

**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs
2 October 2020
WebEx Meeting**

Opening

Mr. Rudder brought the meeting to order at 9:00AM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was held for POW's, MIA's, those deployed, their families and all those killed in the line of duty. Mr. Rudder invited the Board members to introduce themselves:

Board Members

Ms. Hammon, Eagle County CVSO, US Army Nurse Corps, Vietnam

Ms. Scanlon, Vice President of CO Women Marine Association, Chief of Staff of the CO Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and an Afghanistan War Veteran.

Ms. Golonka, works at XCEL energy doing their veterans programs, still in the National Guard, has done four tours overseas

Mr. Dailey, Grand and Summit County VSO, US Army Medical Corps, Vietnam

Mr. Steen, Commissioner, Teller County, 32 Years Commissioned service, US Army Infantry, Active Duty and National Guard

Mr. Gonzalez, retired Air Force, 20 years in intelligence, then a school teacher, currently serving as Commissioner of El Paso County

Mr. Rudder, Rio Grande County Veteran Service Officer, Vietnam Era Air Force Aviation Electronics; used his GI Bill to get a teaching certificate then taught shop for 25 years

Staff

Mr. Hopkins, Deputy Executive Director of Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Greg Dorman, Legislative Director of DMVA

David Callahan, Strategic Director DMVA; 34 Years active duty service in the Army, OEF/OIF

Mr. Tremaine, Director CDVA East

Joanne Iglesias, Director CDVA West

Megan Fraser, Administration DVA East

Carissa Snyder, Officer Manager DVA East

Gail Hoagland, Grants Administrator DVA East

Robbie Robinson, VCLC Commission

Visitor:

Shannon Kopp, Commit Foundation

Minutes

Mr. Steen corrected 'bill under consideration at state level' to 'discussion between the VA and CDOT'.

Ms. Hammon moved to approve the minutes as amended. Ms. Scanlon seconded. Unanimous approval.

Public Comments

Ms. Kopp stated her CEO would be online at 9:30am.

Old Business

By-Laws Review –

Tabled until the next meeting.

Strategic Plan –

Mr. Callahan queried if the Board wanted to discuss branding. Mr. Rudder opened the floor up for discussion. Mr. Rudder stated he had done research on ideas and came up with the slogan “Veterans Helping Veterans”. Ms. Hammon then queried if the Board should have their own logo. Mr. Dorman stated that “Veterans Helping Veterans” is already a 501c3. Ms. Scanlon suggested “Veterans for Veterans”. Mr. Steen said that they have staff and support that are non-veterans and want to ensure that those individuals who still want to support veterans are not excluded. Ms. Hammon suggested “Working for Veterans”; Mr. Callahan suggested relooking at the Mission, Vision and Values for a guide, he inquired of Mr. Dorman if they could use the seal of Colorado. Mr. Dorman stated they can use the one that has ‘The Adjutant General’ at the top. Mr. Steen reiterated that they need to be all-inclusive in their branding. Mr. Rudder suggested “Making CO a great place for Veterans”. Mr. Callahan was tasked with coming up with a few options and distributing those to the Board members. Mr. Tremaine’s suggestion of “CO Cares for Veterans” was to be under consideration as well.

Branding ideas generated include:

- Making Colorado Great for Veterans
- Colorado Cares for Veterans
- Honoring and advocating for those who have served
- Serving those who have served
- Trusted advocate for Colorado's Veterans
- Improving the quality of life for all Colorado Veterans
- Committed to improving the lives of Colorado's Veterans
- Advancing the interests of Colorado's Veterans

Outreach –

Mr. Rudder opened for discussion what the Board members should be considering outreach. Discussion ensued. Ms. Fraser requested that the Board Members be explicit about their outreach numbers each month so that determining Board outreach is not a subjective decision by the DMVA staff.

New Business

Travel – Mr. Hopkins was queried on long bill general fund monies. Currently it looks like there will be some loosening of travel restrictions come November 1. Mr. Hopkins stated that all Covid protocols would need to be followed strictly. Ms. Scanlon requested a plan A and plan B, she will not be able to travel unless the Governor changes the restrictions. Covid case numbers and hospitalizations are going up. Ms. Iglesias provided that WROS is clear to have fifty percent capacity in each room, in the large room they can therefore have 35-40 people. Ms. Hoagland reminded the Board that they have to vote to approve their own monies from the VTF. Ms. Hammon motioned to allow for the necessary monies to

cover travel, hotel and expenses for all Board members. Ms. Hoagland stated there has to be a dollar amount. Last year the Board allocation 25k for travel, they spent approximately 6k. Ms. Hammon amended her motion to set aside 10k for the Board travel through the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Golonka seconded. Mr. Dailey said the Board would be well-advised to wait to travel until at least 1 January. Ms. Scanlon suggested voting on the budget, and then discussing where they will meet. Mr. Rudder confirmed. Ms. Hammon said that her motion includes the meeting at the WROS in November. Mr. Hopkins cautioned any meeting in person would have limited staff due to budget cuts. Ms. Hammon withdrew her motion.

