

**Board Minutes  
5 December 2014  
American Legion Headquarters  
7465 E. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue #D  
Denver, CO 80230**

Dana Niemela, Vice Chairman, called the meeting to order at 0930 hours. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for our POW, MIA, troops in battle or harm's way and all service members.

**Roll Call of Members and Introduction of Staff & Guests**

Board Members Present:

William "Robby" Robinson, Chairman-Not Present  
Dana Niemela, Vice-Chairman  
Rene Simard, Secretary  
Kathleen Dunemn, Member –Not Present  
Christopher Holden, Member  
Wendy Sue Chiado, Ph.D., Member – Not Present  
Duane Dailey, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

Mickey Hunt, DMVA, Deputy Director  
Greg Dorman, DMVA Legislative Liaison  
Reuben "Ben" Mestas, CDVA Director  
Diane Ricci, CDVA Deputy Director  
Tamara Edmond, CDVA Admin. Asst.  
Gail Hoagland, DMVA VAG Administrator

Guests Present:

Jay Bobick, CBVA Colorado State Veterans Community Living Center Liaison  
Richard Sandrock, Governor's Office  
Aaron Torres, Senator Bennet's Office  
Debby Blanc, Colorado State Veterans Community Living Center Representative  
Steve Rylant, UVC  
Ken Melcher, UVC

**Approval of Minutes from November 5, 2014 and November 24, 2014**

Unanimously accepted with Dana Niemela's corrections and amendments.

## Board Member Comments

Duane Dailey: The Denver VA Regional Office is coming to Grand County on Tuesday. We've set up a Skype session. This meeting will be a follow up to the first Town Hall meeting. For a little of the history behind this visit, this will be the first time the Denver VA Regional Office has been to visit Grand County since 2009. We are trying to advertise and let other organizations know they are coming so we have a good turnout. In Routt County, the Denver VA Regional Office has been to visit 3 to 4 times and there was no recognition because no one knew they came for an outreach.

Chris Holden: No comment.

Rene Simard: No comment.

Dana Niemela: I attended a meeting yesterday with the Clear Creek County Veterans Coalition. This is a collaboration that is working to gain their 501C-3 status. The Clear Creek County Veterans Coalition is made up of the VFW, the American Legion, and County Veterans Service Officers, representatives from the Faith Community, the Sheriff, and Judicial System. What is unique about Clear Creek County is that they recognize their dependence in the community. The lines get a little bit blurred but in a good way. The community members are working together to meet the needs of veterans in the area. When these organizations work together to serve the veterans, they realize that they are also helping their communities. It is a very powerful collaboration when you are on the same page as the law enforcement and the judicial system. Jefferson County Mental Health is also looking to get involved. They are looking to bring in mainstream services.

It was a good opportunity to identify an improvement plan for counties. In Idaho Springs, there is no primary care available, there are no family doctors and there are no mental health providers for these veterans. They end up using urgent care for family practice health care needs and this is a huge expense for the counties.

This is a good opportunity to use the Veterans Coalition to advocate for the community as a whole. The Veterans Coalition is involved in engaging the business community. They went around getting the businesses to sign up for discounts for veterans and most of these businesses were already giving veterans discounts. These rural communities collaborate in unique ways compared to urban populations.

There is one story that is a testament to the collaborative efforts in rural communities. There was a veteran in Gilpin County who was arrested on a school premises with a weapon. He has a "conceal and carry" license but weapons are illegal on school grounds. The sheriff called the CVSO, Todd Kumro to see if he could get involved and help get the veteran some assistance. Todd worked with the veterans to get VA Healthcare and get him to a counseling program. When the judge held the arraignment he specifically asked that the VSO be present which is

highly unusual. They worked together with Veterans Court through probation to get connected with the CVSO. They even have allowed him to go out of state to participate in a therapeutic program. These treatment courts and trauma courts are great.

I wanted to give recognition to the Clear Creek County Coalition because they are doing a great job. They also played a key role in getting the twin tunnels officially designated as the "Veterans Memorial Tunnel."

Jay Bobick: Jefferson County has now started their Veterans Court and it is really proceeding very well. The Chief Judge just retired and in his retirement he said he is not leaving the Veterans Court. He still wanted to work on that. He is the one that got it started. So, Jefferson County is doing well, as well.

