

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

Dana Niemela, Secretary, 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 -late
Dana Niemela, Secretary
Kathleen Dunemn, Member – Not Present
Rene Simard, Member
Christopher Holden, Member
Wendy Sue Chiado, Ph.D., Member
Duane Dailey, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

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

Guests Present:

Richard Sandrock, Governor's Office
Brian Van Driel, Senator Udall's Office
Frank McCurdy, American Legion National Executive Committee, 1st Vice President
United Veterans Committee

Dana Niemela: Thank you all for being here in spite of our traffic delays. We will go ahead of approval of the minutes from the last meeting. All Board members should have a copy of the minutes from the last meeting in your folders. Does anybody have any revisions or corrections to the minutes?

Approval of Minutes from June 12, 2014

Unanimously accepted.

-Robby Robinson arrived 9:42am.

Dana Niemela: I will turn the meeting over to our Chairman, Robby Robinson.

Robby Robinson: Have the new Board members had a chance to introduce themselves? We wanted to welcome you to the Board. It is great to see some new faces and to get your perspective on this Board. We will have you introduce yourselves as we will go around and introduce everybody in the room. So, Duane is a new Board member as is Wendy, and I was reappointed so I guess we will have to face this challenge of the Senate confirmation during the next session.

Board Member Comments

Duane Dailey: Hi, I am Duane Dailey from Grand County. I am a fifth generation military. My grandfather served in World War I, and my father served in the Merchant Marines/Navy man in World War II, he had three brothers in the service. My brother was in the Army. I have been a member of the American Legion for 44 years and serve as the Grand County VSO. I am a past Grand County Commissioner. It is a great honor to be a part of this Board. I had a letter from Dick Lamb when I wrote a letter of recommendation in 1974 for a man named Leo Nater to be on this Board. He was one of the first representatives to be a part of this Board from the Western Slope. I am honored to be a part of this very important group.

Robby Robinson: Duane, it is great to have you here. We were in Las Animas last month. The view from the rural area is a different perspective which at times can be quite different from the view from Denver. I think since Jim Stanko left, we have not had any representatives from the rural areas. We are delighted to have you here and he is also a Veteran Service Officer so it will be good to get that perspective as well.

Wendy Sue Chiado: I live in Colorado Springs, but I am originally from the Bronx so you can guess which baseball team I root for. I retired as a Naval Officer and I am very proud to be a Naval Officer in a bastion of the Air Force Community. I work for Aerospace Corporation. I was Navy all my life, my husband is Navy, and my son is serving on a Virginia Class submarine deployed overseas and he will be returning home in about a month. I am very happy to be representing veterans from Colorado Springs.

When I mentioned that I was being appointed to this Board, I had several comments that veterans wanted to get help with the VA. I am proud of the opportunity to advocate for veterans, for healthcare issues and particularly for women's issues. The women's issues are a little different from men's issues. I am very happy to be on Board.

Robby Robinson: Welcome Wendy to the Board.

Chris Holden: I have been a Board member for just over one year. I am honored to serve on this Board. I have 25 ½ years in the Army. Wendy, I will agree with you 364 days of the year but

when the Army/Navy game comes around then I will have to disagree. I enjoy living in Colorado Springs. I also have 2 daughters that also live in Colorado Springs. I work for Exelis Corporation, a defense contractor, in business development. I will get the opportunity to travel next week to Germany, Italy, Qatar, and Egypt, so I am looking forward to that trip.

Robby Robinson: Chris, did you have the opportunity to go with Governor Hickenlooper to the ceremony yesterday? Would you comment on that?

Chris Holden: It was a true honor watching a whole dozen of our veterans participate and receive their apprenticeship certificates. Governor Hickenlooper attended the Veterans in Piping graduation ceremony. It was an honor to see 14 veterans graduate from the apprenticeship program. The Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union No. 58 works in partnership to help see these veterans successfully complete their apprenticeship and get placed for jobs to transition to after being in the military. Members of the veterans' families were all there and it was very moving. There were representatives there from Fort Carson were also in attendance, Mike Webb and Shelly Anderson. There were some nice comments from the Governor. It was very well done and I am proud of these veterans.

Dana Niemela: Hi, I am Dana Niemela. I am a Navy veteran since 2005. I currently run a veterans employment program for the city of Denver to help veterans get back to work and hopefully stay there. This is my third year on the Board and I am really happy to be here. Because of what I do in the city, I am also on the planning committee for the VA Community Mental Health Summit. This is a good opportunity to bring in community partners with the VA. It is my hope that what we have done on the Board and with the Veterans Trust Fund and Veterans Assistance Grant, we will be able to draw some of the grantees into that conversation. I think that at our last Board meeting or just before that, Mayor Hancock signed on to the Mayor's Challenge to end veterans' homelessness. I have been working on veterans' homeless issues with the city and county of Denver with a variety of partners: the VFW, city of Denver, the VA, the Department of Human Services, and a bunch of non-profit partners that are working to end veterans' homelessness. This serves well for Denver and Colorado on a national map in addition to, being part of the *25 Cities Initiative*, which is the national program to create coordinated entry. This means getting a lot of the people who work in homelessness to work together and on the same page.
Thank you.