Members expressed concerns about the date of the November meeting for various reasons.

Ms. Hammon motioned for a budget of 10k for the Board travel budget for the rest of the fiscal year. Ms. Scanlon seconded the budget. Unanimous approval.

Anne Maree Craig, Commit Foundation – Ms. Craig joined the intelligence community shortly after the events of 9/11 and deployed to Iraq in this capacity in both 2005 and 2007. She married into the Army and had to start adjusting to the effects of her husband's TBI. She realized her family was not alone in the difficulty with transition and she wanted to help others. The Bush foundation has credited their foundation as being the best transition program for veterans. They have been operating in Colorado since 2013. In October of 2019 the Anschutz family began donating to their organization as well. They are planning on greatly increasing their involvement in CO over the next 15 months. General Clellan is interested in their technology becoming available to the CONG. They invest approximately \$3,300 in every individual who comes through their program. Ms. Golonka contributed that she has been in touch with the Commit Foundation in her role at XCEL energy. Ms. Craig observed that there is disconnect between Colorado Springs and Denver and she would like to help bridge that to improve the lives of veterans.

Mr. Hopkins asked a few clarifying questions of Ms. Craig. Ms. Craig clarified the Commit Foundation never takes placement fees because they never want service members to question what their motive is. Ideally the Commit Foundation will start working with someone 12-18 months before separation so they can both envision what they want their life to be like and then work on implementing that veteran's meaningful life. The Commit Foundation serves all services and all ranks. They began with special operations but have expanded from there. Ms. Craig stated that veterans of any length can earn their highest level of services but have to show investment in the program and in themselves. The Commit Foundation began with serving Post 9-11 veterans but has expanded to assist all veterans as needed.

Board Reports

Mr. Hopkins – CONG is still busy with numerous domestic operations including Covid-19 testing stations, and wildfire support. The Cameron Peak fire currently has 24 Guard members staffing it plus an aircraft available. He drew attention to the Mullen Fire which began in Wyoming but is growing rapidly into Colorado. Planning is underway for election support, both civil disturbance and cyber support. Planning is also underway for storage and distribution of a Covid - 19 vaccine. CONG executed 27 SAR missions in FY 20. CAP squadrons have begun meeting again. Budget is being discussed with the Governor's office. No significant impacts to the Division of Veterans Affairs budget are expected. In a two year period the overall DMVA budget is expected to be cut by approximately 20%. The Governor will present his budget

request on 1 November. Mr. Hopkins expressed interest in feedback between the customer service between DVA and the County Veteran Service Officers.

Mr. Tremaine stated the conference testing will occur in ten days. Office staffing continues to be at 30-40%. The office is continuing partnership with the Buckley TAPS program. VBA is going to be partnering with our office in a virtual clinic. The office of patient experience is providing all the ancillary costs and DVAAEAST is providing the staff. Secretary Wilkie may visit the DMVA when he comes to CO as a result of this project. Mr. Tremaine stated that at the next ELT meeting for his office that each SVSO will be assigned counties that they will be responsible for mentoring and training. As soon as possible the SVSOs will start visiting their new counties in person; the date of this is pending the ongoing state of the Covid-19 pandemic. Information about virtual clinics will be coming out soon as soon as they discuss it with Mr. Hopkins.

Mr. Robinson stated that Lincoln Park has not yet been fixed and he doesn't expect it to be before the election due to more expected civil unrest. The VLCs are doing a statewide needs assessment to determine the needs of the future.

Ms. Iglesias was having technical difficulties and Mr. Hopkins provided the DVA West report on her behalf. Mr. Hopkins highlighted that she has been on the road, visited all the southern counties meeting both commissioners and CVSOs in those locations. Mr. Oney is still holding weekly huddles with the western CVSOs. The western counties continue to be a bit more lenient with Covid protocols due to the demographics in that area. There is a lot of construction going on at the Memorial Cemetery. They had been about 8 months away from running out of columbarium space. After this project is complete they should have enough columbarium space until the late 2020's.