Dana Niemela: The outgoing Chair of the Clear Creek County Coalition, George Clark, is running a peer mentor program. He has been recruiting veterans to be peer mentors. That program will be starting later on this month. Are there any other comments?

Since our guests are not present yet, I think we should table the guest presentations in case they show up later. They could be stuck in traffic or have had trouble with directions.

## Reports

### Governor's Report

Richard Sandrock: Right now in Colorado, unemployment is down to about 4.3% and for veterans it is about 7%. Earlier this year, the Governor had the opportunity to speak at the graduation down at Fort Carson for Veterans in Piping down. The Governor has tasked me to look for employers who will directly target and train veterans in Colorado. For the last couple of weeks I have talked to different companies, and I have talked to Excel and Kiewit-Turner about positions and the need to focus on hiring veterans. They are directly talking to the Warrior Transition Center down at Fort Carson. Instead of having a workshop where the veterans attends and goes home without a job, they are training and targeting veterans for job opportunities here in Colorado. I started discussions with the Western Dairy Association about developing a program to help veterans get into farming and agriculture. There are 30,000 small farms in Colorado. The average age of people working on family farms is 58.9 years old. The average size of these farms is two people. We are working with the Western Dairy Association and hope to also be working with the Colorado Wheat Association to help develop this program. We hope to develop a job opportunity program for veterans who are leaving the military. If there are veterans who would like to return to family farming then this program will help veterans to intern on a family farm and we can provide funding to them. Later if the veterans would like to go on to University of Colorado to do a 4 year degree in agriculture, then that would be another option. I have a meeting coming up in two weeks with the Colorado Wheat Association and the Western Dairy Association to discuss this opportunity.

I have served as enlisted, as an officer, on active duty, and in the reserves. My wife recently joined the National Guard so now I am in the role of military spouse.

The Tree Lighting Ceremony was on 4 December at the Capitol. It was very well attended.

For those of you who are unaware, there was a Colorado U.S. Air Force Captain who died when an F-16 Fighting Falcon crashed in the Middle East on Nov. 30. He was a born and bred native Coloradan, educated at CU Boulder. The Governor is working with the Casualty Notification Officer to speak at the service.

Rene Simard: If the veterans are pursuing an agricultural degree, the Colorado Community College System has guaranteed transfer courses and degrees. General education courses can be taken at any community college and then transferred to any of the State Universities. For those veterans in the intern program at family farms, if they do go ahead and take courses at the community colleges, they should be able to transfer applicable courses toward their agricultural degree.

Jay Bobick: Richard, you said 30,000 small farms in Colorado. How does that stack up with the surrounding states?

Richard Sandrock: We don't have an exact number for that but I can tell you from conversations with Gen. Edwards, who is from an agricultural farming background in the Midwest, that number is about average for the surrounding states. On average, the family farms are 10 to 49 acres. After that the larger farms go up to 250 acres. It happens in this part of the country, small farms, older mom and dad with no one else to work the farms.

Dana Niemela: When the Governor attended the Veterans in Piping Program, we asked if the State AFL-CIO would be willing to attempt to have similar programs with other trades for veterans to train.

Richard Sandrock: I talked with Bill Hanna from UVC about that.

Dana Niemela: Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce will have the National Director from Hiring Our Heroes presenting, would like to talk with you more about that program for ideas.

Rene Simard: Could you include me on that?

DMVA

Mickey Hunt: In the past when we have had a "Dignified Transfer," at Buckley AFB, the active duty personnel line the streets in their uniforms. If you want more information about that, let me know. The investigating officer, General Pete Burn, one of our own, will be investigating that accident.

