

Board Minutes
April 10, 2014, 0930 Hrs.
American Legion Headquarters
7465 E. 1st Avenue, #D, Denver, CO 80230

Robby Robinson, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 0940 hours. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for our POW, MIA, troops in battle and all service members.

Introduction of Members and Visitors

Board Members Present:

William "Robby" Robinson, Chairman
Jay Bobick, Vice Chairman
Dana Niemela, Secretary
Kathleen Dunemn, Member
Rene Simard, Member
Jason Crow, Member – Not Present
Chris Holden, Member
Marvin Meyers, Emeritus – Not Present

DMVA Staff Present:

Mickey Hunt, DMVA, Deputy Director
Ray Z. Dissinger, VTF Administrator
William "Bill" Conroy, CDVA Director
Tamara Edmond, CDVA Admin. Asst.

Guests Present:

Richard Sandrock, Governor's Office
Brian VanDriel, Senator Udall's Office
Samuel Aaron Torres, Senator Bennet's Office
Jason LeBlanc, State Auditor's Office, Colorado State Audit Committee (Present for Audit Committee Meeting and Executive Committee Meeting)
Andy Knauer, State Auditor's Office, Colorado State Audit Committee (Present for Audit Committee Meeting and Executive Committee Meeting)
Monica Bowers, State Auditor's Office, Colorado State Audit Committee (Present for Audit Committee Meeting and Executive Committee Meeting)
Will Thompson, DMVA, Controller (Present for first half of Audit Committee Meeting)
Steve Rylant, UVC
Ken Melcher, UVC

Bernie Rogoff, Aurora Veterans Commission
Leanne Wheeler, Veterans Advocate, Wheeler Advisory Group

Approval of Minutes from March 13, 2014

Unanimously accepted

Board Member Comments

Robby Robinson: There is an audit of the Veterans Trust Fund ongoing as most of you are aware and Board Members and anyone who was present for the Audit Committee meeting may not discuss that until the report is released. We were late starting because of the Executive Session where we discussed the ongoing audit by the State. Tentatively, there will be a Legislative Audit Committee meeting either 2 June or 3 June at 9:00 o'clock largely dependent on General Edwards' schedule.

Chris Holden: Through the contacts that were made during the February CBVA meeting down in Colorado Springs, I have been invited to be a guest speaker at the Colorado Military Veterans and Spouses Employment Coalition for veterans and their spouses next week. This is a good opportunity to educate them a little bit about the Board and connect with veterans.

Kathleen Dunum: No Comment

Rene Simard: No Comment

Dana Niemela: No Comment

Jay Bobick: As a Board Member, I would like to say thank you to everyone who supported the Annual UVC Banquet and awards. We really need all organizational support. We had it at the highest rank and many of you were there and thank you for being there.

Public Comments Non-agenda Items

Steve Rylant: On behalf of UVC, I also want to say thank you to everyone for support of the UVC banquet. UVC appreciates all the support from the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs.

Reports

Governor's Office

Richard Sandrock: Today, I wanted to let you know there will be a wounded veteran's art exhibition. The realities of war documented in *The Joe Bonham Project: Drawing Stories of*

Wounded American Veterans, the free art exhibit will begin at Anschutz Medical Center and run through June 12, 2014. I have been invited to make a speech and it will be open from 4:00pm through 7:00pm. On Monday, Katherine Wirkus from Senator Perlmutter's office will be presenting a POW Medal to Sergeant Frank Dechant of Arvada, CO, a WWII veteran who was captured during the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium. He was held in Germany for a year or so and he will be getting his medal next Monday, April 14, 2014.

Colorado Serves will hold their meeting next week in Alamosa. I want to say thank you to Bill Conroy who has done an excellent job of helping us reach out to County Veteran Service Officers and get their buy in. I don't think without your buy-in it would have been possible to accomplish very much.

The Governor's Office will start a new "Student Veteran Mentoring" statewide initiative that kicks off next week. It is specifically based on the "Boots to Suits" program initiated by Izzy Abbass. These mentors will all be Colorado CEO's, CIO's, and Executives. It is designed to help student veterans to take advantage of opportunities with CEO and corporations networks statewide. This is a very pilot group that we are starting out. Veterans need to be as polished as possible. The intent is to take these guys getting out of Buckley and Fort Carson. Initially to get the buy in with the CEOs, we have to have a polished products and I have been working heavily with Izzy. We will be kicking that off next Thursday, April 17, 2014.

