

**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes**  
**Friday, 02 August 2019**  
**Western Region One Source**  
**482 28 Road**  
**Grand Junction, CO 81501**

**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  
Norm Steen, Member

**DMVA Staff Present:**

Mickey Hunt, DMVA Deputy Executive Director  
Joanne Iglesias, CDVA West Director  
Rich Tremaine, CDVA East Director  
Jessica Morratto, Veterans Memorial Cemetery Director  
Myra Dollar, CDVA East Office Manager  
Meighan Marquis, WROS Property Manager  
Gail Hoagland, CDVA Grant Administrator  
Carissa Snyder, CDVA East Program Assistant

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**Guests Present:**

Dana Brosig, Grand Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Erin Cavit, CVSO Hinsdale County  
Jim Doody, Vietnam War Memorial Park  
Wendy Hoffman, Operation Revamp  
Dave Krutsinger, CDOT  
Glen LeDoux, VFW  
Dale LNU, Army veteran  
Alyssa Logan, Regional Representative for Sen. Michael Bennett  
Kathleen Lyons, Eagle County DHS  
Fred Marshall, UVC  
Gary Parrot, Commander Grand Valley Honor Guard  
Theresa Rudder, President, Colorado Association of Women's Clubs

**Opening**

Mr. Rudder called the meeting to order at 0936 hours. Proceedings began with a recitation of the pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence for POWs, MIAs, and troops overseas. Mr. Rudder explained the role of the Board to the attendees and invited introductions from Board members, staff, and guests.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Snyder advised that addition corrections to the June minutes had been received from Ms. Hammon and Mr. Gonzales. It was moved by Mr. Dailey and seconded by Mr. Gonzalez that the minutes be approved as corrected. The motion carried.

## **Board Member Comments**

Mr. Dailey said that both Grand and Summit Counties have seen an increase in the number of veterans who locate there during the warmer months. His office participated in the annual July 04 parade in Granby. The event continues to grow with more than 7,000 attendees in 2019.

Dr. Caldwell said the Centura Health Network is continuing its effort to identify veterans who register for inpatient or emergency care by adding the query to the registration system and including it in the electronic health record. They have employed the Columbia rating scale to evaluate suicide risk and use this assessment to inform the care team when planning approaches and treatment. The goal is to provide culturally consistent for veterans.

Ms. Hammon said that the Eagle County area also sees a lot of veteran who are there seasonally, and they have had an increase in incarceration of veterans with mental health issues. The hospital in Vail has opened a six-bed crisis unit. New county veterans service officers have been hired in Garfield, Pitkin, and Routt Counties. All three will attend statewide annual VSO training in August. There is now a Blue Star Family Club in Eagle that has been very well received.

Ms. Scanlon visited the Normandy American Cemetery adjacent to Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery at Meuse Argonne where her great uncle is buried. There are 25 overseas cemeteries for American service members, all managed under the jurisdiction of the American Battle Monuments Commission. She was also able to assist a family member to obtain two medals that he had earned but were not in his collection. She encouraged attendees to assist older veterans who might need this assistance. She will represent the Board at the UVC meeting on September 10.

Mr. Gonzalez said he served on the selection committee for El Paso County Veteran of the Year, which will be announced in September. He attended the Korean War armistice memorial ceremony held in Memorial park the last weekend of July. He also attended the change of command ceremonies for the Striker Brigade at Fort Carson and for the 21<sup>st</sup> Space Wing at Peterson AFB.

Mr. Steen said the Colorado Department of Transportation is actively working on plans to assist veterans with transportation for health care services. Mr. Krutsinger attended the meeting to brief all attendees on the most recent developments. He attended a July stakeholder meeting concerning creating a new state veterans' Community Living Center in the Pikes Peak Region. Current estimates show that with the high veteran population in that area, the need for this care will exceed availability by 2035. The intent is to create a facility with a public-private partnership modelled on the one in use in Walsenburg.

Mr. Rudder said that in the San Luis valley and much of southern Colorado the prevalent issue is access to medical care. The San Luis Valley transit board is working to address the problem. The VA town hall held in Alamosa did discuss the Mission Act, but few answers were available on practical application of the act's provisions.

## Public Comment

Mr. Doody invited attendee to visit the Vietnam War memorial park in Fruita. Also referred to as the Field of Dreams, the park is dedicated to those who served in support of that conflict. A prominent feature is a static display of a UH-1H Huey helicopter, which has motion activated audio to enhance the visitor experience. A memorial wall has the emblems for each of the U.S. military branches and names of service members from Colorado's western slope who died in the conflict are on the wall. The park has recently added Welcome Home statues and has plans to augment the memorial with additional art, including a map of Southeast Asia.

Mr. Marshall said that the Board meetings might not be accessible to many veterans while held on a weekday. He would like to see the Board represented on social media. He is concerned that someone within the state or VHA may be providing mailing lists of veteran to vendors. He is seeking records from VA town halls sponsored by the American Legion approximately two years ago. He said the Mission Act may prove more if the VA can contact more community providers.