Robby Robinson: Thank you Dana. I am Robby Robinson. I am a 28 year Infantryman and I am the Board Chairman.

Rene Simard: I think I am the only Air Force guy. I served 28 years in the Air Force and was Command Chief at Buckley. I currently work at the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and serve as vice president there. I live in Aurora, but I am from New England originally, sorry Wendy, so I am a Red Sox fan. Like Chris, I have served just over one year on the Board. It is an honor to be here.

Bill Conroy: Bill Conroy, Vietnam Veteran, 11B10 and am a combat disabled veteran. I knocked around a few years with different organizations. I have been the State Director for 6 years; my old boss Robby hired me. This will be my last Board Meeting because I am retiring. This month it will be 39 ½ years serving veterans in the State of Colorado.

Dana Niemela: Congratulations!

Ray Z. Dissinger: I am Ray Z. I am the administrator for the Colorado Veterans Trust Fund Grant. I spent 40 years and 5 days for pay in the military. Altogether, I have spent 44 years serving either in the Military or for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. I feel my job is to make certain that the money that comes from the grant goes to the veteran in need with the least difficulty or barriers possible. Like I told the Legislative Audit Committee, they asked me to tighten up the way we are looking at things and I told them, I will tighten them as loose as I can. If it is not fraud, waste, or abuse, then I will try my best to make sure the money gets to the very, very proud, patriotic, hard-working volunteer individuals out there administering the Veterans Trust Fund. Thank you. It has been a privilege to serve.

Gail Hoagland: I am the Veterans Assistant Grant Administrator and this is my 2nd week. I am very humbled and honored to be here and to serve Veterans.

Richard Sandrock: Richard Sandrock, Governor's Office. I served with the Pennsylvania Air National Guard for 6 years. I served 4 years active duty field artillery in the Army. I spent a year in Korea and a year in Iraq. I am happy to be at the Governor's Office getting focused, where I spend at least 40% of my time on veterans' issues.

Brian Van Driel: I am not a veteran but my father was in World War II. He landed at Normandy and he was at the Battle of the Bulge. He also helped to liberate Buchenwald. When he came home, he never spoke a word about it. Because of that I have had not just a curiosity but also a soft spot for veterans. I am thrilled to be in this position where I can assist veterans every day.

Frank McCurdy: I spent 22 years as an Air Force Fighter Pilot and representing UVC.

Ray Z. Dissinger: I have a quick alibi, for those of you who have to deal with my eccentricities; 20 years in service was spent in special ops.

Robby Robinson: I want to take a minute on behalf of the Board, and certainly myself, to honor Bill Conroy's service. I happen to know that 6 ½ years ago, the Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs had some serious problems, personnel problems, processing problems, I won't go into detail. When the previous director of the DMVA retired and we went out and did a search for a new director. A lot of people applied, thankfully, we selected Bill Conroy. Bill Conroy had the respect of most of the Veterans Service Organizations and most of the Veterans Service Officers from around the state. He was known as one of the best that there are and when he took over that Division within 6 months he had completely turned it around. All the people had faith in his knowledge, his expertise, and his leadership. The Division of Veterans Affairs, in my humble

view, has emerged as premier organization in the state to file veterans' claims. That is in total part due to Bill Conroy's leadership and we are seriously going to miss him. In hope that from his mountain home, he will still remember us and involve himself in veterans' affairs and not completely rest on his laurels, which are well deserved. I think the Board needs to be on record as expressing our deep appreciation for the service that Bill has rendered. Not only as the Division Director but for the 40 plus years he has served Veterans. Universally accepted, he is probably the best in the state.

Bill Conroy: Thank you.

Applause all around.

Reports

Governor's Office

Richard Sandrock: Let me just expand a bit on the event Chris talked about attending yesterday. The Governor and I had the opportunity to go the Veterans in Piping graduation. I talked to the union guys, the local pipefitter guys and also the union leadership of the Local 58. One of the things of great importance was they were specifically going after combat arms guys. If a guy joins the military and becomes a medic then he gets out and becomes an EMT or if he goes in engineering, then they get out and go into the engineering fields. But what happens to the combat arms guys, when they get out, like me I had to get a Master's Degree. They are targeting these combat arms guys, specifically infantry, artillery, and armor; who do wonderful things in Iraq or Afghanistan but when they get out and come home, some HR person looks at their resume and says I don't know what this person is, so they have a hard time finding employment. I thought that was an outstanding thing, which the union knows about that, and they are specifically targeting the combat arms guys when they were looking for veterans to be in the apprenticeship program with the help of the folks from the Post.

