

**Board Minutes**  
**September 8, 2017**  
**Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado**  
**2830 Riverside Parkway, Grand Junction, CO 81051**

Duane Dailey, Chair, called the meeting to order at 0902 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, members of the Colorado National Guard aiding in hurricane relief or deployed and all service members.

**Roll Call of Members and Introduction of Staff & Guests**

Board Members Present:

Duane Dailey, Chair  
Jack Rudder, Vice-Chair  
Hollie Caldwell, Secretary  
Pat Hammon, Member  
William "Robby" Robinson, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

Reuben Mestas, CDVA Director  
Gail Hoagland, DMVA, VAG Administrator  
Joanne Iglesias, Veterans Memorial Cemetery Director  
Steven Stogsdill, Veterans Memorial Cemetery Support Assistant  
Claire Dean, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present:

Damaris Bliss, Grand Junction Veterans Health Care System  
Sheldon Smith, Montrose County Service Officer  
Paul Sweeney, Grand Junction Veterans Health Care System

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Dailey provided a correction to the meeting minutes from August 4, 2017 that he was also in attendance in Grand Junction on July 23, when General Loh made the announcement about the upcoming veterans' one-stop. The minutes were then approved as corrected.

**Board Member Comments**

Hollie Caldwell: Student veterans at the Platt College will now receive a military service sash during commencement as part of an increase in recognition.

Jack Rudder: The San Luis Valley has an Eastern Colorado Medical Administrator that visits the area once a month. During Regional Training, it was brought up that most of the rural County Service Officers are older, with many considering retirement. This may lead to Counties and/or regions without Service Officers.

Pat Hammon: The Healing Waters event in Eagle County was a success. As part of the Grand Junction One-Stop Advisory Group, Ms. Hammon will be in attendance at next week's meeting via phone conference. A well-received Cover to Cover workshop was held with Paul Sweeney of the Grand Junction Veterans Health Care System. Ms. Hammon and other veteran representatives met with the Deputy Secretary of the VA and discussed blue water, bad paper and the Choice program. The new Choice plan is set to roll out in January 2018. A parade, from Vail to Edwards, will commemorate Patriot Day on September 11. Ms. Hammon will attend Regional Training September 12-13.

Robby Robinson: The Rifle Community Living Center continues to struggle with staffing. They are finding it hard to compete with the neighboring nursing home that pays higher wages. One option may be to follow the Spanish Peaks model in Walsenburg, which has only one State employee to oversee that all State requirements are met. In 2002, the Division of Veterans Affairs moved from Human Services to the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. It was in that year that the dedication of the Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado was held.

Duane Dailey: Constitution Week will be held in Grand County with several events scheduled for next week.

### **Guest/Public Comments**

Sheldon Smith: The remains of several unclaimed veterans are being stored in Montrose area crematoriums. Mr. Smith asked the Board if they can cover the cost to properly transport and bury the veterans. The cost is under \$200 and the Veterans Assistance Grant only helps those still alive. Ms. Hammon suggested that Mr. Smith contact Fort Logan, since they deal with similar situations. Due to the high numbers of claims in Mesa and Delta Counties, Montrose County is helping with the overflow.

Paul Sweeney: The Grand Junction Veterans Health Care System is working to streamline healthcare in the area. A handout was distributed. Once the mobile medical clinic is running, it will provide the area with better communication and information on benefits. Some VA hospital patients are transferred to the Rifle Community Living Center for rehabilitation. Mr. Sweeney encouraged County Service Officers to attend VA Hospital events. Rocky Mountain PBS interviewed several veterans in the Grand Junction area for a documentary that will run after Ken Burns Vietnam series.

Damaris Bliss: Ms. Bliss has been busy marketing Telehealth in Southern Colorado.

## **Staff Reports**

Joanne Iglesias: Ms. Iglesias presented the Board with a book on the Navaho Code Talkers, whom presented the Cemetery with a commemorative blanket. Duncan Brown has volunteered to retire US flags at the Cemetery. He replaces Navy veteran and Navajo member Roger McGuire. The replacement ceremony was covered on the front page of the Grand Junction Sentinel, which generated donations of \$2k for the Cemetery.

Ms. Hammon added that area Boy Scouts can earn badges if they help retire flags.

Since opening its doors 15 years ago, the cemetery has provided a final resting place for 2,780 veterans, 1,062 spouses and nine dependent children. Last year, the cemetery underwent a Formal Compliance Review by the National Cemetery Administration and received a rating of 85%.