Ms. Cavit said transportation will always be a concern in very rural areas of Colorado. The Mission Act provides the best prospect for relief, but that local care needs to be coordinated through VHA and the provider needs to be paid. Currently the VAM in Grand Junction and the VOA in Durango try to help to coordinate care, but both are so distant from Hinsdale County that complications are constant. Mr. Dailey said he will provide a VOA contact that is specific to Colorado's mountain areas.

Mr. Parrot said that as a representative of the Honor Guard, he believes that 501(c)(19) organizations should be eligible to apply for the VAG Grant. He said they are charitable organizations, and that the honor guards provide for the final needs of veterans as they are laid to rest.

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Glen LeDoux said that the Western Region Resource has been a valuable addition to the community. It has strengthened the supportive atmosphere experience by veterans on the western slope.

Ms. Lyons thanks the veterans present for their service, and thanks the county veterans service officers for their continued support of veterans in Eagle County.

Ms. Hoffman said that many veterans have been moving to the area, which has resulted in an increase of the number needing assistance. The Western Region One Source has been a valuable resource.

Ms. Brosig said her organization in partnership with CDOT is developing a 2035 regional transportation plan for Grand Valley. They are just beginning the public involvement phase and welcome input from local veterans. She had sign up forms available for attendees who might wish to participate. They have a trainer available who can provide outreach to community groups to help educate people on how to use mass transit. Discounted service is available to veterans and daily service is available from Grand Junction to Denver and from Grand Junction to Durango.

Mr. Dale provided a handout and encouraged support for a prospective veterans' prostate cancer support group based on the PCRI model created by Dr. Mark Scholz. Dr. Scholz is a prostate cancer educator who founded the Prostate Cancer Research Institute and has created successful support groups in California.

## **Community Presentations**

### CDOT

Mr. Krutsinger said that CDOT is in the planning process to improve statewide access to health care transportation for veterans. The three overarching goals are safety, mobile options, and transparency. They are currently holding county meetings throughout the state to seek local input and well a performing other outreach at events such a county fairs. He supplied an information packet and indicated where attendees could locate maps of the current state highways and veterans' medical facilities. The need to increase regional transportation has risen since Greyhound no longer provides legacy services within the state. He said CDOT is trying to increase partnerships with local transportation providers, particularly in Grand Junction, Gunnison, and Montrose. The intent for the developing new services is to provide wheelchair-capable buses with reclining seats, chargers, wifi, and restrooms. Ms. Cavit suggested they consider the feasibility of a voucher system for payment, as veterans have to wait for VA travel reimbursement and may not be able to afford the fare up front.

### Veterans Memorial Cemetery

Ms. Iglesias and Ms. Morratto said that the total internments for FY 2019 was 4,449. Funds for capital construction were included in the Long Bill. The \$25,000,000 will fund irrigation, expansion, and additional columbaria. The cemetery has difficulties with VA reimbursements due to a change in VA's process. Reimbursements are often significantly delayed and often unidentified, complicating tracking. To date no reimbursements have been received for internments since March. This is a known nationwide issue.

### Western Region One Source

Ms. Iglesias thanked all in attendance for their support of the Western Region One Source. The community has been very generous with donations of equipment, furniture, and flags. The DEERS office served 82 veterans in May 89 in June, and 11 in July. State Veterans Service Officer Brian Oney has had 28 appointments over the eight days that his WROS office was open in May, followed by 51 appointments in June and 71 in July. VA will send a public contact representative to the WROS one day per month in addition to the one week per month they are at the VAMC. The WROS provides a weekly newsletter to its counties and attends weekly VFW breakfasts to continue connecting with local veterans. The latest tenants moving in include VOA, Transportation of America, and employment services. They will host the women veterans' tea on August 17.

## **Reports**

Mr. Hunt presented a plaque to Mr. Dailey to thank him for his service as Chair from 2016-2019. He said his last day with the department will be in two weeks. His replacement is currently being selected. In response to a concern earlier expressed by Mr. Doody, he assured attendees that the state does not sell or otherwise provide veteran mailing lists. He said that an additional cash fund has again been provided to the Veterans Assistance Grant and that the department would welcome recommendations from the Board on how the funds might be best utilized. Mr. Rudder presented Mr. Hunt with a gift from the Board to thank him for his service to the Board and to Colorado veterans. Ms. Iglesias and Ms. Hammon also presented gifts and thanks to Mr. Hunt.

In Mr. Dorman's absence, Mr. Steen reported that the Legion Act has been signed into law. All veterans from World War II forward are now eligible for Legion membership.

Mr. Tremaine said he has now been with the DVA East for 120 days. He thanks Mr. Hunt for his service. He introduced the DVA East staff present at the meeting. He said DVA-E is implementing technological

improvements to facilitate communication and training. Video conferencing and training will be available to all county veterans service officers. The state has provided webcams to each county and will create a video training library to make remote training accessible at any time. The statewide annual training conference will be held the last week in August. Three state veteran service officers attended the Colorado Mental Health Summit. One state veterans service officer has been designated to specialized training with the Marcus Brain Institute to increase a subject matter expertise regarding veterans and traumatic brain injury. Mr. Tremaine will attend the annual conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veteran Affairs later this month.

