

Approved 09OCT2014

Board Minutes
September 19, 2014
Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
3848 S. Revere Parkway, Centennial, Colorado 80112

Robby Robinson, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 0934 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.

There was no introduction of members as no guests were present.

Board Members Present:

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

DMVA Staff Present:

Mickey Hunt, DMVA, Deputy Director
Ray Z. Dissinger, VTF Administrator
Reuben Mestas, CDVA Director
Tamara Edmond, CDVA Admin. Asst.
Gail Hoagland, DMVA VAG Administrator

Guests Present:

No Guests Present

Approval of Minutes from July 10, 2014

Unanimously accepted with amendments.

Board Member Comments

Kathleen Dunemn: No comments.

Duane Dailey: No comments.

Chris Holden: It's great to be back to the Board session. I missed you all.

Dana Niemela: This past Saturday was the Colorado Women's Veteran Annual Conference. It was the best attended ever, I think Mickey said there were 300 women veterans in attendance. I was a speaker so I did get to sit in on any of the other sessions. It was good to see everyone there very much engaged in networking with one another. I was one of the keynote speakers. I was there to motivate and inspire and based on the feedback it was right on target.

Chris Holden: Other than jobs and transition paperwork with the VA, was there anything new?

Dana Niemela: They had a seminar on financial planning and a seminar on well-being and self-care. And they also had a sponsorship from the Matthew Morris Salon. They conducted sessions on make-up, hair, and dressing for interviews. The overall theme was, "Path to Self-Sufficiency" highlighting entrepreneurship. There was quite a significant theme around entrepreneurship.

Robby Robinson: Did you have anyone there, Ben?

Reuben Mestas: We had Angela Jones representing our office there.

Robby Robinson: I have been gone for most of August. Did anyone attend the Veterans' Education Summit on August 4th? Did anybody go to that or have reports on its success? I had one thing from Izzy that was from Bill Hanna but I think it may be more directed to UVC (United Veteran's Committee). It was written to inform students about Legislative Initiatives. I did go to a candidate's forum. The Lt. Governor spoke on behalf of the Governor and he really gave a very good account about what the administration has done for Veterans. He included the two grants that this Board is involved in and acknowledged the fact that the Veteran's Assistance Grant was put into statute. Somebody from this Department must have briefed him very well.

Mickey Hunt: Richard Sandrock writes for the Governor and he updates him on Veterans' legislation.

Robby Robinson: Richard is off in Eastern Colorado. He sent a note. They are doing some event, Ride the Plains, so he will not be here today.

Public Comments

There were no members of the public present.

Guest Presentations

There were no guests present.

Robby Robinson: If you guys have guests that you want or subjects you want addressed at the meeting, let me know then we can invite a guest to present.

Reports

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA)

Mickey Hunt: Next week, Major General Edwards and I and senior leadership will be taking a five day facilities tour visiting National Guard facilities. We are going across the state in Blackhaws, visiting some of our facilities. All State budget decision items are moving forward. Tomorrow morning I will be down at Fort Carson for the Land Component Commander Change of Command ceremony and tomorrow afternoon I will attend the Army Assistant Adjutant General Change of Command at Fort Carson at 1:00pm. On Sunday night, I will be at the retirement dinner for General Capazzolla. On October 19th, there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony for the ANG facility in North Colorado Springs. That is the last of the five readiness centers we have built and I think it is the largest. It will be 100% federally funded but it would not have been able to happen if we had not used the Veterans Trust Fund to help with the other four.

I have had two meetings with Bob McLaughlin, former Garrison Commander at Fort Carson about Mount Carmel Health, Wellness, and Community Center in Trinidad. I have an upcoming meeting with the owner of Phil Long Ford, Jay Cimino. I will be meeting with Bob McLaughlin, Jay Cimino, Randy Gradishar (Broncos) about opening a second site for Mount Carmel in Colorado Springs. It will serve veterans, military members, and their families of military members as a wellness center. It will be a gamut of resources for Veteran Service Officers and Post Service Officers. I have asked Dana Niemela to be a part of that meeting.

We did the nursing home visits. I met a 100 year old veteran at Camp Hill at the Rifle Community Living Center. I also met a 92 year old veteran at Fitzsimmons who had a B-24 hat on. He flew 38 sorties over Germany and was shot down on the 38th mission and then he was a prisoner of war (POW) for 9 months. The last 76 days as a POW, he was not allowed to change his clothes or take a shower. Sharp as a tack, though! So, that was good. Just this last week, I signed the contract to hire the contractor who is going to do the build out of the Grand Junction Cemetery. That project will be under way fairly quickly. We will be visiting the cemetery next Tuesday as part of the facilities tour.

Veterans Trust Fund (VTF)

Ray Z. Dissinger: We are moving along with normal administrative action for FY 14/15. It is still pretty early yet. Does anyone have any questions?

