

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes
09 November 2016
Wings Over the Rockies
Denver, CO 80230

Members and Guests

Members Present:

Duane Dailey, Chair
Rene Simard, Vice Chair
Hollie Caldwell, Secretary
Patricia "Pat" Hammon, Member
Robert "Bob" McLaughlin, Member
William "Robby" Robinson, Member
Jack Rudder, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

Major General H. Michael Edwards, Adjutant General for Colorado
Mickey Hunt, DMVA Deputy Director
Ben Mestas, CDVA Director
Gail Hoagland, DMVA Grant Administrator
Carissa Snyder, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present:

Tammy Bellofatto, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Ralph Bozella, American Legion National
Lynne Ciancio, Army Retiree
Bruce Dolan, Department of Colorado VFW
Rita Fama, Department of Colorado VFW
David Fry, Arapahoe County Veterans Services
John Mullin, American Legion Post #103, Littleton
Cindy Raley, Provider's Resource Clearinghouse
Theresa Rudder, Jack's wife
T.J. Westphal, Arapahoe County Veterans Services

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dailey at 0803 hours. Proceedings began with a recitation of the pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence for POWs, MIAs, and troops overseas. Mr. Dailey then invited introductions from around the room. He introduced new Board member Pat Hammon, who service as the Eagle County VSO and with the Western Slope Veterans Coalition.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Rudder provided a correction to the meeting minutes from 07 October 2016 and the minutes were approved as corrected.

Comments

Mr. Robinson apprised the Board of the draft report provided to DHS by the Fitzsimons site advisory group. The recommendation is for the south portion of the site to provide permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless veterans and possibly those referred to the program by veterans' courts. The recommendation for the north portion is that it hold a domiciliary and expanded memory care.

Mr. Simard said that a Veterans Day Observance will be held at Buckley Air Force Base on 10 November. He has been asked to will speak at the event and will represent the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. McLaughlin said efforts in Colorado Springs and the surrounding area are drawing down on the community's capability to help troops in transition. Mount Carmel in particular is working with community partners to encourage discharging troops to stay in Colorado. The Colorado Veterans Network offer free behavioral health clinic in Colorado Springs and Denver. The MyVA program has also been boosting interest among HealthNet and Choice care providers to work on solving problems that complicate access to care.

Ms. Caldwell said she provided information to the Fitzsimons advisory committee on frequent health care needs among chronically homeless populations. Most prevalent tend to be chronic conditions, mental health, and substance abuse.

Mr. Rudder said that access to health to care is an ongoing concern in the San Luis Valley. It is approximately four hours to travel to Denver from Alamosa, but it is often necessary because there no physician at the Alamosa CBOC. Mr. Dailey asked if it is a shorter drive for veteran to go to Albuquerque. Mr. Rudder confirmed it is a little shorter, and that drive is often preferred by veterans because they don't have to go over a mountain pass when driving to Albuquerque. He reported that VSO work has been slow probably due to several factors, including hunting season, the potato harvest, and the approaching holidays.

Ms. Hammon said the Grand Junction VAMC serves as the health care hub in her area. It is a small hospital but provides very good care and is an easier drive for veterans west of Vail. There is also a telehealth clinic in Glenwood Springs that is staffed by an NP and has an onscreen physician available. Mental health is a frequent gap and it can be difficult to find care. Recent efforts by the coalition include a modified veteran's court. Local jails can contact the VSO on behalf of incarcerated veteran to help them obtain assistance. An emergency fund is also available for veteran's assistance.

Mr. Dailey said that Grand County Veterans Day events include four school events on 10 November and a veteran's breakfast on 11 November at Snow Mountain Ranch in Granby. He attended the Denver Stand Down and noted that attendance has decreased this year, possibly due to the warm weather. He said that a rededication is planned for the Aviators Memorial Park at Grand Junction Regional Airport. He noted for the benefit of Ms. Hammon and visitors that Board meetings typically state at 0900 hours, but that this one had an early start time to accommodate the Veteran's Salute event scheduled for 11:30.

Community Providers

Mr. Westphal began with an introduction to the veteran's assistance program operated jointly between American Legion Post 103 and Arapahoe County Veterans Services. This program receives funding for the Veterans Trust Fund. He explained that the veterans service office does intake and screening for assistance requests while the post operates the fiduciary agent. The program has been in place for several years and they continue efforts to streamline the process and get funds distributed quickly. They work with many clients facing homelessness and one of the problems the program has encountered is the amount of funds available versus the cost of housing in the metro area. They distribute food and gas cards in addition to housing assistance. Mr. Mullin concurred that shelter and food are the top needs seen by the post. He expressed appreciation for working relationship with the county office and said veterans have been grateful for the assistance. Mr. Robinson asked if grant requirements such as evaluation surveys and expenditure documentation have been at all problematic. Mr. Mullin and Mr. Westphal said documentation has not been a problem and the difficulty with the survey has been how to present it to ensure both its return and the veteran's confidentiality. Mr. Dailey asked for recommendations and Mr. Mullin suggested that the post wait to present the survey until they do follow up with the client. Mr. Dailey inquired if the post or county had sufficient time to devote to a follow-up program and both Mr. Mullin and Mr. Westphal thought that they would. Ms. Caldwell asked if any of the grantee organizations had provided input on the survey. Ms. Hoagland said that they have and it has since been modified, and that periodic webinars provide for forum for grantees to provide suggestions.

