

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes
Wednesday, November 06, 2019
Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum
7711 E. Academy Blvd.
Denver, CO 80230

Members and Guests

Members Present:

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

DMVA Staff Present:

Major General Michael Loh, Adjutant General
Greg Dorman, DMVA Interim Deputy Executive Director, Resource Director and Legislative Liaison
Matthew Biniki, DMVA Legislative Liaison
Richard Tremaine, CDVA East Director
Gail Hoagland, CDVA Grant Administrator
Megan Fraser, CDVA East Administrative Assistant
Carissa Snyder, CDVA East Program Assistant

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Guests Present:

Colonel Brey Hopkins, Director of Joint Plans, Operations and Military Support Colorado National Guard
Robby Robinson, CBVA Liaison to the Board of Commissioners VCLC and Veterans Monument Trust
Theresa Rudder, President Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs

Opening

Mr. Rudder called the meeting to order at 0903 hours. Proceedings began with a recitation of the pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence for POWs, MIAs, and troops overseas. Mr. Rudder invited introductions from Board members, staff, and guests.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Dailey moved that the October 2019 minutes be approved as presented. Dr. Caldwell seconded. The motion carried.

Address of The Adjutant General

General Loh thanked the Board for their work and introduced Mr. Biniki and Colonel Hopkins for the benefit of the room. Mr. Biniki is a legislative liaison for DMVA and Colonel Hopkins has been appointment as the new DMVA Deputy Executive Director, scheduled to assume the position in January 2020. General Loh said that as the Department and the Board attempt to address the needs of Colorado veterans, the needs for data-driven decision making has increased. Survey-based feedback addressing the needs of veterans is available through CDVA and the county veterans service offices, but the needs

of veterans who do not seek benefits or services are largely undetermined. This may particularly apply to underserved and minority populations. He proposed that the Department, Division and Board jointly support a Veterans Task Force to do a statewide needs assessment for Colorado veterans. He requested input and advice from the Board of the concept, possible methods of execution, and funding. He asked the Board to consider whether grant funds could be used to support this effort.

Mr. Dorman said that as the scope of the project is determined, funding needs will become more evident. He inquired whether the Board was interested in serving as on or the proposed task force.

Ms. Scanlon asked if there is a date by which the task force might be expected to begin work. General Loh said that his intent is the next fiscal year. Ms. Hammon said the assessment could take more than one year to complete. Mr. Robinson said that the CLC Board of Commissioners is also pursuing a parallel effort in a veterans' health care needs assessment. Mr. Rudder said that further discussion under the proposal will occur under New Business.

Unfinished Business

Widow's Tax Letter – the final letter was signed by Mr. Rudder at the meeting and referred to the Department for delivery.

Bylaw Review – Ms. Hammon is coordinating with Dr. Nelson to schedule a subcommittee meeting. Mr. Dorman asked to be included in the meeting when scheduled.

CCI Panel – Mr. Dailey said the panel is prepared to present during a breakout session at the statewide CCI conference on 02 December. Ms. Scanlon said that UVC is also tracking the issues being discussed at the panel. She also inquired whether the Board should again consider a letter to county commissioners. Mr. Tremaine said that he and Ms. Iglesias will continue to participate in CCI conferences and that the issue is consistently raised by CDVA with CCI. Ms. Hammon said that county veterans service officers need to be encouraged to advocate for their offices with their boards of commissioners. Mr. Dorman said that it could be helpful for the Board to directly reach out to the boards of commissioners and county treasurers in addition to current efforts. Dr. Caldwell recommended inviting the county commissioners to Board meetings when held in their counties. Ms. Scanlon volunteered to prepare the letter for the Board's consideration.

December meeting – Ms. Hammon said the date and location for the December meeting are still in progress. She has not been able to communicate with American Legion Post 103. The post does not have a building but holds its meetings at a nearby recreation center. Ms. Hoagland said that the grant contact for the post will invite veterans to the meeting but did not have suggestions on a meeting location. Ms. Hammon said that the county veterans service officer confirmed that the county can make space available for a daytime meeting, but it would be behind a secured door. She said that the recreation center utilized by Post 103 could accommodate an evening meeting, but she has not heard back from them in regard to availability on 05 December. The Board discussed whether to hold a day or evening meeting. Ms. Hoagland said that the CVSO opined that veterans in Littleton aren't likely to attend an evening meeting, particularly one held the night after the post meeting. Dr. Caldwell said the Board will need to strategize how to engage veterans, particularly in younger age groups. Mr. Tremaine suggested a live feed of the meetings so that veterans who cannot attend in person could still participate. Ms. Hammon asked if CDVA could supply the technological resources. Mr. Tremaine said not at this point but that perhaps the Department could, with which Mr. Dorman agreed. Ms. Hammon recommended a formal effort to focus on these strategies and the Board concurred. Dr. Caldwell will lead the effort and will consult with Mr. Dorman in regard to Department support. Ms. Hammon will continue to work on a meeting location for Friday, 06 December at the usual stated time. Mr. Rudder reminded the Board that he will be absent from the meeting and Ms. Hammon will preside.

New Business

Mr. Rudder announced the committee appointments. Ms. Hammon will represent the Board at the CDVA annual training. The VTF subcommittee will be comprised of Mr. Rudder, and Mr. Gonzalez. Mr. Rudder and Dr. Caldwell will serve at the Board advisors to DMVA concerning the VAG.