The only other thing is, I used to be the over the homeless veterans issues, and now my priorities will cover all veterans issues. I have been elevated to Deputy Director and veterans' issues will be my priority as well as grant writing and fund raising. Al Salazar and the Governor have decided they would like to push veterans' issues more seriously and surprise they have a veteran working for them, so that will be my focus.

There are 29 veterans at Fort Lyon out of 121 folks present. That puts the number of veterans just under 25%.

DMVA

Mickey Hunt: The Department has several important bills going on in the legislature right now. The Military Relief Fund will expand the usage to include CO National Guard soldiers or airmen serving on State Active Duty. That passed out of committee. The Veterans Assistance Grant is out of committee and it is in the House. It is moving forward and is at Senate Appropriations today.

There is another requirement to do an economic impact study, an FTE to provide a contractor to do the study and it will provide us \$300,000. The economic impact study is used to educate legislatures and elected officials on the impact of military in the state of Colorado. Also, this provides information should there be a BRAC Commission (Base Realignment and Closure) in the future. Lastly, the fallen hero's license plate was expanded. Right now you can only get the fallen heroes license plate if a family member was killed while in theater and it will be expanded out if the veteran was killed while in training status.

\$4.6 M will be added on to the cemetery as part of the Long Bill. \$277,000 is in the Long Bill to add back into our O & M (Operations & Maintenance) the amount that was cut back in 2009 when we had to take a 2% cut. Also, there is an additional 1.5 FTE for additional help for the cemetery.

There is testimony in the Senate in Washington D.C. about the cuts coming to the Army. Active Army units will be coming down to between 420-450 thousand. Army National Guard Units will be cut to 320 to 350 thousand. That is around a 25,000 cut. Army Reserves will be coming down from 200 thousand to 190 thousand.

The Military Ball will be 26 April 2014 and tickets will still be available for anyone who wants to attend. Colorado Serves held their meeting at Las Animas 2 weeks ago at Fort Lyon and the meeting will be in Alamosa next week. We will be meeting this afternoon. Our goal was to have a statewide summit but with the feedback we received from the regions, they would benefit more from holding regional meetings.

Jay Bobick: Mickey, we have been trying to get that fiscal note on the Veterans Assistance Grant removed. What is the latest on that?

Mickey Hunt: I don't know. They are in Senate Appropriations today. It should not be difficult to remove because the money is already in the Long Bill.
Are there any more questions?

-There was discussion among Board Members about updating their CBVA Member Roster information. There was also a reminder to the Board members whose terms are expiring this year that their applications are due to reapply.

Veterans Trust Fund

Ray Z. Dissinger: FY 2013-2014 \$800,000 with approximately \$500,000 accounted for, and \$100,000 out there and \$200,000 need to be used before the end of the fiscal year. I handed out a list of all the grant applications to the Board Members. The review committee meeting went through of all grant applications being considered and we are following guidelines provided in comments from the Audit Committee. If you would look at the grants during the upcoming month to see if you agree with what the grant review committee says. Also, if you have any questions or want a copy then send me an email: ray.dissinger@dmva.state.co.us. At the next meeting in May, you will be voting on the grant awards. If you need to be recused from the vote due to conflict of interest please let me know.

Robby Robinson: Is it possible to post it to the website because we have it all electronically? You sent me your spreadsheet.

Ray Z. Dissinger: Sure it will get posted to the website. Give me a call if you have any questions about the grants at (720) 250-1521.

Robby Robinson: The committee met and made recommendations on each grant. Now, individual Board Members acting as individuals will vote on the awards for each grant. They all have copies of the grants, there were forty of them. We will come back next meeting and we

will vote for each grant. We have to be careful about conflict of interest. The next meeting then is on May 15th and it is open to the public.

Bernie Rogoff: Where is it stated that there are established criteria for submitting the grant applications?

Ray Z. Dissinger: It is on the website. Once again, give me a call if you have any questions at (720) 250-1521 or on my cell at (720) 732-4937. Does anyone have any questions?

Veterans Assistance Grant

Bill Conroy: We have one problem, but Richard has guaranteed that the money will be spent. We have our annual CVS0 Training Conference coming up on April 22nd – April 25th. Dana and Kathleen both are going to attend and observe the conference.

Dana Niemela: I will be staying for the duration of the conference.

Bill Conroy: I would be remiss if I did not mention this. Thank you for the long over-due award from UVC. It was an honor to be recognized.

Jay Bobick: It was well-deserved.

Steve Rylant: I second that, it was well-deserved.

State Veteran Nursing Homes (State Veterans Community Living Centers)

General discussion about Community Living Centers

Jay Bobick: Pretty much all I was going to report was about the name change to Community Living Centers, so other than that are there any questions for me?

