

**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes
Friday, 07 December 2018
City and County Denver Department of Human Services
1200 Federal Boulevard
Denver, CO 80204**

Members and Guests

Members Present:

Duane Dailey, Chair
Jack Rudder, Vice Chair
Hollie Caldwell, Secretary
Patricia Hammon, Member
Norm Steen, Member
Sheila Scanlon, Member
Longinos Gonzalez Jr., Member

DMVA Staff Present:

Mickey Hunt, DMVA Deputy Executive Director
David Callahan, Interim CDVA East Director
Gail Hoagland, CDVA Grant Administrator
Carissa Snyder, CDVA Program Assistant

Guests Present:

George Cassidy, Denver County CVSO
Natasha Elliott, Denver DHS MSW Intern
Fonterra Groves, Denver DHS Veteran Services Outreach Case
Patrice Hawkins, Denver County Deputy Director of Customer Experience for CORE
Greg Loebel, Denver DHS Veteran Services Senior Social Caseworker
Stacey Moslet, Denver DHS Veteran Services Supervisor
Daniel Neelands, Denver DHS Veterans Services
Dana Niemela, Denver DHS Community Outreach and Resource Engagement Director
Christian Nowicki, Denver DHS Peer Navigator/CVSO
Mary Poffmerger, clinic representative
Theresa Rudder, President, General Federation of Women's Clubs of Colorado
Constance Tatro, Denver DHS Veterans Services Intensive Caseworker/Outreach Case Coordinator

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Opening:

Mr. Dailey called the meeting to order at 0900 hours. Proceedings began with a recitation of the pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence for POWs, MIAs, and troops overseas. Mr. Dailey greeted all in attendance and thanked Ms. Niemela for providing the meeting accommodations. The Board members identified themselves for the record and for the benefit of the guests. Mr. Dailey then invited introductions from around the room.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Scanlon said that Ms. Hoagland is scheduled to speak at the UVC general meeting on 11 December to address questions about the grant program. The legislative committee will meet the following Thursday. She is working with the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC on including women veterans in their exhibits and signage. Mr. Dailey said he has given some photos to Dan Warvi for this purpose.

Mr. Steen said he met with the director of the Colorado Springs CBOC and the veterans experience officer for the ECHCS. He distributed copies of an ECHCS workload profile provided at the meeting. The Colorado Springs CBOC has reduce the wait time for new appointments to 31 days. The no-show rate is currently 13% and demographics continue to indicate that it is younger veterans who miss appointments. Mr. Dailey said the lack of working phone numbers at the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC might contribute to that facility's no-show rate, as it is difficult for veterans to reschedule appointments. Ms. Scanlon said she would mention this to VAMC representatives at the UVC meeting.

Ms. Caldwell said she has attended two meeting of the SVCLC commission, chaired by Karren Kowalski, president of the Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence. CDHS director Reggie Bichca also attended. Ms. Caldwell conveyed the Board's support of salary increases for direct care staff and its encouragement of a more aggressive approach. CDHS will present a one-year salary increase plan to the JBC on 21 December. It is recommended that Board members and supporters contact the JBC members individually and that contact by text will be available during the hearing. Ms. Hammon said that the staffing crisis for the SVCLCs was illustrated in a recent incident in which the Rifle facility had to deny two hospice patients due to lack of staff. The Grand River Hospital Authority facility is across the street and offers higher wages. She asked if CDHA was considering any hiring incentives and Ms. Caldwell said not at this time.

Mr. Gonzalez said that he attended the 07 December teleconference introducing the TriWest expansion that now includes Colorado. El Paso County passed a resolutions honoring Pearl Harbor Day. USS Arizona survivor Donald Stratton is being honored at a commemorative ceremony today. A portion of the USS Arizona is being unveiled at the Colorado Springs airport. He was in attendance to see Fort Carson received the Pentagon's Department of the Army Community Partnership Award.

Ms. Hammon said that Eagle County just increased hours for the assistant VSO. The Grand Junction VAMC outreach event is scheduled for 08 December in Edwards. A mobile medical unit will be present for flu shots. Neuroplasticity expert Dr. Patricia Alexander will speak regarding trauma and stress. Equine therapy is available in Eagle. Up to six veteran can be accommodated twice a month at no charge. The Western Slope Veterans Coalition celebrated the first anniversary for the Veterans Resource Center in November. VFW has donated funds for the flags for the Western Slope One Source, which anticipates receiving its certificate of occupancy in January.

