

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes
02 February 2018
VA Regional Office, Director's Conference Room
155 Van Gordon Street
Lakewood, CO 80228

Members and Guests

Members Present:

Duane Dailey, Chair
Jack Rudder, Vice Chair
Hollie Caldwell, Secretary
Lacey Golonka, Member
Pat Hammon, Member
Robby Robinson, Member
Norm Steen, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

David Callahan, DMVA Strategic Planner, Safety Director
Greg Dorman, DMVA Legislative Liaison
Ben Mestas, CDVA Director
Gail Hoagland, DMVA Grant Administrator
Carissa Snyder, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present:

Matt Albright, Center for American values Program Director
Doug Fischel, Congressman Scott Tipton's office, Constituent Relations
Anthony Mason, CDLE Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist
Bruce Raymond, CSU Pueblo Interim Provost, VP Academic Affairs
Danny Rodriguez, Pueblo Veterans Ritual team, veterans transportation coordinator
Dana Rocha, Director of Veteran Affairs, CSO Pueblo
Theresa Rudder, President-elect, General Federation of Women's Clubs of Colorado
Rudy Sabedra, Veterans Service Officer, Pueblo County
Jay Scott, Veterans Service Office, Otero County
Roxie Smith, CDHS and Veterans Service Officer, Crowley County
Ann Stattelman, Executive Director, Posada of Pueblo
Ben Strand, RMHS Homes for All Veterans
LaTanya Yarbrough, Case Manager, Posada of Pueblo

Opening

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dailey at 0905 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.

Mr. Dailey then introduces Ms. Rocha, who helped to coordinate the meeting and secured the meeting space. He greeted all in attendance and the Board members identified themselves for the record and for the benefit of the guests.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Hammon requested that amended drafts of meeting minutes be numbered to simplify the identification of each draft. This request was so noted. Ms. Hammon then moved that the January minutes be approved as submitted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steen and carried.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Golonka reported that recent statistics from the Arapahoe/Douglas County Workforce Task Force indicate that veteran unemployment in Colorado is lower than the national average. The current rate of veteran unemployment in Colorado is 1.8%-2.0%, whereas the national rate is 3.0%-4.0%.

Ms. Caldwell thanked the community for the opportunity to hold the meeting in Pueblo.

Ms. Hammon served on the Senator Michael Bennett's selection panel for nominees to service academies. A reception for the nominees is scheduled for 03 February. The advisory committee for the western slope one source has decided to officially call the new facility the Western Region One Source. Construction is scheduled to begin in early summer with a target opening date on January 2019. Recruitment and selection of the resources to be housed there is ongoing. The location is approximately two blocks from the Grand Junction VAMC and the VAMC is considering providing shuttle service. The Glenwood Springs Veteran Resource Center is open five days a week from 08:00 a.m. -05:00 p.m., with paid staff two days a week and at other times staffed by volunteers. Coffee and doughnuts are available on Thursdays. Volunteers of America is available at the center one day a week and the veterans service officer from Garfield County is there twice a week.

Mr. Steen was the keynote speaker for the Veterans Appreciation breakfast in Florissant on 20 January. He reported that HR 4557 does not have much support, but another bill affecting veterans is S.2193, the Caring for Veterans Act. This bill would modify the health care location choices available to veterans by basing eligibility not on distance but on the services needed. Recent statistics presented to the Peak Military Care network indicate that the Colorado Springs CBOC saw an increase in patients from 25,122 in 2015, to 29,728 in 2016 and more than 30,761 in 2017. Approximately 15% of scheduled appointments are no-shows. The VA's Suicide Data Report shows approximately 22 veteran suicides occur per day with approximately 14 of those 22 veterans were not registered with the VA in order to receive care. Additional enrollment is needed but the long waiting times have been a complication. The goal is to have new primary care appointments scheduled within 30 days.

Mr. Robinson will attend the meeting of SVCLC Commission scheduled for 09 February at Fitzsimons. He will attend the resident advisory council meeting at Fitzsimons scheduled for 07 February. He attended Military and Veterans Appreciation Day at the state capitol on 26 January. The CLC in Rifle is particularly hopeful that that new legislation will allow them to hire staff with exemption from state personnel rules regarding salary ranges.

Mr. Rudder said that a recent summit in regard to veterans suicide, it was brought to his attention that that the most at-risk age groups in Vietnam-era veterans. Colorado's suicide rate among this population is twice the national average, and in the San Luis Valley the rate is even higher. There is a nurse

practitioner available at the Alamosa CBOC and that is working well, but additional access to health care is still a pressing need.

Mr. Dailey also attended the Military and Veterans Appreciation Day event on 26 January. A Veterans Town Hall is scheduled to be held in Frisco on 18 April with another on 19 April in Kremmling. VHA, home loans, and the vet center are all expected to be represented.

Public Comments

Mr. Mason informed the group that CDLE and its veteran employment specialists can help veterans with challenges to employment such as education and accessibility.

Mr. Fischel extended greeting from Congressman Tipton. His office works closely with the Pueblo County Veteran Service Office assisting with claim status inquiries, particularly regarding appeals, and discharge upgrades.

Mr. Sabedra acknowledged the partnership with congressman's office and also with Posada of Pueblo, which offers aid to veterans through the Veterans Assistance Grant. He said that the recent Stand Down underscored the increasing number of homeless veterans in the area since 2014, having grown from approximately 25 to more than 70.

Ms. Stattelman said that data from their Homeless Management Information System indicates that Medicaid expansion has been one of the reasons for in the increasing population in the Pueblo area, and that legal marijuana has contributed as it is often seen as a business opportunity. The city is experiencing records lows in vacancy rates and both rent a deposits have tripled in recent years, adding to the causes of homelessness.

