

Approved

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes
Friday, June 5, 2020
WebEx

Members and Guests

Members Present:

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

DMVA Staff Present:

Gail Hoagland, Grant Administrator
Joanne Iglesias, Director CDVA West
Rich Tremaine, Director CDVA East
Carissa Snyder, Office Manager CDVA East
Megan Fraser, Administration CDVA East
Dee Debor, Administration CDVA East

Guests Present:

Jack Murphy
Jake Underwood, Team Rubicon
Dan Scalise, CVSO
Jay Scott, Otero County CVSO
Ray Odum, Las Animas County CVSO
Adrian Medina, Pueblo County CVSO
Jamie Robelson, Team Rubicon

Opening

Mr. Rudder called the meeting to order at 0907 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

Pat motioned to approve minutes as submitted.

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Guest Commentary

Mr. Scott provided information about the VA clinics reopening and the VA hospital recommencing elective procedures and other services.

Mr. Dailey requested Team Rubicon to remind everyone of their mission statement.

Mr. Underwood, stated Team Rubicon unites skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams, both domestically and internationally. Recent response has been in regards to Covid-19 and they have been responding across the state.

Unfinished Business

Ms. Hammon says they are still waiting to hear back about proposed changes in By-laws from the Attorney General's office.

New Business

Protecting veterans benefits during a state budget deficit –

Ms. Hammon can report from legislative committee of the UVC. General assembly is back in session, working through a 3-4 billion dollar loss in general funds. Funds are being swept in order to handle general fund needs. Some possible impacts for veterans – 100% PTE will be suspended for at least one year. This bill has not yet been passed but this is the proposal. Mr. Steen provided clarification about the Disabled Veteran Property Tax Exemption Law when Mr. Rudder queried about the specifics.

Query was made by Mr. Dailey about the PTE, whether the revocation would just be of new enrollees or of all existing veterans in the state program. Mr. Steen provided further clarification of the PTE, he was uncertain on the total fiscal note of the program statewide. Mr. Tremaine stated the state should not take away veterans benefits.

Ms. Hoagland provided an update related to the VTF and VAG. The master settlement fund created the Trust Fund account, each year funds are allocated that the Board has spending authority on. A certain percentage goes into the Trust Fund account and gains interest. There is approximately 7 million in the VTF, 3 million was taken for the general fund next year leaving 4 million dollars in the account. The amount that was allocated for spending authority for VTF grants has not been impacted. Regarding property tax, excess PT funds that the state does not give to counties, a percentage of that is allocated to go into a cash fund for the Veteran assistance grant program. In consultation with the board, the decision was made to only spend a percentage of that money so that a cash fund would remain and it could be utilized on an annual

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basis. There is just about 1.6 million in that account. 1 million of that is being swept, leaving approximately \$600,000 in that fund. Ms. Hammon thanked her for the detailed explanation. She provided that in the past when they have swept those funds, the Board and other interested parties have reminded the legislature that they owe them the funds back with interest. Ms. Hammon expects that to be the protocol this time as well. Ms. Hoagland let her know that at this time there is no discussion about returning those funds in the proposed legislation as there was in the past.

Mr. Dorman HB 2387 clarified that the proposed legislation only gets rid of the senior homestead exemption, not the disabled veteran property tax exemption.

Strategic plan

Mr. Callahan began by reminding the Board it has been 18-24 months since they last reviewed the strategic plan.

SPI 1. 1.1 is understanding issues facing veterans. Meeting conducted in each congressional district by 2020. Mr. Callahan requested an update from the Board. Mr. Rudder that provide for both 2019 and 2020 that they are at 6 out of 7 for each year. In 2018 they were at 5/7.

SPI 1.1.2 is receiving annual feedback for issues facing veterans. Mr. Callahan is unsure if accurate data exists for this SPI; Ms. Hammon confirmed that this data does not exist. Mr. Callahan inquired if they were going to continue with this SPI. Mr. Rudder said that they were going to get that data from the annual conference, which has not yet occurred this year. Mr. Callahan inquired about the data from 2018 and 2019; Mr. Rudder confirmed that data was not collected; Mr. Callahan is putting 0/64 for each year. Ms. Hammon proposed to ask the SVSOs to include a survey to distribute to all of the CVSOS that they can disseminate this year at the annual training conference. Mr. Steen reminded the Board that there is a report function in VetraSpec that summarizes the number of actions by category, that this report could be generated in that way.