Since it takes about two years to complete the process, Mr. Robinson asked if it is too soon to look at investing more money into building additional columbariums. A map was created with proposed columbarium sites and Ms. Iglesias secured a general contractor to assist in the projection of the sites.

In age-related issues, liner failures have created erosion issues near a couple of columbariums and silt build up in both ponds.

Ms. Hammon asked if the cemetery offers memorial plaques for those veterans who had their ashes scattered at sea or elsewhere. Ms. Iglesias stated that family members can select Memorial stone for the cemetery's Memorial Garden. Quarterly memorial services are now held for those veterans without families. There were five veterans honored in October 2016. 27 veterans were given military honors in July. Members of the community attend the services that include the release of doves, cannon fire and the tolling of bells. Ms. Hammon requested an invitation to the next service. Mr. Dailey thanked Ms. Iglesias and her staff for the excellent work that they do. Both Mickey Hunt and Greg Dorman will be helping the cemetery crew in the coming weeks.

Duane Dailey (on behalf of Mr. Hunt and Mr. Dorman): Both Mr. Hunt and Mr. Dorman are preparing information to be submitted in the Governor's Report. The Community Living Center visits via Blackhawk helicopters will be held on October 4-5 this year.

Ben Mestas: The Annual Board Retreat was held yesterday at the Clarion Inn. The Board was asked to review all the documents that were discussed and to bring up any changes that need to be made in a timely manner. Top contractors for the Grand Junction One-Stop will be interviewed next Thursday. Mr. Mestas encouraged Board members to attend this year's homeless stand-downs, which are listed on his report. Many of the stand-downs are supported through the Veterans Trust Fund.

Gail Hoagland: Grant reimbursement requests have recently increased. In October, Ms. Hoagland will travel to the four-corners area to monitor grantees in the four-corners area as well as attend the homeless stand-down in Durango. Board members are strongly encouraged to attend the Durango stand-down.

Mr. Dailey inquired about the Durango town hall meeting with the VA. Mr. Mestas will check on the date of that meeting.

The USS Colorado Commissioning Grant Agreement is in the works. County Service Officers Sheldon Smith, Greg Bak and Brian Oney were asked to coordinate with the Commissioning Committee awareness events on the western slope and cohost the crew members in various community events and site visits at the Rifle Community Living Center and the ROTC in Montrose. The Commissioning Committee is promoting a STEM curriculum via the State Library System.

The Board recessed at 10:25 a.m. and resumed labor at 10:37 a.m.

Ms. Caldwell wondered if and when the Board will be able to tour the Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center, which will officially open next spring. Mr. Mestas will try to coordinate a tour following the December Board meeting.

Mr. Mestas will help locate veterans on the Colorado Freedom Memorial for Mr. Dailey.

### **Future Meetings**

October 6, 2017: El Paso County- location TBD.

### **Old Business**

#### **New Business**

The Board discussed changing the dates of the monthly Board meetings. With dates and locations already confirmed for this year, it would be difficult to change. Keeping the meetings standardized will promote more community involvement. Mr. Mestas suggested that the Board discuss the issue with Lacey Golonka, the only Board member not present, during next month's meeting. Mr. Dailey stated that he wanted to entertain the motion that the Board keeps its current meeting schedule. Ms. Caldwell motioned to retain the current meeting schedule. Mr. Rudder seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Mr. Robinson addressed the issue of recruiting younger veterans to serve as County Service Officers. Although income for County Service Officers has increased ten-fold it is still not enough to solely live on. Mr. Rudder added that with advancements in the digital age, many rural County Service Officers now need to purchase additional equipment to complete work. The Counties are responsible for purchasing any additional office equipment. Various agencies such as the American Legion may be able to donate laptops and printers as well. Mr. Dailey stated that County Commissioners need to be educated in what the Veteran Service Officers do. Mr. Smith suggested that we should recruit disabled veterans with a 60% or higher rating (i.e., independent income) and Ms. Hammon said that marketing ideas could come from the Strategic Planning Committee.

Ms. Hammon mentioned that a Vietnam Documentary by director Ken Burns will run on Rocky Mountain PBS beginning on September 17. A documentary about western slope veterans and alternative therapies will run on Rocky Mountain PBS on October 19.

Meeting adjourned 11:20am