Ms. Scanlon inquired about Mr. Hopkins timeline. Mr. Hopkins said that he will be on Additional Duty Operational Support (ADOS) orders on 1 January. At that time he will move to Vermont, he will be pushing out a battalion task force to CENTCOM in January, an additional battalion task force to AFRICOM in March, a third battalion task force to CENTCOM in April and he will be deploying to EUCOM in May with a Calvary squadron and his brigade headquarters. He is currently in discussion with TAG as to who will be covering his duties. As early as 1 December Mr. Hopkins replacement will be brought in for training.

Mr. Dorman is trying to get more sponsors for the department bill, he currently has one senator. HR 5610 (the Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act) is the only bill that has been discussed that has had any movement and that has simply been adding more co-sponsors. He doesn't expect much to happen legislatively until the New Year.

Ms. Hoagland stated that things are beginning to pick up with the grants. One VTF grantee has their funds frozen at present pending them turning in information. She anticipates getting this information. She needs to request a significant amount of time at next month's meeting because the application needs to be approved by the Board so it can be released in December. There are some minor changes and she would like the Board to consider thresholds around funding. She will disperse the updated application in the coming weeks. Ms. Scanlon inquired why the funds were frozen. Ms. Hoagland stated that as part of the grant agreement itself, that they agree if there is a negative audit or a suspicion of fraud or theft of the organization's funds that they need to share that with us and provide information on a plan of what they have now put in place to prevent those situations from reoccurring, as much as

they possibly can. She is awaiting those documents. As good stewards of the funds, we need to freeze those funds until this information is provided.

Ms. Hammon stated she did her assigned grantee visit and looks forward to writing up her report for the rest of the Board. She said she'd be happy to do more of these visits. Discussion ensued about grantees and the remote non-monitoring site visits. Mr. Rudder requested copies of all reports be sent to Ms. Hoagland and Ms. Fraser so they can keep a record and share information with the Board.

Board Member Remarks

Ms. Hammon is working on her Veterans Day programs. She continues to enjoy the DVAWest webcam call. The Grand Junction mobile medical unit is finally up and running, it will be coming to Eagle County two days a month. Ms. Hammon said she is a featured speaker on a 29 October event for a Comeback Yoga fundraiser.

Ms. Scanlon reported that the CO Women Marine Association is using their grant money to support veterans. She bought a new car and has a Woman Veteran license plate on it. Covid is causing the CO Women Marine Association to not meet in person. She requested that we find a new platform for the CBVA meetings.

Ms. Golonka said she has continued to work with Annie from Sen. Bennet's office about military sexual harassment cases. Regarding her two grantee visits, they will be held after the thirteenth of this month.

Mr. Steen stated he is continuing with the veterans round tables with Congressman Lamborn's office. He was shocked to learn that there was no observance of 9/11. He stressed that remembering and commemorating big dates in history – both recent and past – is important to continue. He is working on backfilling through a non-profit backfilling of those projects that the VTF turns down.

Mr. Dailey stated his county system had disconnected and he missed everything from the time Ms. Hoagland was speaking. She provided a recap. He inquired of Mr. Hopkins if he can schedule to meet with him and provide feedback as offered to CVSOS. 17/29 of grantees have spent nothing. 4 spent a total of \$772. He queried if that is a concern. Ms. Hoagland said she is not overly concerned at this point but she is watching it. She sees that tons of veterans are getting kicked out of their living place and this will be expensive to handle.

Mr. Gonzalez reported on 10 September El Paso County held its annual Veteran of the Year Ceremony. He attended the Ft. Carson 9/11 remembrance ceremony on September 11th.

Mr. Rudder stated that as a VSO he has had the opportunity to utilize funds from the... his Covered Wagons Days account is now nearly fully depleted and he will no longer be able to assist with food and housing. In the next 30 hours he will be attending three funerals. He is on the Senator Bennett selection panel for Academy candidates. He sat in on a panel last night for the Merchant Marine academy, he was thoroughly impressed with their program. Mr. Dailey congratulated Mr. Rudder and his wife on their 50th wedding anniversary.

Upcoming meetings

November – Ms. Golonka requested a poll be sent out to discern which date would work best. Ms. Scanlon suggested the third week, allows avoidance of the election, Veterans Day and Thanksgiving; she

reminded this would be a two day meeting. Unknown if this will be virtual or in-person. 19th from 1pm – 4pm, 20th at 9am.

December – 4th - If in person then it will be held in the Denver area.

Ms. Scanlon motioned to adjourn. Mr. Gonzalez seconded. Unanimous approval by the Board.

Meeting adjourned at 1107 Hours.