

**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes
Friday, 04 January 2019
Fitzsimons Veterans Community Living Center
1919 Quentin Street
Aurora, CO 80045**

Members and Guests

Members Present:

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

DMVA Staff Present:

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

Guests Present:

Ashley Hersey, Admission and Marketing Director, Fitzsimons VCLC
Robby Robinson, CBVA liaison to SVCLC Commission and Veterans Monument Trust
Theresa Rudder, President, General Federation of Women's Clubs of Colorado
Joan Schwaniger, Director of Nursing, Fitzsimons VCLC
Heidi Tyrrell, Director, Heroes Clinic, UCD School of Dental Medicine

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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 invited introductions from Board members, staff, and guests.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Scanlon recommended that the conclusion of the 07 December meeting conversation regarding the DMVA women veterans program be explained in detail. Ms. Hammon moved that the minutes be approved with this change and Ms. Scanlon seconded. The minutes were approved as corrected.

Board Member Comments

Ms. Hammon said that the 08 December veteran health resource event in Edwards was not quite as well attended as anticipated, possibly due to snowfall the previous night. UVC is assembling a commission to address suicide prevention. Eagle County continues to see success with its yoga program and has added a class at a gym for the convenience of younger veterans.

Mr. Rudder said that helping veterans access VA Community Care has been a priority in the San Luis Valley. Prompt referrals and authorization can be difficult to acquire. Healing Waters continues to be active in the area.

Ms. Scanlon said that state veteran service officer Jaclyn Murrietta is tracking the time commitment required for a State Women's Veteran Coordinator to effectively implement the women veterans program. The program may need its own service officer rather than one with additional responsibilities. Proposed designs for the license plate are in circulation. Preparation for women veterans exhibits at the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC are underway.

Mr. Gonzalez said that the Pikes Peak Cemetery participated in Wreaths Across America in December. The event was well attended by veterans and the community. Significant veteran issues in El Paso County continue to be homelessness and mental health care.

Mr. Steen said the new legislative session convenes today. Transportation and health care access are both important issues in this budget cycle.

Mr. Dailey said that the Boulder vet center will be in Summit County for outreach on 11 December. The Warrior Bonfire Program will be in Grand County in February. This program hosts retreats that include therapeutic group activities for combat veterans such as hunting, fishing, and skiing.

Public Comments

Mrs. Rudder said that the local chapter of the Federal of Womens Clubs also assisted in Wreaths Across America, helping to lay more 1,800 wreaths this year.

Ms. Tyrrell told the Board and attendees about the Heroes Clinic, which offers free and reduced price dental care to student veterans and veterans with low income. They also refer veterans to other veteran health resources such as the Marcus Institute for Brain Health and the Cohen Clinic.

Community Presentation

Ms. Hersey presented information on the mission of and services provided by the Fitzsimons VCLC. The facility offers long and short term care, Alzheimer's and dementia care, and hospice services. Eligible patients are honorably discharged veterans, veterans' spouse, and Gold Star parents. The facility capacity is 180 patients. They accept VA payment, private payment, and Medicaid. Fitzsimons has been able to maintain staffing levels in direct care. They are interested in pay range flexibility that would enable the facility to pay longtime employees the same or more and new hires.

Reports

Mr. Hunt said that the Western Slope One Source plans a soft opening in February with the ribbon cutting scheduled for 17 May. Both the Army and Air Guard will have deployments to Afghanistan this year, with a detachment departing in early January. He will attend gubernatorial inauguration on 08 January. The Office of Suicide Prevention plans to help address veteran suicide in Colorado.

Mr. Callahan gave personnel updates for CDVA East. James Poteet has been appointed Appeals Specialist for the Division and will be located at the Denver VARO beginning in February. A temporary employee is in place to cover the front desk and recruitment and testing are underway for two new veterans service officers, an office manager, and additional administrative support. The newest service officers will attend NVCVSO training in Nebraska in April. Upcoming job announcements will be distributed to Board members and county veterans service officers.

Mr. Robinson said the Veterans Monument Trust is collecting bids to repair the broken light. In regard in the SVCLC Commission, CDHS has provided and budget request to the JBC that would phase in salary increases and allow direct care CLC staff to start at the midpoint of the salary range. Statewide the staff vacancy rate is 25 percent with a turnover rate of 23 percent. The commission will prepare a letter in support of the budget proposal and has requested that the Board consider a similar action. Mr. Robinson volunteered to draft a letter for the Board should the body elect to submit one.

The Board here recessed at 10:49 and resumed labor at 11:02.

Reports

Ms. Hoagland explained the legend for the grant report, indicating which grantees will be asked to modify their contracts and return funds, which may be asked to do so, and which are already almost out of funds. Released funds will result in modified contracts, following which the disbursement of moneys returned to the VTF will be the decision of the Board. Requests for additional funds should be available to the Board by February. She asked the Board to consider a grantee situation in which a vehicle was badly damaged in a no-fault accident and the VA-provided insurance totaled the vehicle. This grantee has a vehicle that can be used during the rest of the grant cycle, but it is a situation that could recur. The Board members agreed that grantees should be encouraged not to surrender vehicle titles to VA. In regard to other grant rules, Ms. Hammon said that VA now provides mental health services to veterans with a dishonorable discharge if they have been diagnosed with service-related TBI or PTSD. Should the grant rules adjust to allow grantees to serve this population? If amended new rules would apply to the next grant cycle, so this item was noted for future consideration.

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Discussion

VAG Information for Board

Ms. Hoagland asked if detailed VAG reports could be provided to the Board quarterly, rather than on the same monthly basis and the VTF reports. The rationale is that the reports are time-consuming to produce and the VAG is not within the purview of the Board. The consensus was that quarterly reports will be provided.

State Funds and VSO Pay

Mr. Steen said that for many counties the fund provided by state in support of veteran services is not the sole course of compensation for county veterans service officers; it is a subsidy. Counties have to consider their pay scales when deciding whether to provide additional compensation to a CVSO. Ms. Scanlon said the CVSOs have been complaining that the state funds are used for different purposes altogether. Could the Board send a letter to county commissioners encouraging the use of these funds to support veterans services? Ms. Hoagland said historically that has been done annually by the

director of CDVA East. Mr. Steen said he will broach the subject with CCI and encourage commissioners to consider the fiscal ROI of veterans services.

CDHS Budget Proposal

The Board considered the timeline for submitting a letter in support of the CDHS budget proposal. Mr. Robinson had encouraged the Board to allow the SVCLC commission to submit their letter first. He will prepare a letter for the Board to review prior to the next meeting.

Strategic Plan

Mr. Steen recommended commencing effort and tracking progress on the strategic plan. Mr. Callahan said he should have hard copies of the plan available by the next meeting but encouraged the subcommittee to begin work. Mr. Steen recommended that the committee hold their meetings adjacent to the Board meetings since the members will already be assembled. No consensus was reached on a start date, as the February meeting is expected to be well attended by veterans and following two will be committed to VTF training and application evaluation.

Upcoming Meetings

01 February VFW Post 1, Denver: meeting time adjusted to 10:00
01 March Golden CBOC: time-limited meeting, agenda is grant training

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Rudder moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Gonzalez. The meeting adjourned at 12:38 p.m.