At first the Senior NCO leadership at Ft. Carson was very skeptical. When you have 20 to 30 guys who are doing a grass cutting detail, 10 guys at the range, or on some other detail like picking up cigarette butts then two of the guys are going to go off to a training class and not help out the company, it made them think this would not work. Even though they were skeptical, through education and the backing from the head Command Sergeant Major at Fort Carson behind this program, then that started to filter down to senior NCO's; they have been educated and are now supportive of this program. They were able to put together this pipefitter class. I wanted to let you know that I ensured that the Governor knows that during the last 3-4 months this class has been their duty station. They are getting paid by the Army or the Marine Corps to go to training. So instead of cutting grass or picking up rocks they can go to this class. When they exit the Army, they have their certificate and are on their way to a job. It is not a fancy program where it says you are trained to do something now good luck. They leave with their DD214 and their certificate and the next week start working. So, the Governor understands the importance of that. The Governor is on his way to the National Governor's Association Conference and he has the names of the soldiers who will be going to other states. I

think 14 graduated, 3 are staying here in Colorado, and the other 11 are going to other states. He has the lists and any other Governor's knows in the other states, he will let them know that in Colorado we have young men who have been trained and they are returning to their states ready to work as pipefitters. He will pass their information on to the Governors of the states where these soldiers are moving and hopefully send some guys our way. That is all that I have, any questions?

Robby Robinson: What goes around comes around. When I was one of those frustrated First Lieutenants in the Army I had eight guys who were assigned to my platoon who were not in my platoon because they were in Project Transition being paid by the Army for their last 6-8 weeks. They were being paid to train in local civilian industry so that way when they went from the Army they would have a trade. This was during the Vietnam War. This is in some ways a reinvention of that, so what goes around comes around. It only took about 45 years or so. It was a great program, and hopefully this program now will catch on. So it has come back around full circle.

Richard Sandrock: The Governor is very much behind it. I think it is a great program and if there is anything the Board can do to help sustain it, to help their efforts so that we don't have to wait 40 years again, I would advise that.

Dana Niemela: I work in employing veterans and many of the veterans I work with have backgrounds in construction and trade. But they are older and they don't want to do that kind of work anymore. What we see is a real gap; there is a lack of interest with veterans of current conflicts of going into construction industries. These are lucrative opportunities and they are good pay. How do we connect that, is there a way that we can help to spread the word to get more of the people who are currently separating from the military to consider this as an option?

Richard Sandrock: I would say yes. As far as I know in Colorado, the only place that this is happening is at Fort Carson. There is nothing at all at Buckley AFB, nothing at Peterson AFB, or the National Guard, or any of the other bases; this could be useful to them. If you look at Fort Carson, of the 14 that graduated, 3 stayed in Colorado. What I see at Fort Carson is an actually small percentage of these guys are getting out and staying in Colorado. So any of the other points of contact that you guys have, Buckley AFB, the National Guard, the Air National Guard, or any of the other smaller military bases, if you could spread the word to, that would help. You need the buy-in of the posts. It is all going to come down to the unit paperwork, is the union going to pay for it, is the instructor available, and is the E-8 or E-9 at that unit going to allow 2 or 3 guys to leave his unit to go train and get paid for that?

Robby Robinson: The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, do they have the authority to let someone go to training on a day-to-day basis while they are on duty? That may require something higher than a local commander to make that decision.

Richard Sandrock: The Department of Labor made individual MOAS's (Memorandums of Agreement) with these individual posts to make this happen. They are doing this at Fort Carson, Joint Base Lewis-McCord, and Camp Pendleton are the three bases where they are doing this type of program. The Department of Labor and the International Union came in and spoke with the commanders. The commanders said, "Roger, this is a good ideal; make it happen, this is allowed on our posts."

Robby Robinson: I know this was a nationwide program back when Project Transition happened.

Wendy Chiado: The Air Force is going through a big Reduction in Force (RIF) right now. That is going to impact a significant amount of the population down in Colorado Springs. It is not just the young kids who enlisted, but a lot of the officers, it is just all of the sudden, you know?

Bill Conroy: Richard, did you say only 3 were going to stay in Colorado?

Richard Sandrock: Yes, the way it works is it is almost like the military, these service members get to choose their duty station after the program. Out of the 14 who graduated from the program last night, 3 are from Colorado. The other 11 are mostly staff sergeants, one is a Chief Warrant Officer, and these 11 are not from Colorado so they decided to return home to work in their home communities.

Bill Conroy: When I give the TAP briefings out at Buckley, I always ask if they will be staying in Colorado. Of a class of about 40-50 there are usually 70% to 80% who raise their hands to say they are staying in Colorado. I just find it odd that only 3 out of the 11 are staying in Colorado, but jobs probably drive those numbers.

Richard Sandrock: Right, it is a guaranteed job, so these guys may have their union sponsor them from South Carolina and it is a guaranteed job with their certified apprenticeship when they go home to South Carolina. So if they can get a job in say Milwaukee, then they take it so they will have work.

Rene Simard: The Aurora Defense Counsel meets once a month we get representatives all of their senior officers, and Buckley, too. So this may be a good place to provide some education about the program to representatives of the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard leadership in that forum. So, that may be an opportunity to try and get that word out.

Richard Sandrock: Chris, what do you think? Do you think that would be something that Mike or his supervisor would want to participate in?

Chris Holden: They are expanding the program to Fort Riley, at some other posts and looking for other places to expand. Wendy and I talked about holding a meeting in Colorado Springs. Mike Webb is the point of contact on that.

Rene Simard: We hold a meeting in August, so I will send a poster to you.

