

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes
04 May 2018
Adams County Human Services, Room Cherry A
11860 Pecos Street
Westminster, CO 80234

Members and Guests

Members Present:

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

DMVA Staff Present:

Dave Callahan, DMVA Strategic Planner, CDVA West Interim Director
Ben Mestas, CDVA East Director
Gail Hoagland, DMVA Grant Administrator
Carissa Snyder, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present:

Debra Glade, Rocky Mountain Assisted Living
Gillian Kaag, Cohen Military Family Clinic
Tiffany Morgan, Cohen Military Family Clinic
Steve Rylant, VFW Post 41, Fort Collins
Robert Sheetz, CVSO Adams County

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Opening

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Dailey at 0902 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 greeted all in attendance and the Board members identified themselves for the record and for the benefit of the guests. Mr. Dailey thanked Mr. Sheetz and Adams County for providing the meeting space. He informed the Board that he would have to leave the meeting at approximately 10:00, at which time Mr. Rudder would assume the chair.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Dailey confirmed that the Board members present had received Mr. Robinson's modifications to the drafted minutes of the April meeting. Mr. Steen proffered a verbal correction of the date of the upcoming SBA-sponsored Veterans Small Business Conference in Colorado Springs on 05 August. It was moved by Mr. Steen and seconded by Mr. Rudder that the minutes be approved as corrected. The motion carried.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Golonka referred the Board to her email sent on 03 May, in which she reported on her interaction with Bert Potwin, Constituent Advocate for Congressman Coffman. From the perspective of the congressman's office two of the largest areas of concern to Colorado veterans are complaints about Fitzsimons, from both residents and staff, and CONG administrative issues. Veteran unemployment rates continue to be low in Colorado. She said her remote attendance at the meeting would likely be interrupted as she would soon have to parachute jump as part of a training exercise.

Ms. Hammon said that the design of the western slope one stop is approximately 90% complete and the application for prospective tenants is ready for use. They are currently seeking donation for furnishings and landscaping. Eagle County can now provide veterans with transportation to Glenwood Springs and Grand Junction.

Mr. Steen said the budget increase to allocate an additional \$300,000.00 to counties to support their county veterans service officers was signed by the governor on 02 April. He discussed strategies to encourage county commissioners to use the funds to benefit the CVSOs. According to the GDX, every dollar spent on the county veterans service office brings approximately \$5,000.00 of revenue into the county. Also, VA funds received by veteran will help those veterans decrease their need for county assistance. Mr. Rylant asked if the counties could be required to use the funds for CVSOs. Mr. Dailey said that home rule prevents the legislature from mandating the use of the funds. The fiscal note attached to the line item does specify that it is meant to be used for CVSOs. Ms. Hammon asked when counties will be notified and Mr. Mestas said those notification are usually mailed in July. Mr. Steen said that on the monthly conference call of NACO's Veterans and Military Services Committee held on 01 May, the committee was informed that and veterans' health care bill regarding Choice is schedule be in committee markup on 08 May. One issue of concern is that the Choice program is almost out of funding, and an additional allocation is needed to finance the program through the end of the fiscal year. On 25 April Mr. Steen met with Kim Hoge, director of the Colorado Springs CBOC. As of April 2018 wait times for primary care at the clinic had improved, with 74% of new appointments scheduled within 30 days. The percentage of new mental health care appointments scheduled within 30 days continues to be high at 94%. Specialty care appointments continue to be more difficult to schedule promptly. VHA is working to expand the telehealth network with eight locations now available in Colorado. He distributed copies of a brochure detailing the services available from the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System. He said that Denise Rohan, the national commander for the American Legion, will be in Colorado May 11-14.

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Mr. Robinson said that the Spanish Peaks CLC ~~has expanding to have~~ an adjoining wing with the hospital in Huerfano. There is some concern about the continuing viability of the partnership as the hospital district is in financial crisis. The legislation that attempted to exempt direct care providers from state pay rules failed. The CLCs have also experienced project complications due to contracting problems in DHS.

Ms. Golonka here exited the meeting at 10:337 a.m.

Mr. Rudder said the San Luis Valley will have a Healing Waters fly fishing event on 05 May. He attended the state VSO training held in April and it went well.

Mr. Dailey complimented Mr. Mestas on the successful training conference and said that the CDVA and VA speakers were very knowledgeable. Summit County has had two town halls within the past month. Grand County's Memorial Day event will be held in Grand Lake and Mr. Robinson will be the keynote speaker.

