Hear ye, hear ye, Town Hall meeting to give Pax personnel a voice

10 a.m. to noon March 28
Center Stage Theater

By Donna Cipolloni
NAS Patuxent River Public Affairs

Personnel from across NAS Patuxent River – whether military, civilian or contractor – will have the opportunity to engage with Pax River Commanding Officer Capt. Jason Hammond during the installation’s first Town Hall meeting, 10 a.m. to noon March 28 at Center Stage Theater.

Hammond will field questions and listen to concerns in an open forum discussion designed to give the people of Pax an outlet where they can be heard by leadership.

“People need a voice,” Hammond said. “And one effort we haven’t made in the past is to publicly advertise to the Pax population to come see the base CO and tell him what you think, ask a question, or express a concern. This is their chance to do that and it’s open to anyone with base access.”

Hammond believes that if you’re going to work in a public management position, you have to be willing to listen to people.

“That’s usually an element of truth in everything brought up,” Hammond noted. “Regardless the concern or complaint, there is always something in it that I or we could be doing better. If you live that way, you’re empowered. You eventually shift from a mentality of explaining to people why you’re not doing things toward a mentality of trying to do something. It’s subtle, but it can change your attitude about the way you do things.”

While Hammond reiterates that solutions to problems can certainly be hampered by a lack of resources or time, he also knows that he can’t solve a problem if he isn’t aware it exists.

“I can’t solve every problem I know about, but I guarantee you I’ll never be able to solve something I don’t know about. This meeting not only gives personnel an outlet to be heard, but will give us the opportunity to learn what’s happening and what’s on people’s minds.”

It also provides an opportunity for leadership to explain their actions.

“We’ll also get the chance to explain things because, occasionally, complaints are simply misunderstandings and it’ll give us that opportunity to offer those explanations. In any case, it’s a good thing. Anytime you get the chance to stand in front of people, you’ll do better.”

Town Hall meetings are expected to continue and others will be planned in the future, Hammond said.

U.S. Naval Test Pilot School bolsters UAS curriculum

By Jeff Newman
Naval Aviation News Staff Writer

As unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) become an increasingly key factor in military operations, the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School (USNTPS) is preparing for that future by revamping its current UAS instruction while adding a two-week advanced course for new graduates slated to be unmanned test pilots.

Beginning with Class 155 in July, the school expanded its introductory UAS topics taught in the classroom and restructured its intermediate teachings—wherein students apply what they’ve learned in the classroom to actual unmanned flights—to take further advantage of the convenience and flexibility of an onsite flight simulator, USNTPS Commanding Officer Cmdr. Glenn Rioux said.

Previously, students would head to Naval Outlying Field Webster in St. Inigoes, Maryland—roughly a 15-mile drive from the schools location at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland—to fly two UAS events. Now one of those events is conducted using the simulator, which reduces both time spent transitioning to Webster Field and flight cancellations due to weather, Rioux said.

“Using the UAS simulator also lets our aircrews operate the air vehicles to the full limits of the hardware. We have many more limitations placed on the operators when flying out of Webster Field,” he said. Next summer, after Class 155 graduates, the school will begin offering a two-week, post-graduate course focused on personnel headed to a UAS developmental test program or Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (UX) 24, which commissioned Oct. 18 as the Navy’s first dedicated UAS test squadron.

The school currently offers three distinct 11-month curricula—fixed-wing, rotary-wing and systems—with its introductory and intermediate UAS teachings incorporated at the same level across those three tracks. Because all USNTPS students to date have been pilots and naval flight officers trained to operate traditional manned aircraft, creating a dedicated UAS curriculum could come with undesirable consequences.

Senior instructor Dr. Vernon Gordon leads an Oct. 3 class at the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School at NAS Patuxent River.

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