- December 10<sup>th</sup> will be the Joint Budget Committee Hearing. This is the one where we listen to the analyst and do not speak.
- December 18<sup>th</sup> will be the Joint Budget Committee Testimony. General Edwards and I will both present testimonies.
- There will be a welcome home for the Site K Special Forces Unit, the time and date to be announced.
- I went to Colorado Counties Incorporated (CCI) Conference in Colorado Springs. I will leave that for Duane to talk about.
- December 19<sup>th</sup> is the TAG's Holiday Party, at the Revere location.
- December 16<sup>th</sup> the TAG and his wife are traveling to Grand Junction for the Annual Food and Toy Drive. General Capozella and I have done this before. General Edwards and I have done the Food and Toy Drive before and it is very rewarding. For the last five years we have participated in that event.
- On December 17<sup>th</sup>, I will take the Blackhawk to Grand Junction and if any of the Board members would like to go and help out with the Annual Food and Toy Drive, let me know so I can save you a seat on the helicopter. It is a wonderful event. The kids get full boxes of toys even with bicycles. The families get a full Christmas meal with a turkey and all the trimmings. It is very heart-warming.

Dana Niemela: Do you want me to talk about the Polish Delegation? There is a delegation from Poland that is coming to Colorado. They are seeking information on wounded warriors' matters. They have been in Washington, D.C. They will be here to talk about how we educate on veterans, how we advocate for veterans, to learn about educational, medical and psychological support for veterans. The Polish Delegation wants to learn about the best practices and strategies on how to best serve the wounded veterans. I will talk about the process involved in administering and delivering the grants in our communities. The meeting with the Polish Delegation will be on December 16<sup>th</sup> and if anyone is interested let me know and I will send you the particulars.

Greg Dorman: The TAG Holiday party will be on 19<sup>th</sup> of December and it usually starts about noon.

Mickey Hunt: Gen. Edwards hosts the Holiday party and it is usually in the general purpose area on the second floor. However, there are usually several parties going on during this time and it becomes several smaller parties held in different units. The punch should be a little less octane this year with Les Kennedy not being there to spike the punch. Hopefully, there will be less of that all around.

Dana Niemela: This would be a good time to hear any legislative updates from Greg Dorman.

Greg Dorman: I want to say thank you to all the Board members for their contributions to the Annual Governor's Report. I would like to have that finalized no later than December 15<sup>th</sup>.

For the Legislature, there is a new General Assembly. Several of the Representatives with whom I have dealt have shown an interest in helping veterans. It will be a process of educating the new members. This aligns with Department of Military and Veterans Affairs mission to educate the Legislature on the needs of veterans.

Most of you know that there has been a modification to the "Military and Family Relief Fund." The modification was to strike the word, "deployed" from the statutory language. January 30<sup>th</sup> will be Military Appreciation Day at the Capitol. It will be starting earlier in the day to accommodate the Governor's schedule. I will be working with Bill Hanna on Military Appreciation Day.

Mickey Hunt: The Joint House and Senate Military Committee will meet on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015. I will need a Board member present. The Chairman of the Board and the Vice Chair of the Board usually address this Committee. It starts at 10:00am and I will send further details to you.

Jay Bobick: You mentioned the Military Appreciation Day will start earlier in the day, how much earlier? It is usually an all-day event.

Greg Dorman: It will be starting at 7:30am instead of 8:00am.

Rene Simard: On Thursday, the Aurora Defense Council will have a special meeting featuring congressional staffers. We have invited staffers responsible for military and veterans issues, to talk about the coming year. There will be representatives from Sen. Elect Gardner's Office, Sen. Bennet's Office, Congressman Perlmutter's Office, Congressman Coffman's Office and Congressman Polis' office. This is a good opportunity to hear what is on their agendas for next year. The meeting will be at the Doubletree on Iliff and I-25. Let me know if you want to attend. The Aurora Defense Council's Annual Holiday Party will follow afterwards so you are all invited. Let me know if you'd like to attend one or both and I'll get you registered.

#### Division of Veterans Affairs

Ben Mestas: We attended CCI and Duane will cover more of that meeting. Gail will cover any updates on the grants. I will focus on updates from the Cemetery. We have almost completed construction with the first columbarium a little ahead of schedule. The last thing will be the concrete pour. If you can imagine, those three columbariums will be filled up soon. The second item, I want to cover is we are at the highest rate of veterans interred in years. This emphasizes the point that the Cemetery expansion is right on time. There is one issue in-house issue with Information Technology to work out some issues with the computers. I am working with AI to sort that issue out.