Community Presentations

Adams County Veterans Services

Mr. Sheetz presented a PowerPoint reading Adams County Veterans Services. Adams County has approximately 30,000 veterans and the population is increasing. The county currently sees approximately \$37,000,000 per year in VA revenue from compensation and pension, with approximately \$150,000,000 more in education benefits. The most prevalent types of compensation claims are related to PTSD and to Agent Orange. The Adams County Court for Veterans is the third largest program of its kind in Colorado. The county formed a Veterans Advisory Committee in May 2018, and the initial goals are to create a veteran's memorial and to establish a VHA CBOC.

Cohen Military Family Clinic

Ms. Morgan informed the Board that the clinic is now open at the ~~Denver Tech Center Office-University of Colorado-Anschutz campus~~ and she and Dr. Kaag showed a presentation regarding the clinic and its services. The clinic provides mental health care to post-9/11 veterans, National Guard members, reservists and their family members. Their services are available regardless of discharge status, combat experience, ability to pay, or insurance coverage, and they focus on culturally competent and easily accessible care. The Cohen network now has eight clinics nationwide and hopes to have 25 by 2020. The clinic focuses on short to medium-term care, but does help veterans to access longer-term treatment when needed.

Recess

The Board here recessed from 10:21 a.m. to 10:35 a.m. Mr. Dailey left the meeting and Mr. Rudder assumed the chair.

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Reports

Mr. Mestas said that 68 of the state's 78 county veterans services officer attended the annual training. Over the last year all 78 county service officers have completed training, with a 79th county service officer just added within the last month. San Juan County still has no service officer and provides nso county veterans services. The training conference also trained representatives from the American Legion and from Colorado nonprofits. Featured guests were VOA, Gold Star Wives, the CLCs, and a law firm that assists veterans when cases are appealed to the US Court of Veterans Appeals. State payments to some counties have been delayed due to a problem with the addresses used by the state accounting system but have been now brought up to date with the exception of Delores County. The issue the state cemetery has experienced with Sunset Mesa Funeral Directors is still under investigation by the FBI and no disinterment has been authorized by that agency. He told the Board that the financial problems experienced by hospital in Walsenburg are of concern to the veteran community due to the relationship between the hospital and the CLC, and there may be questions about it from the community at the June Board meeting.

Mr. Callahan said the groundbreaking for the Western Slope One Source is scheduled for June 2018 and the building should be completed by January 2019. The third week of May is Armed Forces Week and that is the target for the grand opening.

Ms. Hoagland said that the contract process is underway for the Veterans Trust Fund grants and that the Veteran's Assistance Grant committee recommendations are currently under department review. Contracts may not be executed by 01 July due to the length of the process. The grant agreement must

be signed by the grantee organizations, which then must return four originally signed signature pages to the department. There is then a series of department signatures that must be obtained, ~~and grants in excess of \$10,000.00 must also be signed by the state controller.~~ Not until all of the required signatures are in place ~~and in~~ the grant agreement ~~is~~ fully executed ~~will and~~ funds ~~be~~ attached. Mr. Rylant said his post is seeking guidance on how to justify a requested increase in grant funds. Ms. Hoagland said she will work with post during the next application cycle.

Action Item: Strategic Plan

Mr. Callahan referred the Board to the current draft of the plan that he emailed in advance of the meeting. He is waiting for feedback from Ms. Golonka on SPIs one and two and asked all Board members to have their final comments to him no later than 11 May. He will send out the final draft for review, but it cannot be voted on until the next meeting. Mr. Robinson said the goal associated with SPI2 has been accomplished with the Long Bill allocation of funds to the CVSOs. After discussion the consensus was to modify the goal to increasing the allocation of counties by 5% over the current base for the next three years. Mr. Callahan will incorporate the change into the new draft of the strategic plan.

New Business

Ms. Hammon said that Comeback Yoga now has two recurring classes in Eagle. Comeback Yoga is a nonprofit whose mission is to assist veterans in returning to healthy life function by them with free access to appropriately designed yoga classes. In addition to Eagle, these classes are available at the Denver VA hospital, various CBOCs, VFW Post #1, the Cohen Clinic, and at select yoga studios in Denver.

Upcoming Meetings

01 June _____ Walsenburg

No meeting in July

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Steen made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Mr. Robinson. The meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.