Dana Niemela: Do you think that the state AFL/CIO director or teamsters would be a good person to talk to expand beyond singular trades? So it is not just local pipefitters in Colorado Springs doing it but you've got pipefitters, electricians, carpenters, and other trades.

Chris Holden: We were contacted by the Local Pipefitters Union #58, but if the AFL/CIO director knows of other unions that would be willing to sponsor training, it would be worth considering.

Richard Sandrock: The organizers have self-identified the bottleneck with having only a pipefitters program. Because it is just the UA, the pipefitters, they only have only so much money to provide for these classes so they can only do a class of 16 here and at two other bases every eighteen weeks and then they go back through the cycle. If other trades were brought in, then it would provide more opportunity. One thing you have to look out for, is the reason this program is so successful is they know there is a nationwide shortage of pipefitters so that is why this union is making this investment now so they have more trained pipefitters down the line. If there is a union that is good on membership they may not be so interested in this, but if it is to their benefit to spend that 2% now then it will be a big investment down the line.

DMVA- Mickey Hunt called to say he would be late due to traffic.

Veterans Trust Fund

Ray Z. Dissinger: For July, the discussion of Conflict of Interest statement is on the list. You should have all received and signed a Conflict of Interest statement. After talking with some people, I am going to implement a new procedure. I will scan everything, send it out, and have you email it back with your signature. I will revise the form so the form can be signed as reviewed and explain it in the email. That way, I will know exactly what I have each time, if anybody wants a copy, I can send them one and they can update it as changes occur. Last year, we are closing out a couple of accounts. We are looking at the possibility that we will have to do collection letter on one of the Post. I am hoping that they are just really behind resolving everything. I have sent emails, voice mails, letters, and we still need to collect \$3,750. I am looking to wrap things up.

Robby Robinson: Roughly, how much has not been spent?

Ray Z. Dissinger: There was approximately \$80K-\$100K. Some of that, a couple of the posts had 2 grants and they had more money than they were able to expend. I told them to expend the one year money first.

Robby Robinson: About 10% did not get expended?

Ray Z. Dissinger: Yes, approximately about 10% did not get expended. But it rolls back in.

Discussion about remaining amount and circumstances that caused grantees not to be able to expend the money.

Ray Z. Dissinger: One thing, I like to make sure everyone has my email address, my phone number, and my personal cell phone number. If a question comes up about a grant, then please give me a call so I can look at it and provide an answer.

For 14/15, for the first time that I know, we have some grants have been authorized as of 1 July to have money expended against. For next year, if it is possible to move the May meeting up, then as soon as the Long Bill is signed, we can get the authorization process moving. So theoretically we would have more of the grant money available by 1 July instead of like in the past at the end of August, September, even October. Although it would be mid-July before money can move. Advances may take a while, but if we can cut down the turnover time, it would help them out. The one thing I would have to make clear is that although they would have authority to spend, it would probably still be the middle of July or so, because no matter what, it has to be entered into the accounting system before the money can actually move. So reimbursement would be authorized to be expended but advances would still take a while. But we have really cut down over time from one year to the next, in the amount of time it takes to have the contract out there. Are there any questions?

Veterans Assistance Grant

Bill Conroy: The Veterans Assistance Grant Committee met in June. Robby Robinson, Dana Niemela, Myself, Mr. Kennedy, and Gail was able to attend. We are very excited to have Gail and her introduction was modest. She teaches grant writing at Regis College so she where she is new to us, she is certainly no new to the process. Ray is training her, but she is a fast learner. She just has to learn the business side and she is doing a great job.

Of the \$2,140,186 funds requested, we have recommended \$970,000 in grants. I think it was a good meeting. The Adjutant General approved our recommendations. I did receive a couple of phone calls. We had to deny four grants. One was at the VFW Post in Las Animas, a request for a vehicle and there was some question as to who would provide insurance and maintenance of the vehicle, so we felt it needed to be rewritten and sent back to the Veterans Trust Fund. The other three grants that were denied should not have come to us but should have gone to the Veterans Trust Fund originally. Gail has sent the letters out explaining why they were denied and Ray is helping her with that. They are going to both be on the same piece of paper, so to speak. I think this will be a smoother transition. Do you have any questions?

Robby Robinson: Let me address that issue. For the Veterans Trust Fund if the recipient does not use the money then it rolls back into the Veterans Trust Fund itself. We are appropriated money every year out of the new money and the interest that is in the Trust Fund itself, (about \$4.7M), but we also get the interest on the principal in the fund. While the new money may not all get spent that year, say 10% of the money that doesn't get expended it, it goes back to the Trust Fund and gets re-appropriated. The question is this new money, the Veterans Assistance Grant, is it the same based on the law that they passed?

The statute reads, “Hereby created veterans assistance grant program cash fund referred to in this section as the “fund.” Monies are appropriated to the fund by the general assembly. Those monies are subject to annual appropriation and direct costs can be pulled out up to 5%. The State Treasurer shall credit any interests and income derived from the deposit and investment of the monies into the fund. Any unexpended and unencumbered monies at the end of the fiscal year shall remain in the fund and shall not be credited to any other fund. Except that any money remaining in the year 2024 shall revert to the general fund.”