Ms. Fama then provided an explanation of the VFW Department of Colorado veterans assistance program, which also receives funding from the VTF grant. They require applications for assistance and those applications must be approved by at least three members of their board. Most applications have a one-week turnaround. The VFW also receives a lot of requests for housing assistance and they expect to have expended \$40,000 by the end of October. They are able to fund about half of their applicants and try to prioritize veterans with children. Mr. Dolan added that collaboration with Rocky Mountain Human Services has proved helpful and that Denver Human Services also helps with rental assistance through their application process.

General Edwards joined the meeting at this point and offered his comments to the Board. He expressed the support of the proposed veterans' one-stop in Grand Junction and underscored Colorado's dedication to serve all of its veterans. In regard to the CONG, he said that higher funding has been made available to units who provide balanced readiness, with active duty and National Guard aligned. The Colorado Guard has been occupied with deployment, sending much artillery overseas including two batteries and Special Forces. Mr. Robinson asked about this year's budget requests. General Edwards said the Grand Junction one-stop is below the budget cutline so it is still undetermined, and there is also a request for an increase in tuition assistance, which has the governor's support.

A recess was called at 09:36 a.m. The Board resumed labor at 09:50 a.m.

Ms. Raley addressed the Board in regard to Provider's Resource Clearinghouse, which receives funding through the Veterans Assistance Grant. Provider's Resource Clearinghouse is a division of the Aurora Mental Health Center, which provides veterans with furniture and necessities. Assistance is restricted to once per year per client, and to date they have served 173 veterans this year. Ms. Hammon asked about their service area and Ms. Raley said most have their requests have been in the metro area, but they are willing to help any Colorado veteran regardless of location. They are funded entirely through grants and

get their items through donations. They also work with the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to provide vocational and employment training.

Public Comment

Ms. Bellofatto addressed the Board on behalf of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. They assist homeless veterans with housing and employment. She will bring numbers served to a future meeting.

Mrs. Rudder said that the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs is working in support of Wreaths Across America, in which wreaths decorated by volunteers are laid at the graves of fallen soldiers. Wreaths are \$17.00 each.

Reports

Mr. Hunt said the Colorado Civil Air Patrol will help with the wreath project at the state cemetery in Grand Junction. The Peak Military Care Network advisory met last week and mental health outreach remains an area of focus. The visits to the CLCs are now complete. Census is doing well at the CLCs but they continue to struggle with staffing. The next JBC meeting will be on 29 November and DMVA will attend.

Mr. Mestas said the final report has been issued on the Grand Junction cemetery with a performance rating of 84%. Noted deficiencies were items within federal rather than state control, but the Division and cemetery director will work to accelerate those interactions as much as possible. DOLA has completed its sunset review of the Board and has recommended that it continue once this commission expires in June 2017. The next review will be in 2032. Six of the state's eight Stand Downs are complete. Longmont is scheduled for 17 November, and Windsor will be in April.

Ms. Hoagland referred the Board to her report, noting that despite some concern that the VTF grant might be underutilized in rural areas, 60 percent of last year's grantees were in rural areas. These rural areas are identified according to HUD's definition of metro and rural areas, which classifies Grand Junction, Greeley, and Montrose as metro. All the current VTF grantees are currently performing. Mr. Hunt mentioned that he spoke with the CFO of RTD about possible funding for free rides for veterans, and this could be a prospect for the VTF in the upcoming cycle. Ms. Hoagland had distributed copies of the proposed application packets for VTF for regular applicants and for CLCs. Mr. Robinson moved to accept the CLC VTF application packet. Ms. Caldwell seconded and the motion carried. Next Mr. Robinson moved to accept the regular VTF packet as presented. Mr. Simard seconded and the motion carried.

Discussion Items

Mr. Dailey announced the Board committee representatives: Mr. Simard for Grants, Mr. Rudder for Training, and Mr. Robinson for CLCs.

New Business

Mr. Dailey inquired as to whether in was an appropriate time for the Board to consult with the Department strategic planner. Mr. Hunt said the resource is at the Board’s disposal.

The Board discussed and confirmed dates and location for upcoming meetings:

- December 02, 2016 VA Regional Office, Lakewood
- January 06, 2017 Trinidad – possible strategic planning session
- February 03, 2017 Fort Lyon
- March 03, 2016 CDVA
- April 07, 2016 CDVA
- May 04, 2016 Durango

Mr. Bozella addressed the Board with compliments for the grant program. He mentioned that the American Legion Post in Longmont is having trouble finding a program manager for the grant. He invited the Board to attend the Longmont Stand Down on 17 November.

Adjournment

Mr. Dailey requested a motion to adjourn. Said motion was made by Mr. Robinson and seconded by Mr. Simard. The meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.