The other issue I want to bring up, there is the “Art in Public Places” proposal. When we got the amount to fund the Cemetery, 1% is required by the State in order to put public art out in the cemeteries. Of the funds available, that is \$33,861 that we are going to have to utilize for public art. I am having a conversation with Ruth Runo, who is running the program for us to purchase and maintain the Public Art. Of that \$33,861, they will take 5% off the top and then require another 5% to maintain the art in public. With both the 5% for administration an additional 5% to maintain the art, then that would only leave \$28,433 available to purchase the art. That additional 5% to maintain the art, I am still negotiating with them because if we buy a statue then it will require a foundation and some structural maintenance but if we buy a painting, then it will just hang there and not need much maintenance. Another 5% in addition to the first 5% does not make much sense to us. If both the 5% to administer purchase of the art and the 5% to maintain the art, the amount of money it only leaves is \$28,433. Dick Gigliotti is looking to get matching contributions for a life-size Army Soldier saluting in towards the Cemetery. The \$28,433 is not enough to make this purchase. One of the requirements of the “Art in Public Places” is to have a committee to review the purchase decision. I have recommended a committee to review the art to be utilized and I have recommended Dick Gigliotti as well as two other community members, either artists or business leaders, to be on this committee. Dick has submitted to me two names and I have forwarded those to Ruth. That is pretty much what I have and I don’t have anything else to add.

Dana Niemela: Is the 5% administrative cost an allowable expense by statute?

Ben Mestas: Of the money set aside for the Cemetery project, they are saying that 5% of the 1% has to be set aside for administrative costs and 5% of the 1% has to be set aside for maintenance.

Dana Niemela: It sounds like a committee would be a good idea. Ben, do you have anything else? Are there any other questions?

#### State Veterans Community Living Centers

Jay Bobick: December 12<sup>th</sup> will be the next meeting for the CSVCLC Commission meeting at 8:30 am in the Human Services Building. We will be reviewing the annual report and finalize the report. We will also hold the elections and nomination for the appointment of Chairman. There should be a briefing from one of the homes; I think it will be from Homelake. We have four meetings a year and one of the home presents at each meeting. Are there any questions? You are all invited to the CSVCLC Commission meeting.

Debbie Blanc: We are all trying to get used to the new name change.

Jay Bobick: The term, nursing home, has become detrimental and with a negative connotation through the years. In Washington VA, this was a strong issue to change that connotation to Community Living Center. It is a place to go to live life, not a place of death.

It all goes with the whole Eden Alternatives philosophy where life for people at the Community Living Centers as best as they can be "homelike."

Steve Rylant: Are you planning to change the current signs because some of the homes have signs in stone?

Jay Bobick: They will have to be changed eventually but it will not be overnight due to shortage in funding. At Rifle, the stonework will be very difficult to change.

Debbie Blanc: The stone at Rifle is from the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier." There is also the branding issue, trying to get people to accept the new name and still have the branding. We were allowed to keep the State Seal as part of our identity.

Jay Bobick: We have been very successful in the updates of all of our homes. Fitzsimmons has one third of the construction that still needs to be updated. The plan is the south side will be the domiciliary and the north side will be transition units. Originally the construction costs were approximately \$43,000,000 but have increased to approximately \$52,000,000. The State share will be 35% (\$18-19 million), the rest funded through the VA grant system. The Commission number one priority is this construction at Fitzsimmons. No construction can be initiated until completion of the Department of Human Services ongoing study of future overall Colorado nursing home/community living center needs. This study is scheduled for initial completion in the first quarter 2015.

Dana Niemela: In Clear Creek County, the growth need for the over 65 population far exceeds the under 25 population. This is a huge problem with access to care.

*Discussion about aging population needs and the expense of care.*

#### Veterans Trust Fund and Veterans Assistance Grant

Gail Hoagland: The Grant Office has moved to the South Colorado Boulevard address. Yesterday was my official first day. The audit response is progressing along nicely. It is due by December 22 and I hope to have it out next week. In the review/revision part, it looks like all but one of the issues has been fully implemented. The one that remains outstanding has to do with the tracking of the rolling 90 day advancements. This has to be done through CORE (State Accounting System) and CORE has not been able to track these yet. We will create stop-gap procedures until they can be put back into CORE automatically.