Mr. Tremaine says that on VetraSpec that they don't have the ability to mine specific data because there is an a la carte charge. He said that he could send a message to the state VSOs running the conference with the request. Mr. Steen inquired if this ties into TAGs mission, Ms. Hammon says yes. She believes it is achievable for 2020.

1.2 CVSos consolidate and provide feedback. Provided target amounts for 2018 – 2020. Mr. Steen spoke – check recording.

1.3 Provide annual program updates to the legislature NLT July of each year for all state funded Veteran programs. Ms. Hammon inquired of Mr. Dorman if he has been doing this. Mr. Dorman said those are done in December by the letter from the Board of the Governor and legislature.

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Date changed from July – December. Ms Scanlon inquired if it should be left as July because that is the end of the fiscal year. Added 9by statute)

1.4 – Communicate recommended changes to Colorado VA director No later than July of each year. Ms Hammon inquired, what changes? Mr. Steen and Mr. Dorman worked to clarify what communication is required. Mr. Callahan suggested the board needs to examine whether the strategic plan being extended out for more years. Ms. Hammon suggested they try and get this done by October. Mr. Steen pointed out that they had two years with no action. Ms. Scanlon asked if they wrote the letter now, what it should say. Ms Hammon inquired, this is VA general, what information are they really after? LISTEN TO THIS DISCUSSION.

Ms. Hammon inquired of Mr. Tremaine if this is data that could also be collected at the ATC? Mr. Tremaine replied in the affirmative. Ms. Hammon offered for her or Mr. Ruder to work with the SVSOS running the conference to put together a survey for those items. Mr Rudder inquired about what is and what is not working. Mr Tremaine said that they can send out a letter to all VSOS at any time. Ms Iglesias said she emails all west cvsos every month asking for their data. She said it would be easy to include the questions the board needs information for and collect monthly info. Mr. Scott suggested that a form could be submitted with the CVA 26 as to what their wants and needs are and they could submit those together. Mr Rudder said that some counties don't submit those forms and supported Ms Iglesias idea. Mr Dailey backed Mr. Scott's suggestion, citing its efficiency. Ms Caldwell said there could be data collection in both ways. Mr Rudder cited challenges LISTEN for these. Ms Hammon suggested she would work on a template for CVSOS changes for VA and vHA policies. Mr. Rudder thanked her, verified this can not be completed by July, it was changed to December.

SPI2 – advanced communications

2.1 – CVA brand established and circulated. Mr. Rudder inquired if they were supposed to make a logo. Mr. Callahan confirmed that was the case. Ms. Hammon said they wanted to come up with a mission statement and a brochure. Mr. Steen clarified what they meant by their branding. Mr Rudder said their byline was going to be 'veterans really matter' Mr Steen said it is more than an advertising scheme, it is how they function, their entire ethos. Ms Hammon says that committee needs to work on that.

Multiple board members inquired as to how they meet. Mr. Steen says that the strategic plan should govern how they function, if it is a distraction, they should no longer have one. Ms Caldwell asked if what is in the SP is appropriately within their purview as a type II Board. Ms Scanlon asked if somebody on the staff can look into. Mr Steen said that if it is inappropriate that the board can drop a measure if they can't do it. Ms Caldwell said that while a pamphlet could be helpful, that the branding is not necessarily a thing. Mr Steen said it isn't about a logo, it's what the veterans see and think of the board. Ms Caldwell suggested getting rid of measure 2.1. Ms Hammon said she would like to try it again. Mr Steen suggested redefining the outcome not the

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objective. Ms Hammon suggested tabling 2.1 to come up with a new outcome to a future meeting.

2.1 publish a dCBVA trifold No later than July of 2019. Mr Callahan requested an update. Ms Hammon thought it was done, Mr rudder said not the trifold. Mr rudder says they don't have that capability. Ms ahmmon suggests tabling this measure as well for a later meeting.