Discussion/Action

VTF Grant Discussion

Robby Robinson: Any questions about the VTF Grants?

Ray Z. Dissinger: In the past, when they looked at the grants they went over each grant individually. If we group together like grants, then we can move through them a little quicker. If you have general questions then please ask me but if you have a specific question, then highlight the grant and we will address it as a group at the next meeting.

Dana Niemela: Was there consideration to Veteran's Assistant Grant available to non-profit organizations knowing some of the organizations may be making an impact request for the Veterans Trust Fund?

Ray Z. Dissinger: That was taken into consideration.

Robby Robinson: For example on grant #17 there was a request for gazebos and locks, this was not considered

Ray Z. Dissinger: I contacted them to let them know.

Mickey Hunt: It is very important that Veteran's Trust Fund and Veterans Assistance Grant money are not going to the same organizations. I testified at the House Committee that the money did not go to the same organizations. I testified that money from one grant is not given to the same organizations from the other grant.

VTF Committee Report

Robby Robinson: Rene or Kathleen, do you want to talk about the priorities used in consideration of grant recommendations? There was \$1.6M requested and 40 applicants and only approximately \$800,000 available.

Kathleen Dunum: The process was similar to past years; I have served on the grant recommendation committee previously. Each proposal was reviewed individually because of not having enough money. We were not able to fully fund many of the proposals. Some of the people asked for twice as much as they had asked in previous years. As they were not yet spending that money, we took that into account. We also took into account the priority list and we talked through each of those priorities as a group for each and every proposal.

Robby Robinson: We also had to remove some things from some of the proposals because they did not fit the guidelines on the instructions of the grant application or specify what the money would be used for in the grant.

Rene Simard: I don't have that much to add, it was my first time to sit in on the grant review committee. I want to acknowledge Ray for putting all of that together. He made it very easy for us to go through each one of the proposals. The only other thing I would add is about those two new ones I had mentioned. We did not fully fund them because we did not have a lot of data. They were not real specific. A lot of times they wanted \$20K and they just listed that but did not list the details of how they would use it. Some met the criteria and it was the right thing to do to fund them. It was fair when they were asking for more. I think we were consistent in how we did that.

Robby Robinson: Just to restate, the past performance of the grant played a pretty big role in our decisions. What did you get last year? How much were you asking for this year? How was

the performance and if you were underperforming? If the year is three-quarters gone and you have more than half of the money not spent – it is not good. If it is a year program, then they were not utilizing their money. That kind of gives us a sense of (a) how it is administered and (b) the severity of the need. If you have three-quarters of your money and half the year is up, then the need must not be that great. I know that it is a bit subjective but with a lot of these organizations, we have 7 years or more of a track record to use for basing those decisions.

Bernie Rogoff: Do the organizations we fund or donate to, are they required to file an evaluation report or acknowledgement of what they have done?

Ray A. Dissinger: They are required to file four quarterly reports; however, we know what they are doing because I process the reimbursement and it specifically shows what they are spending the funds on. We do get data because we get reports generally back from them every two weeks.

Bernie Rogoff: They don't get all the money at once?

Ray Z. Dissinger: No, the maximum they can get is a quarter of the award. So every 90 days they must expend that. We review what they are spending and have them on a rolling account system so they are not without money.

Bernie Rogoff: May I ask then how they spend it in their program and how they are going to improve, and then do we review that improvement?

Ray Z. Dissinger: In subsequent years, those who were dependent on the grant to continue on, then we would ask them to let us know. But generally, the posts are depending on it, and that is something we need to look at and I will need to talk to the Board about it. One post used Bingo to raise money and they actually paid us back the grant money.

Rene Simard: I just want to add to it, in many cases where they asked for additional funds, they did not really say why they needed additional funds specifically. For example, they may have asked for \$20K increase but did not say why or even how they would use the money if awarded.

Ray Z. Dissinger: We had a couple of posts that were exemplary, they looked at their program and asked for less this year because in their area they would not be spending it and the Board looked at that very positively.

Steve Rylant: In the VFW Colorado case they normally requested \$75K because they expect it to take them through the year for veterans in dire straits. Last couple of years, you awarded them \$40K and they run out of that money in February about half-way through the year that is what I am told.

Ray Z. Dissinger: VFW Colorado, I will look it up for you, just give me a few minutes.