I was present on Tuesday at the United Veterans Committee (UVC) meeting and will attend the January 24<sup>th</sup> Mid-Year Conference to discuss Grant Funding Availability. The new program policy for Veterans Trust Fund and the Veterans Assistance Grant are on the web. I hope to come up with creative ways to work with County Veterans Service Officers to get the word out about the grants.

Jay Bobick: I have one request from you. Please succinctly discuss the differences between the Veterans Trust Fund and the Veterans Assistance Grant when you go to the UVC Mid-Year Conference. This is a very important issue.

Dana Niemela: For the VTF Policy letter, thank you for everyone who had input. This will help make this clearer as well as make it fairer for the applicants. Regarding the Audit Report, do we feel as though we have adequately addressed the grading process as far as outcomes and outputs for the grantees?

Gail Hoagland: Do you mean as far as administrative performance on previous grants or on outcome measures?

Dana Niemela: It would be expected performance for grantees outcomes.

Gail Hoagland: As far as the program letter, not necessarily. The new grantees once they are awarded the grant, a manual of expectations including measurement of outcomes, work in progress, and service delivery, will be sent to the grantee. This manual will instruct them on how to incorporate the outcomes back into the program to make improvements. Part of the grant award will include a survey where the veterans will self-report on how the grant has assisted them. The survey questions will ask the veteran: How the grant money helped them? Did this make a difference? I will ask the grantee questions that clarify if they are spending the money appropriately. Administratively, there are several points through the year where there will be a “mini-audit” process based on the numbers and dealing directly with the grantees.

Dana Niemela: When we put together the report, we worked with Gail to make sure the suspense dates were included.

Gail Hoagland: December 15<sup>th</sup> is the date I hope to have the first draft out.

Mickey Hunt: For the Legislative out brief we need to have a finalized written report.

Dana Niemela: Gail, have yours by December 12<sup>th</sup> to Robby and I. Then, Robby and I will work to have something to Mickey by either the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> of December.

*Discussion about the report and Gail's office hours.*

Steve Rylant: Gail, in past years, there has been direct deposit available for the grantees. Do you think that will be available for grantees next year?

Gail Hoagland: The issue with the hold up on direct deposit has been with CORE. Some of the grantees are receiving direct deposit this year and other grantees who are not yet receiving direct deposit are being worked on individually. Hopefully, it will be rectified soon.

Dana Niemela: Are there any other questions about the Veterans Trust Fund or the Veterans Assistance Grant for Gail?

Colorado Counties Incorporated Presentation (CCI)

Duane Dailey: We were in Colorado Springs for the Colorado Counties Incorporated (CCI) conference luncheon. I was surprised that we were as well received as we were. Gini Pingnot was very enthusiastic and she is willing to work with us to incorporate CDVA into future programs. Gen. Norm Steen was the moderator. He was excited about our presentation and wants us to come back. We had ten minutes to do the presentation and from what feedback I received it went very well. There was a good response from the rural counties.

Mickey Hunt: This was a giant step for the Board. Outreach is what the Board is about and this was an excellent opportunity. Thank you to Duane for opening this door and for building bridges with CCI. Each one of you Board members brings something from your unique backgrounds. Attending CCI was a great success for the Board. That is one of the reasons why I invited you to go to Grand Junction. Dana and I have enhanced that through Colorado Serves. I spoke at CCI about the budget initiative and that was very well received. The Governor spoke and then he opened it up for questions and answers for about 30 minutes. It was very well received. They asked questions afterwards. It is what we do – education. I encourage the Board to use your background to build these relationships and make an impact on veterans' issues.

Ben Mestas: We are going to be setting up a table at every conference from now on. The feedback we got back from the questions has been invaluable. If they are aware of what the CVSO's are doing for the veterans and the impact that makes on the communities and the county economy, then we are doing our jobs. I am committed to being there with a table. It was productive.

*Discussion CCI, the presentation by Duane Dailey and Mickey Hunt, the opportunity and need for education about what we do for veterans.*

Ben Mestas: It was great for us and for the Board.