Veterans Assistance Grant (VAG)

Ben Mestas: Let me talk first about the Veterans Assistance Grant: all contracts have been signed and all are in the process of having the money executed. Of the original \$970,000 for the grant, \$907,000 remains and we have expended a little over \$54,000 out of the Veterans Assistance Grant. If you need a breakdown of expenditures, let me know and I will get it to you electronically.

Travel expenditures: In your packet you will find a copy of the travel expense form. Should anyone be traveling, normally, you would turn this form in to the DMVA accounting office for travel reimbursement. We used \$6,000 of CDVA budget to pay for part of the contractor's travel for the cemetery work so I have to really scrutinize the budget. If you are submitting for reimbursement of travel expenses, please give your travel expense form to Tami Edmond first and she will submit it to the accounting office. I just want to keep a better account of my budget.

On September 22nd, 2014, there will be two Town Hall meetings at the Denver VA Medical Clinic on Clermott.

- 8:30-10:00AM- VA representative to talk about benefits
- 10:00-11:00AM- VA Healthcare

They will be discussing some of the changes resulting from the nationwide audits. If you need more information about where we sit nationally with the health care scandal it will be addressed at that meeting.

The Grand Junction Cemetery is targeting with the initial contract ground water issues between November and April when the ground water is lower. The other priorities initially will be trying to keep the irrigation system going as to not negate the work done on the grounds, and prioritizing the columbariums. We have essentially run out of space in the columbariums. The goal is by December 30th to have at least 1 columbarium if not 2 up and running. Like Mickey was saying, the contract was signed earlier this week and they are ready to get to work.

Robby Robinson: Just from looking at Dick's report, it looks like they have run out of wall niches. 60% are electing to go to in-ground niches.

Dana Niemela: I do plan to attend the Town Hall meeting but will be there later, after 9:30am due to another meeting I have to be at. I just wanted to let you know.

SVCLC Update

Robby Robinson: Kathleen Dunemn is a member of the State Veterans Community Living Center Commission. By their statute our Board has to have a liaison to their Commission. The Governor's Office thought that our liaison should be someone other than a member of that Commission so I asked Jay Bobick if he would be willing to be the liaison. He agreed to do that.

Kathleen Dunemn: Since the SVCLC State Director is no longer there; Vickie Manley has stepped up and is managing both jobs until they can hire a new State Director. It is not an easy time of

year to hire State Directors so it may take some time. For a quick update, all of the State Veterans Community Living Centers are doing an excellent job. Some of you may have had the opportunity to visit them during your travels. We are listening to an outside contracted agency that provides them with metrics such as number of falls, number of patients on certain anti-psychotic medications, etc. Overall, they are doing a good job. All of the State Veterans Community Living Centers are in the black.

Rifle SVCLC census remains down and they have trouble keeping staff. Right next door, there is another Community Living Center that gives a lot of competition for staff because they will offer hiring bonuses. They have a lot of difficulty keeping their census up as well. The others are doing well. At Homelake SVCLC, apparently grant monies at one time funded the area between the facility and a domicile where residents sit and enjoy the outdoors. One of the domicile residents got in his truck, he had kind of a blackout spell and he drove his truck right through the gazebo. Thankfully, no one was sitting out there where there would normally have been residents sitting. Hopefully, his insurance will cover it because he did quite a bit of damage. If anyone is interested in the medical aspects of the State Veterans Community Living Centers then they should come to one of the SVCLCC's meetings. It is a good opportunity to hear how well they are taking care of the Veterans.

Robby Robinson: Support the Troops license plates history: It was determined that DMVA would develop a request for proposal (RFP) and they would select someone to execute a program for the Support the Troops License Plate. This program generates money and the money would be spent on behalf of Veterans. The organization that bid on that RFP is American Military Families, Inc. they get 15% for overhead. Kathleen is our liaison to the Board of AMF.

Kathleen Dunemn: Support the Troops License Plates for January to June 2014, there were 652 license plates and it generated \$16,300. These funds went to 26 small individual grants that were approved and 111 were denied. Most of the grants were for PTSD, TBI sessions, marriage counseling, veterans' assistance, bills, travel, repairs, etc.

Gail Hoagland: They are a VAG grantee.

Robby Robinson: We give them money for direct veterans' assistance but this is different money. Debbie Quackenbush is the head of that. Are there any other questions about the SVCLC or the Support the Troops license plates?

Discussion/Action

1. Conflict of Interest Statements/Forms

Ray Z. Dissinger: Conflict of Interest Statements need to be updated annually. We have converted the form to pdf, so everyone can do them electronically. The forms have been changed with multiple signature blocks, so when you receive the form, you just sign it. I have

received a Conflict of Interest Statement back from everyone except Wendy Chiado. Once it is all electronic, everyone can fill in the forms, then it converts to an electronic signature and we will be able to renew it annually. You can sign the form, scan it, and send it back to make it easier to keep up with annually.