Gregg Parker is the person to talk to find out if that is the case, but that language is the same as the language that authorized yours. The money won’t be lost if somebody does not expend it. The reference on that is Colorado Revised Statute Section 28-5-712.

Discussion about money intended for one VSO (Veteran Service Organization) if they did not need it could it be spent to help another VSO.

Ray Z. Dissinger: For the Veteran Service Organization, it does not matter where the money is spent as long as it is spent for the same purpose to meet the requirements of the contract. If they don’t use it all, then it rolls back in for next year and it comes back out as grants. You don’t transfer the money to Haxtun or any other parties.

Robby Robinson: The issue there, and we deal with it every year, is it looks like someone is not able to spend the money. The question is that if in April that we have money unexpended, can we take it back and give it to someone else? The answer to that is in theory, yes it could happen but practically no, because it is a contract with that agency. The current contract has to be abrogated and then we would have to write a new contract. You are not going to get that done because it is the end of the fiscal year. Also, the other place we can use unexpended money is it can be used straight for Division of Veterans Affairs operations, for the State Veterans Community Living Centers, and for the State Cemetery which we have used on numerous occasions.

Duane Dailey: Is the Veterans Assistance Grant synonymous with the One Year Grant?

Robby Robinson: Yes, and we have discussed that we need to change it somehow to avoid confusion, by changing color of the forms and with a consistent title. Okay, Kathleen is not here so we won’t have an update on the State Veterans Community Living Centers.

Discussion/Action

Conflict of Interest and Ethics

Robby Robinson: First, we need to discuss Conflict of Interest and Ethics. I do not know if the new board members had an opportunity to review the results of the Audit, but they had a lot of suggestions on things we were doing right and doing wrong. One of the things we are involved with is the fact that we have nearly \$2M in grants to give out every year. We do not give out the money on the Veterans Assistance Grant. We are asked to sit on the committee but the

Adjutant General decides and authorizes the money primarily on the recommendation of the Deputy and Bill. But we sit in and one reason we sit in is so we don't duplicate the money between the two grants. For the Veterans Trust Fund, we do make the decision on the grants. From the review of the audit, it is important that we have full disclosure and sign the Conflict of Interest Statement every year and their point was that things change, so we need to report any changes in membership during the year. All of us tend to be members of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legions, or Disabled Veterans Association (DAV), and looking at grants and who approves them it appears to be a conflict of interest. In the revised By-laws, it is not necessarily a conflict of interest to be associated with an organization, but if you are in a position of leadership or a person of influence active in the chapter that is asking for money, then it would be a conflict of interest. When that organization comes up for grant consideration in the discussion, then you must recuse yourself and let those remaining decide on the grant request. If you are just a member but not actively in leadership or a position of influence then it would not be a conflict of interest. This happened once, but the Auditors wanted it tightened up. The revised by-laws tightened up the reporting and accountability. We were supposed to have someone from the Governor's Office to training on Conflict of Interest and Ethics, but she is not going to be here. But I think we can cover it today so everyone has an understanding of what is required. What was discussed before I arrived is that Ray is going to send out the form and whenever it changes. If you get elected as president of some post, or if you join another organization, then you have to disclose that.

Duane Dailey: Do we need to have an alternate when that conflict happens; say when I am on the Governor's Grant Sub-committee do we need to have an alternate to fill in for us?

Robby Robinson: No, you just recuse yourself, and leave the room. Do I detect that you are interested for the Grant Committee when that comes around?

Dana Niemela: A good example of conflict of interest is that of our involvement in VFW Post #1. Both Robby and I are both members of that Post. Most people don't know that Robby is even a member, and I on the other hand have done an extraordinary amount of outreach on behalf of Post 1. I serve on several committees, and have chaired a committee and most in the organization would consider me in a position of influence or leadership regardless of the title. So whenever VFW Post #1 applies for funds, I stay out of the conversation, I recuse myself and leave the room. Robby does not have that much involvement in the organization compared to the perception of my involvement. With one of us leaving, that way a quorum still exists for the voting to take place, so there is not a need to have an alternate be involved in that discussion.

Robby Robinson: The other thing is ethics and government. I know that new appointees we all received one of these in our packet, Amendment 41. Amendment 41: The Standards of Conduct in Government. Basically, it says we can't gifts, grants, or donations to exceed \$50.00 a year. I think what they are saying, however, and I am not a lawyer, is conduct yourselves in accordance with this to ensure propriety and don't accept gifts, grants, or donations. I would offer this we are being public officers in accordance with this particular act. We ought to conduct ourselves as required of public officers. However, the technicality here is that public

officers do not include: a member of the general assembly, a member of the judiciary, or local public official, or any member of a board, counsel, or committee who received no compensation other than per diem, or reimbursement for reasonable expenses, which tells me we are not covered by this, so I am curious as to why I received it. As I read that, it says I am not a public officer. However, I think the intent is that we conduct ourselves as if we were public officers. I think that is what the Governor's Office or Romaine's intent is that we conduct ourselves as if we were public officers, even though the law says as I read it that we are not public officers. I will get some clarification on that before our next meeting.

Ray Z. Dissinger: In the past that is the way it was addressed. It said that you would act in accordance of the executive order.

