

**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes**  
**04 August 2017**  
**Fort Lyon**  
**County Road 14**  
**Las Animas, CO 81054**

**Members Present:**

Duane Dailey, Chair  
Lacey Golonka, Member  
Patricia "Pat" Hammon, Member  
William "Robby" Robinson, Member  
Jack Rudder, Member

**DMVA Staff Present:**

Mickey Hunt, DMVA Deputy Director  
Dave Callahan, DMVA Strategic Planner, Safety Director, Lean Champion  
Ben Mestas, CDVA Director  
Gail Hoagland, DMVA Grant Administrator  
Carissa Snyder, CDVA Administrative Assistant

**Guests Present:**

Lynne Ciancio, Army Retiree  
Jim Collins, Mayor of Las Animas, CVSO Bent County  
Dan Davis, Commander, American Legion Post 09  
Richard Devlin, Commander, American Legion Post 9313  
Phil Harrington, Associate Director, Fort Lyon Residential Community  
Kim MacDonnell, Bent County Commissioner  
Bob McLaughlin, COO, Mount Carmel Center for Excellence  
Theresa Rudder, President Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs, Jack's wife  
Jay Scott, CVSO Otero County

**Opening**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dailey at 1000 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. New board member Lacey Golonka was introduced. Ms. Golonka served in the U.S. Army and currently serves with the Colorado Army National Guard. She is a Veterans and Diversity Consultant for Xcel Energy and was previously employed as Veteran Advocate and Outreach Coordinator for Senator Michael Bennett.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting held on 02 June 2017 were approved as submitted.

**Board Member Comments**

Ms. Hammon was in attendance in Grand Junction on 23 July when General Loh made the announcement about the upcoming veterans' one-stop. Eagle County is among eight on the western slope participating in Cover to Cover, a program funded by a VAMC grant to teach community members and organizations about veterans benefits. The northwest Colorado Council of Governments will meet on 23 August in Frisco. The Sturgis Veterans Charity Ride was in Eagle on 02 August and was attended by

county employees as well as employees from three nearby towns. The Western Slope Veterans Coalition has plans underway for a resource center in Glenwood Springs. The recent Mental Health Summit addressed the opioid crisis and intends to open mental health crisis centers in Grand Junction and Frisco. Healing Waters Fly Fishing will have a veterans event in Eagle County in August.

Mr. McLaughlin joined the meeting by phone to acknowledge his resignation from the Board. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve and expressed his regret that his professional commitments prevent him from continuing. Mr. Dailey thanked him for his service and his impact during his time on the Board.

Mr. Robinson said that the five acres on the south section of the Fitzsimons campus has been designated for permanent supportive housing. The plan is to build a four-story residence with 80 single occupancy units. The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless has submitted a successful proposal and is currently seeking grant funds for low income housing. The Colorado Department of Local Affairs has approximately 40 VASH vouchers at their disposal. Discussion is under way with how to use to five acres on the north campus. Ideas include a greenhouse model, mental health and /or memory care units, and skilled nursing care, perhaps with a VAMC partnership. The CLC in Rifle has been struggling for staff due to competition from a private nursing home. CDHS is trying to reinstate the Rifle CLC's CNA training program and is considering a partnership with the local taxing authority to address this issue.

Mr. Dailey thanked Mr. Hunt for serving as the Grand Marshal at the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade in Granby, which had more than a thousand attendees. Diamond Star Ranch in Eagle held a weeklong veterans retreat for more than 70 veterans from Balboa Naval Hospital, Brook Army Hospital at Fort Sam, and Walter Reed Medical Center.

Mr. Rudder said that the Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley met that last week of July and heard from representative from the VAMC and the Choice program.

### **Public Comments**

Mr. Collins greeted the Board and welcomed the members to Fort Lyon. He has taught at the campus and acknowledged it as a powerful program. Fort Lyon has had good support from the State of Colorado. He then introduced county commissioner Kim MacDonnell.