Diane Ricci: The inroads we made by attending were important to explain who we are and how we partner with the counties. We made a very favorable footprint with your speech, Duane and it was a good opportunity to be able to stay and talk with the Commissioners afterwards.

Mickey Hunt: These relationships are vital given the upcoming expectations we have for downsizing in the near future. As a Board, it is important to develop positive relationships

with Fort Carson, Peterson, and Buckley. This will be the first generations where many of the veterans are not choosing to get out of the military and it will create a new dynamic.

Dana Niemela: Between now and then, what role specifically can the Board play for the services we have a role in providing? I think the first step would be including them in our distribution list of our meetings and ask them good places in rural counties to post information about our meetings.

Mickey Hunt: The key is to let those rural counties know that we are here to help. We are not here to tell you what to do. The message that we are here to help is what we want to get across.

Dana Niemela: In communicating with the County Commissioners, are there any contacts that we need to keep in the loop to be informed of veterans' issues?

Duane Dailey: On Fridays, there used to be a Military and Veterans Affairs Meeting. I will check to see if they still have that meeting.

Rene Simard: Bill Holen is a good guy to contact. He is a big supporter of the Aurora Defense Council and the military and also an Arapahoe County Commissioner. He is great to get energized about veterans' issues. I will get his contact information for you.

Dana Niemela: Are there any other questions about CCI?

*Discussion about CCI conference and opportunities to maintain momentum from the positive reception at the conference. Ideas for communicating with Commissioners and possibly a veterans' forum in their newsletter.*

Steve Rylant: Next Tuesday, United Veterans Committee will be meeting and Gail will be there to present.

Dana Niemela: Since we have a representative from Sen. Bennet's Office, Aaron Torres, did you want to report anything? No, well thank you for coming.

Discussion/Action: Annual Report of the Board

Dana Niemela: Everyone has a copy of the Annual Report of the Board and you should have received an electronic copy if you have any changes or suggestions. What about CCI, do we want to put something in there for that or for next year? What about the Veterans in Higher Education piece that took place in August? Are there any corrections? If you have feedback, you need to let us know.

Chris Holden: I provided feedback directly to Robby.

Dana Niemela: What about the meeting with the County Commissioners?

Greg Dorman: If you want to include it, I would recommend including it in the letter but not in the report unless there is a paragraph that is on a broader outreach topic.

Dana Niemela: The topic to be covered is over the area of focus of the Board. To speak to Mickey's point earlier, we have a very real opportunity based on the focus at the table. If we have a plan to have continued outreach to the County Commissioner, it would be good to address that in the report. For the Board members, take this as an opportunity to build up our efficacy in the community. What do we want our focus to look like next year?

Greg Dorman: This is also an executive summary with the boiler plate letters from the different agencies attached on the back. The Board may want to consider this as an executive summary and put in Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has focused on outreach and the needs of rural veterans. Consider this a way to formally tie those things together.

Dana Niemela: That reiterates the need for a Strategic Plan and the need to work on the development of a Strategic Plan.

Mickey Hunt: Along those lines, if we get budget approval, then we will have an FTE for a Strategic and Lean Planner who could definitely help you with the Strategic Plan.

Dana Niemela: Being able to communicate what our priorities are is important to our effectiveness. Duane, would you mind writing up a paragraph about CCI and the presentation?

Chris Holden: Is there any way we can have the meeting in Colorado Springs in March instead of February so I can have time to arrange everything?

### Future Meetings

9 January 2015, American Legions HQ, 09:30AM  
6 February 2015, 0930, TBD (Check on VARO or VAMC)  
6 March 2015, 0930, Colorado Springs

### New Business

Jay Bobick: If you want to tour the Rifle facility while you are on the trip to Grand Junction, please let me know and I can arrange a tour.

### Old Business

Duane Dailey: Ben we discussed the issue of a notary public. I took 6 hours of training and I have a legal question about notarizing legal papers for someone with a power of attorney. When I have the VA 21-22 would that mean I can't notarize for them?

Ben Mestas: You can't notarize for someone you have the legal power of attorney for because you are able to legally sign their name. You would not be doing that with a VA 21-22 and I am pretty sure it would not be the same situation.

Dana Niemela: Any other business?

Meeting adjourned at 11:03am.