2. Review of Audit Findings/Action

Ray Z. Dissinger: I have been working with Gail on this and she has been invaluable. I will go through the recommendations, highlight them, and then respond by either the Department or the Board.

For the VAG we are going to have a policy letter, documentation, and specific grantee procedures. We are going to have a VTF policy letter, documentation and specific grantee procedures. We will also have combined procedures for VAG and VTF. There will be some minor changes, but most of the administration on procedures will be the same. I will be getting this out to the Board and email it so it can be approved and finalized into a document by the end of October since we are supposed to have it for the Board in November.

The ability to target the limited funding, specific program goals, and priorities, define grant criteria, and objective scoring: The Board of Veterans Affairs will define a process for determining specific priorities prior to the next solicitation. We are looking at this in the procedural documents based on last year's priorities and it will obviously be revised based on this year's input. That will be one of our addendums to the document. The Board in conjunction with Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) will develop the criteria for specific scoring and comparing. I have been working with Gail to develop a matrix that the Board will be able to use when they have their review committee meetings. This will assist the Board in scoring and being able to decide which grantees scoring is the highest and using an objective basis decide which grant applicants will receive funds.

- The Department application form must provide applicants with a specific description: We are going to have an exhibit with our policy letters providing specific descriptions to grant applicants so we can measure them. We will define a tool (quarterly report form revised) for measurement in the contracts.
- Providing clear guidance in our recommendations: Review our audit process to support expenditures, report reimbursements, or document expenditures and investigate to see if there is a problem with their documentation and the 90 day expenditure advances. The response from DMVA: We are amending the application form to require more documentation and we will have an example of the document going out to all grant applicants as guidance. We are looking at training for applicants and for grantees after they are awarded. One of the areas of particular concern is the unanticipated requirements. No matter what we require by grantees as a program we will put in a mechanism to say this is an exception, does it fall within the overall parameters, and how do we prove it?

With Veterans Assistance Grant, it is almost impossible to record everything. We have a contract to allow the grantee unanticipated requirements. We are creating the procedural documentation to support expenditures. We will require a little bit more documentation from the grantees. That was mentioned frequently in the recommendations that the documentation we were telling them to have was not enough. We are going to define it to where hopefully, it will meet the requirements of audit procedures better in the future. Also, we will define what we are doing regarding withholding reimbursements if procedures are not followed. We are also putting in place a rolling 90 day period oversight when they get an advance.

- DMVA's response is that we are working on measurable goals. There is a United Way document that is a good example of measurable outcomes and output. We are using that to help us establish measurable goals and that will be part of our procedures in the information to the grantee.

We will have the grantee input information. They will have to collect it from them. Currently, we will have the grantees measuring the number of instances of assistance, looking at the number of veterans assisted, and any duplication in the grants that are being provided. It will be very basic information to start, which will be expanded on. We are going to expand that by doing two things: we are going to modify the quarterly report and we will get better input from the grantees on how they are using the funds. It will be on the quarterly report if they have assistance: is it food, clothing, a ride to a job interview, etc.? We will be recommending that the grantee requires each veteran to provide a short form giving us some data on how much this assistance will help them at the time the assistance is provided. Hopefully, trying to quantify the help the assistance is providing and expanding our goals and measures will provide a better focus on how we are using the funds.

Dana Niemela: Is the intent that the veteran would be required to write a request to explain how it is going to help them before they receive assistance or after they are assisted to write a narrative as to how it helped them?

Ray Z. Dissinger: After it helped them, after they have been assisted right now feedback would be provided on the spot by the recipient.

Dana Niemela: Will the organization be required to provide that in order to be reimbursed?

Ray Z. Dissinger: We are going to work on that, we haven't decided if they would be required. I don't think we are looking at it being required, however we will really emphasize how important it is to explain where the money is going then it will help the Board when they look at it and how we will recommend to the Board the next time they are awarded. We want the grantees to be able to do it without discouraging the veteran from seeking assistance and we want to do it without discouraging the grantee from giving the money out.

Dana Niemela: My expectation is that once they receive assistance in a lot of cases the veterans are gone. You don't hear back from them and you don't see them again.

Ray Z. Dissinger: Hopefully, we will get information in the form of a request and then how the assistance helped them.

Dana Niemela: Follow up is hard after they received assistance.

Gail Hoagland: We are looking at a very brief satisfaction survey that includes whether their crisis was resolved, a very simple form with blanks or boxes to check.

Discussion of short satisfaction survey potentially to be used with veterans who receive assistance from grantees.