Mr. Rudder said that difficulties accessing health care and medical appointments are a continuing problem for veterans in rural or isolated areas. VA Community Care has been difficult to use.

Mr. Dailey said that VA contractors who perform compensation and pension exams also report no-shows, although many are the result of very short notice provided on appointments. The new name of the Grand Junction hospital is the Western Colorado VA Health care System. The Veterans Day event in Snow Mountain Ranch had about 400 in attendance despite the cold weather.

Community Presentation

Ms. Niemela provided a history and overview of the Denver County DHS Veteran Services program. The program has evolved from a federally funded homeless reintegration program to a county funded holistic approach that assists veteran with acquiring and maintaining sustainable employment in order to help them preserve stable housing. They employ intensive case management and one-to-one peer navigation in addition to helping veteran access state, county, and VA benefits.

The Board here recessed at 10:45 and resumed labor at 11:00.

Public Comments

Mary Poffmerger, community member and surgical nurse, informed the board that her husband and his business partner, both former army technicians, are hoping to establish a clinic that will address the diagnosis and symptomology to TBI and PTSD. They intend to offer a variety of treatments to include hyperbaric treatment and hormone replacement.

Reports

Mr. Hunt said that Ben Mestas has been otherwise detailed and in his absence David Callahan is serving as acting director of DVA East. VSO Carolyn Fregel is no longer with the department and former appeals specialist Diane Ricci is now employed by Jefferson County Veterans Services. There are multiple staff vacancies with the DVA east and Mr. Callahan will address those under his remarks. He recorded a radio interview with KNUS that is schedule to air on 17 December at 12:00 p.m. The SMART Act briefing is scheduled for 14 December at 1:30 p.m. The JBC staff briefing on 29 November resulted in positive feedback regarding funding for the DVA West director and for funding for the Western Slope One Source. Veterans Appreciation Day will be held at the Capitol on 01 February. Ms. Scanlon asked about staff support for the women veterans program. Mr. Hunt said the project had been put on hold due to short staffing. Ms. Scanlon said that the department should prioritize according to promises made to the Board and UVC. Further discussion will be held on this topic.

Mr. Callahan said that the design for women veterans license plate should be sent to Greg Dorman by the following week. Four positions have been announced for DVA East: administrative assistant, appeals VSO, office manager, and outreach/training VSO. There is an additional VSO position to be announced and the division is still seeking a temporary employee to service as the administrative assistant for the women veterans program. Mr. Dailey asked if the Board would be copied on forthcoming job announcements and Mr. Callahan said they would. Mr. Callahan is also working on strategic planning for DVA East.

Ms. Hoagland referred the Board to her submitted report. She is increasing the number of site visits to grantees to monitor and coach. Webinar trainings for the current application cycle have been scheduled. Ms. Hammon asked why the Board does not receive a detailed report about the VAG such as they

receive for the VTF. Ms. Hoagland said that the detailed reports require a considerable amount of time to compile and that the VTF is the program that is within the direct purview of the Board. Ms. Caldwell suggested that the VAG reports could be compiled quarterly rather than monthly.

New Business

Funding for CVSOs

The Board has received complaints via UVC that the funds provided by the state for CVSOs are being used for other purposes by counties. Mr. Dailey said that this is an issue of local control and the Board has little influence. Mr. Steen agreed that county commissioners have full fiscal responsibility within their jurisdictions and that CCI is the appropriate agency to lobby for this issue. He volunteered to attend a UVC meeting to explain.

Veterans Appreciation Day

Mr. Steen moved that the Board move its meeting schedule for 01 February to 10:00 a.m. so that Board member can attend the Veteran Appreciation Day at the Capitol. It was seconded by Ms. Hammon and carried.

Discussion

Mr. Dailey said that he recently experience difficulty at the Denver VARO when he was unable to obtain a preference letter from public contact and the DVA East satellite was unexpectedly closed. He said that CVSOs are not informed of schedule and staffing changes. Mr. Callahan explained that while DVA East is short staffed the priorities are hearings and appointments, thus the temporary closure of the satellite office. It will be open again once staffing levels allow. He agreed to prioritize communication in the future. Mr. Hunt added that while it is not typical to notify CVSOs of every staff change, schedule changes and office closure should be disseminated.

Upcoming Meetings

- 04 January Fitzsimons SVCLC: please note that you must check in, show ID, and be escorted to the meeting room
- 01 February VFW Post 1, Denver: meeting time adjusted to 10:00

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Rudder moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Steen. The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.