Mr. Scott said health care has been a prevailing issue on the southeastern plains. Access to care has been of concern and the perception is that the Choice program seems to have created as many problems as solutions. Nonpayment to participating facilities can end up affecting a veteran's credit. Ms. Hammon recommended that veterans in this situation contact the Choice coordinator at the Denver VAMC, and Mr. Scott said that Senator Gardner's office has also helped with these situations. The La Junta CBOC now also has a nurse practitioner after a two-year vacancy. There are few homeless resources in and surrounding Otero County but the homeless census is low. There is some subsidized housing but very limited availability.

Mr. Raymond said there is Veterans Task Force on campus that helps student veterans access available resources. The campus is trying to earn a Purple Heart designation and places a great deal of emphasis on its veteran-friendly programs. This would be the first school with this designation in Colorado.

Community Presentation

Mr. Albright introduced attendees to the Center for American Values and its Pueblo location, known as Home for Heroes. The Pueblo community is home to four Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, one of whom is the center's co-founder Drew Dix. The mission of Home for Heroes is to connect with youth and help all generations to recognize the sacrifices made by veterans. One of the focal projects of Home for Heroes has been documenting the stories of more than 140 Medal of Honor recipients

Recess

The meeting was called to recess at 10:25 and labor resumed at 10:40.

Community Presentation

Mr. Albright here presented a video about the Home for Heroes and its project, with excerpts from interviews with several Medal of Honor recipients.

Reports

Mr. Dorman said the confirmations for the new board members are scheduled for 26 February at 01:30 p.m. at the Veterans Caucus meeting at the state capitol. In legislation he reported on SB 112, an unfunded outdoor recreation grant for veterans and SB 157, which proposes a State Women's Veterans office, funded from the Veterans Assistance Grant.

Mr. Mestas said that the division annual training conference will be held in Westminster April 10-13. The semi-annual payment list has been prepared and this is 12th consecutive year that there is no report of veterans services from San Juan County. Veterans in San Juan are assisted by veterans service officers in neighboring counties. Other gaps in reporting were noted from Bent and Gilpin Counties. A new service officer has been hired in Jackson County and he will be trained at the state office. Larimer County plans to continue for the present with an interim veterans service officer. The state office will hold its selection board for new service officers in mid-February, and Mr. Robinson has agreed to serve on that board.

Ms. Hoagland said that the grants office has been very busy. The commissioning date of the USS Colorado has been scheduled for 17 March. Senator Gardner is to be the keynote speaker. Grant funds remaining to be spent in each grant stream is approximately \$350,179.80 for the Veterans Trust Fund and \$492,435.00 for the Veterans Assistance Grant. Both grants are on track for spending to date. Mr. Dailey asked if Ms. Hoagland could comment on delayed reimbursement. Ms. Hoagland said the typical turnaround has been 10 days from the time that a reimbursement request is made complete. EFTs are occasionally held for verification by the receiving bank.

Action Item

Mr. Dailey laid the question of phone attendance at meetings before the Board. Current bylaws require a quorum of four. Is that inclusive of phone attendance?

Ms. Hammon stated that she has not experienced any limitations or qualifications on phone attendance with other traveling boards of which she is a member. She suggested no limits on phone attendance. Mr. Rudder and Mr. Steen concurred. Mr. Steen suggested the Board explore permanent accommodation, such as a conference phone or voiceover IP tools.

Mr. Mestas said that cost would need to be evaluated in regard to purchasing specialized accommodation, and both Mr. Steen and Ms. Hammon offered to contribute their travel reimbursement if necessary.

New Business

Mr. Callahan ensured all the Board members had a copy of the latest revision of the strategic plan. The plan has four strategic policy initiatives with 12 goals and 15 supporting objectives. Mr. Robinson suggested a wording change on SPI 4, changing Veterans Trust Fund/ Veterans Assistance Grant funding to "grant funding."

Ms. Hammon moved to assign subcommittees to create the action plans for each SPI. This was seconded by Mr. Rudder and opened for discussion. Mr. Mestas reminded the Board that the planning sessions

are subject the sunshine law and the meetings need to be scribed. Mr. Steen suggested holding the subcommittee on the same day as the board meetings, with subcommittees meeting both before and after the meeting. The consensus was to assign two subcommittees per Board member.

Mr. Robinson moved to adopt the SPIs and goals as presented with the grant wording change. It was seconded by Mr. Rudder. The motion carried with no dissensions.

Subcommittees were assigned as follows:

Ms. Caldwell	SPI 2, SPI 3
Mr. Dailey	Floater
Ms. Golonka	SPI 1, SPI 2
Ms. Hammon	SPI 1, SPI 4
Mr. Robinson	SPI 3, SPI 4
Mr. Rudder	SPI 3, SPI 4
Mr. Steen	SPI 1, SPI 2

Mr. Callahan will distribute the revised draft and the subcommittee assignments in writing.

Community Presentation

Ms. Rocha presented graduate student Ben Buckland from the school's Veterans Resource Center to discuss student veteran issues. One of the struggles is VA vocational rehabilitation. Regular appointments with vocational rehabilitation counselors are a requirement and the students have to travel from Pueblo to Colorado Springs, which creates a hardship. This also affects students at Pueblo Community College. Mr. Dailey accepted the opportunity for the Board to advocate on behalf of accessibility for student veterans.

Upcoming Meetings

The training for Veterans Trust Fund will be held at the March meeting and the vote on applications will be held in April. The site for the March meeting is TBD as the hospital is not yet ready to host. The schedule follows:

March 02, 2018	Denver
April 06, 2018	Aurora
May 04, 2017	Jefferson County

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Rudder made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Ms. Hammon. The meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.