Robby Robinson: That is not the executive order. This is Amendment 41 from the State Constitution. That may be what we are missing, the executive order, even though you are not a public officer, I want you to be honest. The next one is, Open Meeting Requirements of the Sunshine Law. We have to be aware of that it is primarily for the Division and whoever does the agenda. Every meeting has to be announced on the website and there must be 24 hours' notice for a meeting. The difficult thing is that everything has to be announced. The meeting is also announced through the distribution list. The old by-laws said we could call a meeting anytime we wanted to, but we can't now we have to give notice. It also states the requirements for executive session. The requirements for an executive session are we have to state what we are going to do, the reason for the executive session i.e., privacy, embarrassment, etc. and take a vote. It takes a two-thirds majority to call an Executive Session and there must be an electronic record of it.

The other thing is if we have electronic voting. If we have a discussion on the internet, then it brings up another issue. Any meeting between two Board members constitutes a public meeting. This also applies to any discussion on the internet where two members are exchanging information; whoever initiates that would have to give 24 hour notice of a meeting so we can put it on the internet. So as you can imagine, there will not be much voting in that format. You probably won't see very much discussion by email because carrying that out under the Sunshine law makes it very, very complicated. We haven't advertised when that took place so people did not know when we were meeting and also we would need to do that with the Grant Committee Meeting. We never have any people at those. They said we need to make people aware that it is open to the public. If you go through what I call the condensed form of the Audit Results, the recommendations and our response to it, we will be tracking that as we go along because we have some deadlines to meet in November. Are there any questions?

Grants for Funeral Detail Purchase (VFW 2411)

Robby Robinson: We need to discuss the grants for purchase for funeral detail purposes for VFW 2411. The VFW 2411 asked that grant money be allowed to be used to purchase funeral detail uniforms. There was a question as to why we did not allow the purchase of the uniforms for the funeral detail for honor guards. They have asked that we allow it and perhaps restrict requests for posts that perform ceremonies at the Veteran Cemeteries in Fort Logan and Fort

Lyon. Right now, we say no, that the grants should not be used to purchase the uniforms. Is there any discussion?

Ray Z. Dissinger: I believe we should continue to say no. This is my reason. We have well-over twice the requests for veterans' health and well-being needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and basic needs than funds available. I think it is a very important function that they do. I think using the money to support veterans for food, clothing, shelter, and their needs should take precedence over a funeral detail. Right now, they are being supported, not by us, but they are being supported. I think we could put it there as a priority but I don't think it would ever make it to the top of the list. Another thing is what if they come in and say; now we are going to do tributes. So, as a grant administrator and looking at the amount of money we have and where it is going, and the priorities of the Board, I do not think that we should allow it. That is my opinion.

Dana Niemela: I concur with you, Ray. I see the Veterans' Trust Fund as a direct service to veterans. I don't see this as a direct service to veterans. I do understand the need for I see the ceremonial detail in any regard of the individual posts should be the responsibility of that individual post to manage.

Rene Simard: I don't know how you could restrict it. They could say it is for the National Cemetery for now but what would be next?

Discussion of uniforms for ceremonial details, the changing of members of honor guards, and prioritizing the needs of veterans.

Bill Conroy: Another thing it brings up is what is considered part of the honor guard uniform funeral detail is a rifle. I don't think we really want to be a part of that, do we? I don't think we want to get into that for any reason.

Robby Robinson: Should we officially vote on it? Do I have a motion?

Duane Dailey: I would make a motion to the Chair to deny that request for funding for uniforms for honor guards.

Dana Niemela: I second that motion.

Robby Robinson: Any discussion?

Ray Z. Dissinger: I know I am not part of the Board, but I think part of the motion should say that the Board's guidance remains the same – where we specifically say none of those will be included.

Robby Robinson: Would you accept an amendment to the motion to state, current guidance remain in effect that we do not allow the purchase of uniforms for honor guards?

Duane Dailey: I would agree with that amendment.

Robby Robinson: So the restated motion that we will vote on is “There is no change in current policy. We will not fund uniforms for funeral details.”

All in favor say aye? Are there any opposed? Okay, that makes it pass **unanimously**.

Grants for purchase of cell phones for drivers (DAV- Jeremy Miller, VSO Prowers County)

Robby Robinson: As a matter of policy, we do not purchase cell phones. We had a request for the purchase of cell phones for the drivers and we have not allowed them to purchase cell phones with grant money.

Ray Z. Dissinger: In the past, in some cases we have allowed it for safety. They are volunteers and there is a lot of coordination when you have to run your transportation program. I have allowed it because of safety.

Bill Conroy: I am curious about the rural area, if Duane has any thoughts on that. We are talking about drivers in rural areas wanting cell phones to use for their transportation to the VA Hospitals.

Duane Dailey: I would agree that they need communication in rural areas, though much of mountain Colorado you don't have service. I would be a little more interested if we could present a stipend if there are any additional charges on their phones? Aren't most services now almost unlimited?

Ray Z. Dissinger: I think we could put out guidance that we are not going to provide that service anymore unless you come in with a letter stating that as an exception to policy that shows that there is a need. I think they need to clarify the need in a grant of exactly what the stipend would be used for like we did with employment transportation in Aurora.