2.1 – increase stakeholder and customer attendance at CBVA board meetings by 15% in 2020. Mr Callahan suggested looking at the rosters to determine who was attending and inquired Mr Tremaine if that is something his office could provide. Mr Tremaine said that Ms Fraser can look back and gather that data.

2.2 increase number of outreach activities and events attended by CBA members 15 percent by 2020. Ms Hammon said that again they would have to review the minutes. Mr Rudder said we only need to review 2020, Ms Hammon said the data for 2020 is skewed due to Covid-19. Mr Gonzalez said things have slowed down. Mr Callahan asked if they wanted to go back to 2018 and 2019. Mr steen pointed out that if we are going to establish a trend. Ms Hammon says she believes the numbers from the previous years are important. Mr. Callahan concurred with Mr Steen that online events also count as outreach. Mr Callahan asked if could expand till 2023. Mr Tremaine inquired if this could be put on hold until Ms Fraser determines if she can gather the requested data.

2.3 create a CBVA website by July 2019. Discussion ensued. Mr Dorman said he doesn't think the board is going to get their own full website, they have a page on the department website. He inquired, you want mission, vision, etc. Said we don't have the bandwidth to do a regular update. Mr Rudder suggested scrapping this.

SPI3

3.1 – increase CBVA board members non monitoring site visits. Ms Hammon says she finds this to be important LSITEN. Mr Scott inquired how many grant applications were turned in by April. Mr Rudder replied 71. Ms Hoagland described this as a meet and greet. Ms Hammon suggested each board member talks with Gail and visits with 3 grantees each about what LISTEN

3.2 – increase collected of VTF feedback to 21 by 2020. Ms Hoagland has ptu together a survey monkey, by the end of the month that will close and she can collect that data.

3.3 formalize and establish distribution process of the VTF grantee best practies.

SPI4

4.1

4.2

Mr steen talked.

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Mr Callahan said that due to the reduced funds as stated at the beginning of the meeting, that they need to reduce the target amount.

Mr. Callahan said he would update the dashboard and send it to the board.

Mr. Rudder called for a 10 minute break at 10:40am.

Mr. Callahan and Mr. Scott had to leave the meeting.

Meeting resumed at 10:53am

FY 20 – 21 CBVA Meetings

August meeting – Burlington VFW Post is not big enough to meet in and maintain a 6 foot distance. Ms. Hammon says things are closed through August and suggested one more WebEx meeting till things reopen. Mr. Dailey suggested NE CO where there isn't a VA presence, perhaps a fair ground or something so social distancing is possible. His idea is to expand the presence of the CBVA.

August – WebEx

September – Eastern plains – Limon? Duane and Pat

October – Grand Junction, WROS and training confirmed. Megan dn Pat discuss where to stay

November – Wings over the Rockies

December – VA Hospital

Board Reports

Ms. Iglesias received exciting news from National cemetery administration. The cemeteries are now reopen and can have full honors for anyone interred since March. County parameters will still be observed. WROS – hired a property administrator and a triage assistant for the front desk, both are starting next week. She thanked the board for the funding for the assistant position.

Ms Caldwell announced her resignation to the Board effective June 20, 2020.

Mr Rudder reviewed that Mr Steen has to reapply for his Board position this year.

Mr Dailey said that Mr Robinson is at the veterans memorial that was recently damaged and working on assessing damage and repairing it. Ms Hammon said that funds are being swept regarding the CLC's . there was to be a research study to see what veterans needs would be, that study has been scrapped. The DHS is still going to do that research study. Ms Scanlon said only Fitzsimmons had covid, 14 veterans died, the other VCLCs are okay. All are still closed to visitors. Lots of Fitzsimmons staff is asymptomatic and that is causing a staffing problem.

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Ms Scanlon asked Mr Tremaine for an update on General Loh's position. Mr Tremaine suggested Mr Dorman could provide a better update. Ms Hammon said General Loh's nomination has not yet come up for review therefore his national appointment is not yet finalized. He has been nominated by Gov Polic to be the commanding general of the US national guard.