Mr. Rudder reminded Board members that travel reimbursements must be submitted within 90 days in order to be paid.

Ms. Hoagland asked if the Board had any changes to make to the VTF application. Dr. Caldwell asked if Ms. Hoagland had any suggestions. Ms. Hoagland said it could be beneficial to consider geographic distribution as a separate category, as it is currently scored in conjunction with identification of service gaps. The Board agreed and discussed whether the score value should be changed. A change to the value for the new category could change the total number of possible points. The Board decided to leave the total number of possible points at 100, thus establishing five points possible for geographic distribution and five points possible for identification of service gaps. The Board approved the application with these changes.

Mr. Rudder asked the preference of the Board regarding new business items: to be submitted in advance to be considered at a stated meeting or whether introduction at the meeting is sufficient. The consensus of the Board was to provide new business items in advance, but when that is not possible The Board will continue to allow them to be introduced at the meeting.

The item regarding VTF and honor guards was withdrawn.

Discussion of the task force proposal was held after Reports.

Reports

Mr. Dorman said that there are two bills the Department is actively tracking. One would remove statutory provisions that limit the appropriation and allocation of money for tuition assistance for members of the National Guard. The other would increase the amount of active service pay for members of the National Guard, which is currently capped at \$20.00 per day.

Mr. Rudder referred the Board to Ms. Iglesias' submitted report. CDVA West has hired a new cemetery director scheduled to start on 02 December. The One Source has identified a staffing need as they have no office support. Mr. Dorman said that funding for this is included in the proposed budget.

Mr. Tremaine said DVA East is currently averaging 300 appointments per month. Training needs are being discussed, with the intent to add new content to the annual training conference in 2020 and to begin to make a virtual training library available to VSOs beginning in January. He said that Myra Dollar has accepted a position with the Colorado State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training and will begin with that agency on 02 December. A job announcement is being prepared for her position. Two announcements have been released for state veterans service officers due to the upcoming retirement of Renee Pace and an additional vacancy. One of these SVSO positions is specified for diversity and inclusion. He said he will attend the Grand County Veterans Day event with Mr. Dailey on 11 November. The Division is continuing work with VHA to create an MOU to allow service officers access to mental health units at the VAMC.

Mr. Robinson said there is no update from the Veterans Monument Trust. Barbara Grossman has resigned as administrator of the Rifle CLC and recruitment is underway for her replacement. He said the current budget request from CDHS will use cash funds rather than profits to fund the salary increases approved last year. Ms. Hammon asked if there is any legislative effort to increase the pay for nutrition and facilities employees at the CLCs. Mr. Robinson said that while the topic was raised, it did not make

the top five this year. Ms. Scanlon offered to prepare a letter to CDHS to encourage them to continue to pursue the issue.

Ms. Hoagland referred the Board to her submitted report. She noted that VTF grantees with compliance issues have been noted on the report. Compliance issues recorded on the report are major issues such as lack of spending and failure to submit quarterly reports. Problems with reimbursement requests are not recorded as compliance issues on the report. Ms. Scanlon asked if Ms. Hoagland could in the future indicate on the report which grantees are new recipients this year and Ms. Hoagland agreed to do so.

Discussion

Mr. Rudder invited discussion regarding General Loh's task force proposal. Mr. Gonzalez agreed with Ms. Hammon's earlier statement that the assessment could take up to two years. Mr. Dorman said that while grant funds might be possibly fund the effort, they are not the only option. The Department might consider contracting with an organization that already has resources throughout the state, such as CCI. He said other state departments may be consulted and involved, such as CDHS, CDLE and Higher Education. Ms. Hammon moved that the Board establish a subcommittee to define the cope of the work. Ms. Scanlon seconded. The motion carried. Mr. Rudder appointed Ms. Hammon, Ms. Scanlon, and Mr. Steen to the committee.

Board Member Comments

Mr. Gonzalez said that he attended the Adjutant General's leadership luncheon on 31 October. He also attends the October meet and greet event for the new garrison commander at Fort Carson. He will attend the investment ceremony of Terrance Mc Williams as a Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army.

Dr. Caldwell said that it has been determined that multiple systems across 17 states are used to identify veterans in health care. The data can be used to provide information on current trends to indicate needs and service gaps. A joint effort is underway as different health systems combine their data.

Ms. Scanlon attended the retirement ceremony of Brigadier General Laura Clellan, assistant adjutant general, Army, commander of the Colorado Army National Guard on 19 October. The women veterans exhibit is on display at the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC. UVC will meet on 12 November and Ms. Scanlon will communicate their legislative goals to the Board at the December meeting.

Ms. Hammon said that Comeback Yoga now holds 55 sessions a week in Edwards and Denver. She encouraged the Board members to attend Stand Downs. She participated in Senator Bennett's panel for nominees for the Air Force Academy. The Western Slope Veterans Coalition held an open house at the Glenwood resource center in October that was attended by 75 veterans.

Mr. Dailey said that The Grand County Veterans Day ceremony will be attended by Mr. Tremaine as previously mentioned, and by Michael Kilmer from the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC.

Upcoming Meetings

03 January – Denver VARO, Lakewood

07 February 2019 – Mount Carmel Center for Excellence, Colorado Springs

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Dailey moved to adjourn. Mr. Gonzalez seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.