Robby Robinson: It gets to be fairly expensive for individual drivers I would think. For example, if you are in say, Pumpkin Corner, then you will not necessarily get reliable cell phone coverage. How do you control that? I understand the need for safety but that does not necessarily provide it in eastern Colorado.

Dana Niemela: The Veterans Trust Fund has to do with direct services for veterans. I don't see this as a direct service to veterans. I do understand the need for the communication also coming from the rural area going to the VA hospital. It doesn't mean that the drivers should not have a cell phone. On the flip side, I see your point, that individual cell phones cost a lot more, I pay \$99 every month with unlimited minutes, unlimited text. I use it for my volunteer services for the organizations I am serving. I don't ask for reimbursement for my cell phone. With that said, as a volunteer for the organization, they incur an undue charge for their volunteer duties, for example, if they are getting roaming charges. I would think they could go

to the organizations, like DAV has direct services and ask for reimbursement for additional charges.

Ray Z. Dissinger: I do not take and count the individual hours that a driver makes. They get \$46 per day reimbursement.

I think we could deny cell phone period and the individuals who are providing the volunteer driving, get plenty of money to cover a cell phone.

Robby Robinson: Earlier, you said if they give full justification you would consider it.

Ray Z. Dissinger: Only on an exceptional basis and then you would need to do a full write up to show justification or need. They would need to tell me exactly what you need, why you need it, and those that really, really do need it will do that exception.

Robby Robinson: Does anybody have a motion to that effect?

Dana Niemela: I move that we do not allow the funds to go toward the purchase of cell phones for drivers.

Chris Holden: I second that motion.

Robby Robinson: Any discussion?

Duane Dailey: Where I am at we are in Verizon county and there are roaming charges but not necessarily good coverage. Once you leave Routt County then you don't get any service until you get to Steamboat. If we were to do an exception, then I would want more details.

Robby Robinson: Any further discussion? The vote is on no money allowed for the purchase of cell phones for drivers. All in favor say aye? Any opposed? That was unanimous.

Mickey Hunt arrived at 10:14am.

Election of Vice Chairman to replace Bobick

Robby Robinson: Jay Bobick had served two terms on the Board and he was the Vice Chairman so now we need to fill this position. By the by-laws, we elect officers for the Board every two years. I am not saying this is how it is, but the precedent is that the Vice Chairman typically becomes the Chairman. So I would like to open the floor for any nominations for the position of Vice Chairman to serve the remainder of Jay's term which is until next June?

Rene Simard: I nominate Dana Niemela to be Vice Chairman.

Chris Holden: I second that nomination.

Robby Robinson: Any other nominations for Vice Chair? All in favor of Dana for Vice Chairman say aye. Any opposed? That is **unanimous**.
Now that leaves a vacancy for the position of Secretary. Now we need to nominate someone for Secretary. I had heard a rumor that Rene wanted to be the Secretary.

Rene Simard: Someone asked me if I were offered a nomination then would I accept it, and I said I would.

Robby Robinson: Will you accept the nomination of Board Secretary, Rene?

Rene Simard: Yes.

Robby Robinson: Okay, so Rene is nominated for Secretary. Are there any other nominations? All in favor say aye? Are there any opposed? So, that is a **unanimous** vote and Rene is the new Board secretary.

Ray Z. Dissinger: I would like to say, "thank you," to the Board for allowing me to provide input and listening to it. I know I don't have a decision or vote but I really appreciate having the opportunity to provide my opinion.

Discussion

Robby Robinson: I think you have met Duane Dailey and Wendy Chiado. Mickey is the Deputy Directory of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. He works for General Edwards who is the Executive Director of the Department. Part of that Department is the Division of Veterans Affairs, with Bill, the other part is the Civil Air Patrol, with basically one person, and the third part is the Division of the National Guard which is the Air Guard and the Army Guard in the state of Colorado. Mickey, any updates with DMVA?

DMVA

Mickey Hunt: Yesterday I was down in Alamosa with Colorado Serves a couple of months ago doing a presentation on PC3 (Patient Care Community Care) and the veterans down there asked Becca Montgomery to set up a facilitator to work with the VA. After that meeting, we met with Lynnette Roth and set up a PC3 meeting. There were PC3 Representatives there from Ohio, Texas, and from Denver to meet with the providers down there. PC3 is basically like Health One where providers have to request to sign up on their Health One benefits and then they have to be validated. This is a lengthy process to get on the list and it takes 3-6 months. Here's the bad news, if they are chosen to sign up and get on the list, then they are paid at 20% less than Medicare. There were providers in Alamosa that said they will sign up and said they would take a loss in order to serve the veterans in their community. I talked to the PC3 people and to the VA and I told them to take this message to their senior leadership that need to get this up to Medicare Standards. Urban doctors only take about 22% of the VA patients. We need to make

communities more aware of this because when they outsource this care they need to pay at least the Medicare standards.

Robby Robinson: I understand that we are talking about the VA outsourcing care.