Ms. Hoagland thanked Ms. Hoffman for her attendance and said the only item in addition to the submitted report was to inform the Board of the cash fund for the Veterans Assistance Grant. Mr. Steen asked if grantees could assist veterans with regional transportation cost by paying for bus tickets or passes. Ms. Hoagland said they could if that was included in their approved line item budget. The grantee would need to provide a receipt for the payment method and maintain a signed log showing to whom passes were distributed and when.

*The Board here recessed at 11:29 and resumed at 11:43*

#### **Discussion/Action Items**

Mr. Tremaine requested that the Board allocate \$15,000 for this fiscal year from the Veterans Trust Fund for CBVA travel expenses for 2019-2020, and that the Board allocate \$50,000 from the Veterans Trust Fund to support the Census 2020 complete count project. Ms. Scanlon questioned whether \$15,000 would be a sufficient allocation for travel. Ms. Hammon concurred and recommended that the Division consider \$20,000. Mr. Tremaine modified his request to \$20,000.00. Ms. Hammon moved that the Board allocate \$20,000 for this fiscal year from the Veterans Trust Fund for CBVA travel expenses for 2019-2020. Ms. Scanlon seconded. Mr. Dailey said the Board could consider whether some of the established travel is necessary. He asked Mr. Hunt if the Board is required to visit the Veterans Memorial Cemetery each year. Mr. Hunt said that the current bylaws require a meeting to be held west on the continental divide and added that that rule was made when the Board was based in Denver. He said **he this** could be less necessary since the staff at CDVA West will be regularly reporting on the cemetery. Ms. Hammon asked what the travel expenses were for 2018-2019. Ms. Hoagland referred to the end of year report, which lists a total of \$11,316.48. However, not all expenses were submitted so the real total was probably higher. Also the Board's strategic plan requires a greater number of non-monitoring site visits to VTF grantee organizations in this fiscal year, which could have costs attached. Ms. Hammon asked if \$25,000 might be more appropriate. Mr. Tremaine said that the Division would support \$25,000. Ms. Hammon amended her motion to allocate \$25,000 for this fiscal year from the Veterans Trust Fund for CBVA travel expenses for 2019-2020. Ms. Scanlon seconded. The motion carried.

Mr. Steen said that the Board members should ensure that any travel reimbursed by these funds is to the benefit of veterans. He encouraged the Board members to help publicize the meetings and encourage attendance from veterans and the community. Mr. Tremaine said that his office will publicize the meetings in DVA East. Ms. Scanlon said that she announces them at each UVC meeting. Mr. Rudder said that a new American Legion directory should be available soon and he will share those contacts with DVA East. Ms. Hoagland said that she notifies and encourages attendance from grantees.

The Board next considered the proposed allocation for the Census 2020 project. Mr. Dailey asked specifically how the funds would be used and Mr. Tremaine said that is not yet known. Mr. Hunt said that David Callahan is spearheading this project and should have more information. The Board decided to table this request until additional data is available.

Ms. Hoagland said that the current VTF grant award to the Spanish Peaks CLC is to buy a van. The CLC has found a van for approximately \$9,000 less than the original bid, and has requested to modify their grant agreement to put the now remaining grant funds toward the purchase of another, smaller van to assist with additional transportation needs. Dr. Caldwell so moved and Mr. Dailey seconded. The motion carried.

### **Unfinished Business**

Ms. Scanlon said the letter she and Ms. Hammon agreed to prepare in regard to the “widows’ tax,” wherein retirement benefits are reduced for surviving spouses as they are offset by VA benefit payments, may no longer be needed. All of Colorado’s congressional representatives currently support the effort to permit concurrent receipt. Mr. Steen suggested instead contacting those representative to thank them for their continued support. Board members could volunteer to testify. Ms. Scanlon asked **if** that was permissible. Mr. Hunt said that is was but it make sure The Adjutant General knows about it first. The Board decided that Ms. Hammon and Ms. Scanlon will write the letter to these revised guidelines.

Mr. Dailey asked if there was still an intent for the Board to write to CCI encouraging support and funding of county veterans service officers. Mr. Steen that the issue was addressed effectively in person when David Callahan attended the CCI spring conference. He recommended further in-person advocacy. Mr. Hunt suggested that a representative from DMVA leadership address CCI at each meeting. The next meeting will be at the end of November. Mr. Steen said with notice they could prepare a panel discussion.

Mr. Steen asked if the strategic plan needed to be addressed at the time. Ms. Hammon said the SPIs had been reviewed at the Board’s training session and specific action will probably wait upon the advice of Mr. Callahan.

### **New Business**

Mr. Rudder appointed a bylaw review committee consisting of himself, Ms. Hammon and Ms. Scanlon. Mr. Dailey said he intends to invite a VHA representative to speak at the October meeting in Boulder.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

September 06 Boulder Public Library – meeting time 10:15  
October 04 Florence, SVCLC  
November 06 Aurora, Wings Over the Rockies

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mr. Dailey moved to adjourn. Mr. Steen seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:34 p.m.