Ray Z. Dissinger: CBVA Response for Recommendation #4 pertaining to the Open Meeting Law, we are on track with the transcript-type minutes and they are posted on the website. So this is in place. Recommendation #5 is related to policies and procedures for Conflict of Interest Disclosure. We have discussed this and individuals will abstain from participating in a discussion where they could have a conflict of interest. This is in place. That is where we stand in regard to the Audit and are there any questions?

Dana Niemela: Are they satisfied?

Ray Z. Dissinger: They have not come in yet. I think they will be more than satisfied.

Robby Robinson: The goals, objectives, and measures are probably the toughest part. Concerning everything else, we have to educate them. In rural areas, transportation may be a high priority. In urban areas, homelessness may be a priority; however, in Durango as an urban area the priority may be transportation.

Ray Z. Dissinger: There is the new Smart Government initiative where we are looking at output and outcomes. As I said before, Gail has been providing invaluable assistance. We have agreed where we are going and what we have is sufficient.

Dana Niemela: You may want to consider the availability of services in geographic areas.

Robby Robinson: We have some paperwork coming up. The VTF Report, an annual report is due that goes over to Human Services.

Ray Z. Dissinger: That is what I just discussed. There are only three areas on there that we needed to discuss.

Robby Robinson: That feeds into our annual report which is due in December. We will discuss that more the next meeting. Ben, concerning the website, the link for CBVA is not on the

homepage. When I go on it, it is not intuitive that CBVA should be a state service, we are not a state service and it is hard to find.

Ray Z. Dissinger: It is on the Department's page.

Ben Mestas: We can provide a link on the homepage.

Robby Robinson: Duane, do you want to talk about CCI?

Duane Dailey: Colorado Counties Inc. (CCI) is made up of County Commissioners. When I was Commissioner, we had a subcommittee on military and veterans but the subcommittee went away. To me there is a tremendous disconnect between County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO's) and County Commissioners, most of the CVSO's are not full-time or they are volunteers.

In my area, Eagle and Summit County they are class 2 counties. Eagle runs an office 8 hours a month. We are on the agenda for the Annual Winter Conference in Colorado Springs. It is an opportunity to tell CCI what CVSO's do for the counties. We will be in competition with the luncheon. We need a dynamic speaker to tell them what we do.

Chris Holden: What is the date?

Ben Mestas: December 2nd, 2014

Chris Holden: I can be available.

Duane Dailey: My role is that of a facilitator.

Mickey Hunt: From my experience, counties are very frustrated because CVSO's are mandated but there was no funding with the mandate. This is an opportunity to educate the County Commissioners. Either a Department Head or a Board Member would be good. They need to be aware of the Board in an advisory capacity. It would be good to have both.

Duane Dailey: It would be good to have quite a few of us there. Rural County Commissioners are overwhelmed and they are always leery of unfunded mandates. They need to see that we are separate from the Federal VA. When we plan that one piece, we want to be on the same page.

Ben Mestas: They need to see how much money is going into their counties because of the CVSO's.

Discussion of building positive relationships with County Commissioners and the need for a dynamic speaker at the conference.

Duane Dailey: Mr. Chair, I think we should volunteer to put together the best color guard of our group that we can to make a good showing for the veterans.

Future Meetings

10 October 2014, 09:30AM, American Legion HQ, 7465 E. 1st Ave #D, Denver, CO 80230

5 November 2014, 09:00AM, Wings Over the Rockies, 7711 E. Academy Blvd., #1, Denver, CO 80230

5 December 2014, 09:30AM, American Legion HQ, 7465 E. 1st Ave #D, Denver, CO 80230

Old Business

Duane Dailey: On August 14th, he had a meet and greet with Jim Stanko and the Grand Junction VA Administrator.

Dana Niemela: FYI, Sunday, October 12th, Nine News, VFW Post 1, and Walgreens are sponsoring the Veterans Health Fair. There will be VA representation and other community based organizations. October 14th at the Auraria Campus there will be a Welcome Back for Student Veterans. This organization does a lot around Metro Denver. Also, Volunteers of America (VOA) is hosting, "One Stop for Homeless Veterans." This is part of VOA's mission. Homeless veterans will be screened for VASH eligibility. Some veterans will be getting vouchers. This is supported by the Denver Coalition for the Homeless Veterans Providers. It will be at 14th and Santa Fe.

Reuben Mestas: Stand Downs:

October 3rd – Pueblo Stand Down

October 16th- Colorado Springs Stand Down

October 31st- Grand Junction Stand Down

November 6th- Denver Stand Down

November 20th- Longmont Stand Down

Mickey Hunt: We enjoyed celebrating our tenth anniversary of the relationship between Colorado ANG and Jordan. It was a very positive visit.

Robby Robinson: Congratulations to Ben on his promotion to Colorado Division of Veterans Affairs Director.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20am.