Ms. MacDonnell welcomed the attendees to Bent Bounty and to the Fort Lyon campus. As commissioner and a fifth generation Bent County resident, she provided a history of the Fort Lyon campus, beginning with its inception as Fort Wise in 1861. It became a Navy hospital in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and then a VA hospital. When VA left the facility in 1990s it was economic blow to the community. The Colorado Department of Corrections leased it for a decade until the current supportive residential community was formed in 2013. She then introduced the community's associate director, Phil Harrington.

Mr. Harrington provided details on the supportive services provided. The program has a target goal of two years, although the timeline is adjustable according to circumstance. Rehabilitation is nonclinical and often employs the 12-step program. Addiction issues are addressed first. Chapters of AA and NA are available on campus. The program has seen 11 graduates since its inception and approximately one in five leave needing no government assistance. Referrals come through the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless and all residents must apply through the agency.

Mr. Devlin spoke on behalf of American Legion Post 9313, which operates on the campus and is the only post in the state with a primarily homeless membership. This has caused fluctuating membership due to the transitional nature of the campus. When necessary the post has been assisted by Post 6 in Las Animas and Post 9 in La Junta, and is currently suspended with members now formally associated with Post 6.

Mr. Hunt said that the location for the Grand Junction one-stop in an unused 14,000-square-foot armory that is being refurbished. The one-stop is modeled on the Bill Daniels veterans one-stop in Denver. The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recently met with Senator Bennett's office on the topic of behavioral health, and Colorado Serves may be reestablished to address this topic. Mr. Hunt recalled visiting the Fort Lyon campus when it was still part of the Department of Corrections, as he was part of the committee considering options for the campus. He reminded the Board that the Department needs any legislative suggestions or proposals as soon as possible. The Blackhawk CLC visits will be in September.

Mr. Scott reported that a primary issue faced by veterans in southeastern Colorado is access to professional medical services. Transportation is a critical problem and often local care is entirely unavailable. Mr. Rudder concurred that access to care is a problem throughout rural Colorado. The Choice program is not always a viable option due to a lack of providers willing to accept it. The VA is working on a loan forgiveness program for physicians that looks promising. Mr. Scott asked if VBA has plans to address the appeals backlog, and Mr. Mestas told him that currently some claims staff are working appeals.

### **Reports**

Mr. Mestas emphasized from his report that that CVSO compensation from the state has increased and that county commissioners were notified in July. From fiscal year 2012-2013 to fiscal year 2017-2018, compensation to the counties from the state has increased tenfold. A recent meeting with veterans and veterans organizations in Trinidad was attended by the director of the New Mexico VAMC. The Division also had the opportunity to meet with Willie Clark, VBA Area Director for USDVA and discuss transportation complications between Colorado and New Mexico, as well as issues experienced by CVSOs such as the availability of VA documents and award letters. The Division's outreach goal for the last fiscal year was 120, which was exceeded with an outreach total of 166.

Ms. Hoagland reported that the new VTF contracts are approximately 90% executed. In response to an inquiry from Mr. Dailey, she confirmed that the process has been slow this year. The Long Bill was signed late in the legislative session, which affects the turnaround time. She told the Board that while last year's execution rate of 95% was very good, the new quarterly report form will help more closely track spending rates and asks grantees to project whether they will be able expend their grant award. Grantees that are unlikely to expend will be asked to modify their contract. Negotiations are under way for the grant contact for USS Colorado.

### **Action Items**

American Legion Post 25 in Florence was contracted from \$15,000 in VTF funds rather than \$20,000. This modification requires Board approval. Ms. Hammon moved to accept the modification and Mr. Robinson seconded. The motion carried.

Mr. Mestas then recommended that the now-unallocated \$5,000 be held over until the Board considers contract modification after the first of the year. This was so moved by Ms. Hammon and seconded by Mr. Robinson. The motion carried.

**New Business**

The Board decided that the next meeting will be held on 08 September in Grand Junction, with the annual retreat in the same location on 07 September. The strategic planning meeting will wait until October. The date of the November meeting has changed to 08 November to coincide with Wings Over the Rockies.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mr. Robinson made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Ms. Hammon. The meeting adjourned at 12:31 p.m.