Leanne Wheeler: As for full disclosure, this is probably a question for Bill or Richard. I am working with the VFW and American Legion in Fort Lyon. They are going to be applying for the Veterans Assistance Grant. I want to make sure I am not in conflict for what is already in the area. When is the end date for the submission for the Veterans Assistance Grant?

Ray Z. Dissinger: The deadline for applying for the Veterans Assistance Grant is 20 May.

Leanne Wheeler: There is support for veterans for when they come out of the black box and choose to stay in Las Animas. The VFW is looking to do job fairs and some other support.

Ray Z. Dissinger: I have the answer. The VFW Colorado up to a week ago, they had \$23,841.64 left out of the \$40,000 they were awarded. That is over half.

VTF Out of Cycle Procedure

Robby Robinson: We had a discussion last meeting about VTF out-of cycle procedures. The question was, "what if funds form VTF become available because they are not executed or if they have not signed the contract, or if they were not able to fulfill the contract. Jason suggested we have some sort of policy written down. For the Trust Fund Policy, I had a couple of suggestions as far as language.

"During the year should additional funds become available or should funds not drawn from or executed by recipient, the Board may at the written request of the Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs, the cemetery, or the Colorado State Community Living Centers (SNH) reallocates these funds to one or more of these organizations."

Dana Niemela: "At the written request of CDVA, the cemetery, or Community Living Centers," are we targeting specifically those three?

Robby Robinson: Yes. We are leaving out other service organizations and the reason for that is that if funds are identified in March, then there would not be time to execute another contract for other service organizations. In other words, I will work with Ray and I will run it by the Board.

Ray Z. Dissinger: When we work with other veterans service organizations we would have to abrogate the current contract so it makes it less and then we would have to execute another contract and it would be extremely short to be executed. We have to enter it into the system by the state.

Report from Senator Udall's Office

Brian VanDial: At Senator Udall's Office, we have been very concerned about the process for obtaining VA identification cards. Primarily because it was like it was designed to keep people out of the system rather than let them in. We have two concerns. First, homeless vets do not have to have photo identification now because the VA can do knowledge-based authentication

with questions about a veterans DD214. Second, the original plan called for two visits to the VA. The first visit the veteran would have to apply to be authenticated and on the second visit they would have their photo taken two weeks later. That is a huge concern for rural veterans.

Report from Senator Bennet's Office

Samuel Aaron Torres: I was looking at the Army Tattoo Policy and how that will impact us. Has anybody seen a PowerPoint on that or a factsheet, because I was looking at Army regulations and it would be helpful to have a free-flowing PowerPoint to summarize the policy? Our office is looking at the VA backlog.

Senator Bennet in recent hearing at the Senate spoke movingly about being a part of the Fort Carson Naturalization Ceremony. He wants to recognize soldiers that have served our country and want their citizenship.

Bill Conroy: If you are talking to the VA, can you ask them how long it will take to get a claim scanned in?

Samuel Aaron Torres: From a recent report, the VA is now 82% paperless.

Bill Conroy: Let me clarify what I am asking. For example, I come in to file a claim. It is paperless. It is sent to Kentucky to be scanned in. They are saying the claim will be back in a couple of weeks, it is taking months before it pops up in virtual where people can work it. Therefore, the timeline it takes to complete a claim does not start until it shows up in virtual, adding months to the claim processing time.

Samuel Aaron Torres: Okay, I will check.

Leanne Wheeler: The Senator hosted a Women's Leadership Forum last fall. There was supposed to be a work product that came out of that and I am the only one who did not see it. A couple of weeks ago there was an invitation to attend the Patent Office seminar and are they hiring veterans for that office?

Samuel Aaron Torres: I know the Patent Office is hiring and they are giving preference to veterans.

Ken Melcher: I am working with Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) on rural transportation needs. I know how many of the DAV vans they have but I want to know how many vans the Veterans Trust Fund has bought? I have no idea on how many vans VTF bought and where they are located. There is a grant but it only applies to counties with less than 7 people per square miles. Any authorized VSO could apply but it has to be in the low density counties.

Robby Robinson: Do you need to know the location and the number of vans?

Ray Z. Dissinger: It is feasible for me to ask current grantees what they have; however, it would be misleading to say how many we are providing because we may buy one then several years later buy another one to replace it and the first one may have disappeared. I will ask how many vans are in service and where. I will send an email.

Ken Melcher: I know where the DAV vans are and how many there are but I don't know where the other vans are?

Future Meetings

8 May 2014, American Legion Headquarters, 9:30am

11-12 June, Las Animas and tour of Fort Lyon facility, time and place TBA

Motion to Adjourn by Robby Robinson, seconded by Dana Niemela at 11:10am