Mickey Hunt: Yes, about outsourcing care. Right now, the veterans have the pyramid where they can get health care services starting with the VA Hospital, CBOC, and then it goes down, and this is the last level the outsourced care, but due to the large volume of veterans needing care, it is still in demand.

Bill Conroy: It used to be before this came on board, it is fee-based, and then I went to the primary care doctor and asked if I have back surgery. If they want me to do physical therapy two days a week for three, then makes no sense if I pay the fee to see the private doctor and am paying Medicare rates. Under the new program, the hospital signed up for it ahead of time to participate in this program. I know Lynette told us it would be 10% but now it has gone up to 20%. That is horrible.

Mickey Hunt: It is horrible. If they don't sign up for PC3 in Alamosa, then the veterans will have to go back to Pueblo for care. Many of the veterans are being seen for mental health, I just did that drive and if you have PTSD, you don't need to be driving over La Veta Pass in the wintertime. That is a horrible way to treat our veterans in our rural areas, and I continue to be an advocate for them. Next week I have been invited to the Grand Junction Mental Health Summit. I have been asked to speak for about 10 minutes about Colorado Serves and Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs to help them get a better understanding of what we are doing and to advocate for veterans in their city.

Discussion of budget proposals.

Mickey Hunt: I continue to travel to town meetings through the state trying to get to more rural areas. General Edwards continues to travel to Washington, D.C. looking at all the changes coming up.

Chris Holden: What are some of those changes as far as National Guard?

Mickey Hunt: A few years ago, the Army and the Army National Guard were really at odds as far as force structure change. But there have been changes and they are now trying to balance the forces, with input from the Army National Guard specifically. General Edwards and the Florida TAG are discussing force structure changes. The Air Force the Reserve components will actually come up a little bit then the Active component will go down. It will be a better balance because the Reserve components are a great value for the impact. Congress is proposing a study to propose what should be done and that will delay some of the changes. The Army has proposed some cuts that would be battalion sized, like at Fort Carson, it would potentially be about 16,000 combined military and civilian jobs. There will be cuts and we know they are coming. We want them to keep the forces balanced.

Report from Senator Udall's Office

Brian Van Driel: In the years of "Don't ask, Don't tell" there were approximately 13,000 military members discharged from Active Duty Military based on their sexual orientation. They were kind of left in little bit of a limbo because of their DD214 said they were "honorable" but their reenlistment codes said they were ineligible for reenlistment. They are eligible for a discharge status upgrade. In most cases, it is submitted to the Board for Correction of Military Records, but it never goes through the Board it is done administratively. The only exceptions to that would be if there is a secondary reason not related to the Board decision. If they went AWOL but went AWOL because they were being harassed then it would still go to the Board and they still might get that discharge upgrade. If it is the only reason they were discharged, then it is basically rubber-stamped. This is huge because not only does it makes them all eligible for VA health care benefits but also eligible for the G.I. Bill. Under the G.I. Bill, of course, they have 15 years to use their benefits. The clock resets to the date of the updated discharge, so we need to get the word out. This is a very difficult constituency to reach because people are out there afraid to come in and they don't know they are eligible for this.

Robby Robinson: The Education Summit would be a good place to help get the word out.

Rene Simard: Have you tried the Community Colleges?

Discussion of Discharges, DD214's, and ways to find veterans to educate them that they have the right to upgrade their discharges if they were forced out of the military based on sexual orientation.

Brian Van Driel: It all goes to the Board for Correction of Military Records. These will be done administratively. Thank you for helping to get the word out. Any questions?

Mickey Hunt: The General will be doing his nursing home visits on 5-6th of August. Greg Dorman will be the point of contact on that trip if you are interested in going. General Edwards takes 2 Blackhawk helicopters to visit three nursing homes. On one day, he will visit Homelake and Florence and then the next day, he will visit Rifle and Fitzsimmons. They land the helicopters right on the property and the residents love it. We like to see interest and if any members of the Board want to go we will try to get them on.

I like to pick out one or two residents and visit with them. Last time, I found a widow of a veteran sitting off to herself and at first she told me the sad stories of how she missed her husband. After I had listened and talked to her for a while, she started telling me the happier stories and we laughed together. I don't think it was me, but it was the company that lifted her spirits. The staff tells us that the energy level is up for at least 3-4 weeks after a visit.

Thank you.

Future Meetings

No CBVA Meeting in August

September Meeting TBA (Considering either Durango or Grand Junction.)

Traditional meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of the Month – Discussion of changing the meeting to Monday or Friday

Old Business

Duane Dailey: For ½ term CVSO's have you had a discussion with the CCI's (Colorado Counties, Inc.) where the Colorado County Commissioners meet for their annual meeting, I think it will be in Colorado Springs at the Four Seasons this year. They typically meet in the legislative session.

Mickey Hunt: I have not been invited.

Bill Conroy: We have been trying to get an invite for years.

Duane Dailey: May I have permission to get an in road to that meeting?

Robby Robinson: That would be good.

Discussion of rural Colorado and the need to educate on what we do.

Dana Niemela: I presented to the City of Denver last week, we are bringing in \$100M in Education benefits, in VA benefits, in VA Medical benefits, and home loans, etc. this makes a big difference in how they view what we do when they realize the impact on their communities.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20am.