Ms Hoagland – echoed the remarks to Hollie, thanked her for her leadership, particularly in regards to the VAG, she appreciates Ms Caldwell's insight, LISTEN. Ms. Hoagland is not certain if the long bill will be finished and designed for the new FY grants to begin on July 1 as normal. We are currently in a holding pattern. Ms Scanlon inquired if all monies will be spent by grantees for the last FY. Ms Hoagland said that is varying, execution rate may be about 80%. Many trust fund grantees are individuals at high risk and are limiting contact, additionally not all are tech savvy and are therefore not easily able to continue services during the pandemic. Some grantees however have been very creative and active in supporting veterans during the stay at home and safer and home periods.

Ms Hammon said many of the posts have a restaurant or bar that their revenue is used to keep the post open and many posts are in the position of closing permanently due to lack of income during Covid. It is another problem that grantees are having. Mr Dailey inquired if long bill is signed by 30 June, what date could they then project the announcement of the VTF awards. Ms Hoagland said if signed by 30 June then announcements will go out that day. LISTEN

Mr Steen inquired if there is a 10% cut what happens. Ms Hoagland said this could be discussed in this meeting, that the plan was if it was a 10% cut that would apply across the board, if it is a 20% or greater cut then they will reconvene and determine who will actually receive funding. LISTEN

Motion from Mr Steen, Ms Hammon seconded.

Mr Dailey said it is premature to consider because there are too many unknowns.

Vote – 20% or less

Unanimous approval

Board member remarks –

Ms Caldwell – are covid patients veterans? in over 400 cases, not a single instance of documenting veteran status was documented because that staff had no PPE training to go into the rooms to collect the demographic information. Mr Steen thanked her for her service.

Ms Scanlon – began a new job on 1 June, now chief of staff of CO homeland security and emergency management. She is no longer on the UVC legislative committee because this is a state job. Ms Hammon is the new UVC rep. she took an 80 year old vet to emergency care, got him covid testing, took 45 minutes to get him seen and he was in very bad shape. The UVC is having their banquet on the 23 August, she pointed out that Mr Hopkins is not at this meeting

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and she is disappointed that he could not make this once monthly meeting. Mr Steen will also attend UVC.

Ms Hammon – has been busy with zoom meetings, has still been actively engaged in outreach and providing financial support. Lots of her veterans are seasonal employees. She has many only veterans and they are working to stay in close contact and be supportive of them. WROS will be opening with modified service. Is uncertain if the UVC banquet will happen. Did lots of memorial day activities, taped at 10am with only 10 people present and showed it at 5pm. The boy scouts did do flags in the cemetery. The community still came together and honored vets.

Mr Steen, doing lots re covid in the county level. Now working towards economy recovery. One focus is working on getting vet back to work. Working on a state wide vet org and the commercial sector to rehire vets and get them back to work. Personal announcement – reapplied to get reconfirmed to this board. Yesterday he was called by the AL and appointed as the legislative chair for the AL, he will be working closely with the UVC for legislative matters.

Mr Gonzalez – thanked Ms Caldwell for her service. Defunding of senior and disabled vets PTE, he opposed that. In the middle of their local vet of the year award in el paso county, he is participating in reviewing the applications for the candidates.

Mr Dailey – thanked Ms Caldwell for her dedication, her agenda has been veteran centric with a specialty in grant guidance. Would like to discuss the new 72 hour rule for contacting the VA with Mr Tremaine. Mr Fraser will communicate this to Mr Tremaine. Flags laid at gravemarkers at Fraser cemetery and at Granby.

Mr Rudder won't be back into his regular office until at least July and expects it to be later than that. They have done two funerals which were both lightly attended by family. The VFW in Alamosa is now gone. To Ms Caldwell, you will be missed, we hope the very best for you, you have been a great inspiration for me, you have been an influence on every member of this Board.

Ms Scanlon requested Mr Rudder send Mr Hopkins an email requesting he not hold other meetings during the monthly board meeting. Mr Rudder agreed.

Ms Hammon motioned to adjourn. Mr Gonzalez seconded.

Unanimous approval. Meeting adjourned at 11:55am.