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Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs Minutes
Friday, August 7, 2020
Webex

Members and Guests

Members Present

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

DMVA Staff Present:

Gen. Laura Clellan, The Adjutant General of Colorado
Brey Hopkins, Deputy Executive Director DMVA
David Callahan, Strategic Planner DMVA
Greg Dorman, Legislative Liaison DMVA
Richard Tremaine, Director CDVA East
Joanne Iglesias, Director CDVA West
Gail Hoagland, Grants Administrator DMVA
Carissa Snyder, Office Manager CDVA East
Megan Fraser, Administration CDVA East

Guests Present:

Bryan Stice, VA Mental Health
Robbie Robinson, VCLC
Leon Pohl, CVSO Gilpin County
Jim Pickart, CVSO Park County
Sheldon Smith, CVSO Montrose County
Ron Brown, CVSO Yuma County

Opening

Mr. Rudder called the meeting to order at 9am. Proceedings began with a recitation of the pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence for POWs, MIAs, and troops overseas. Mr. Rudder then yielded the floor to Mr. Hopkins.

Mr. Hopkins introduced the new TAG, Brigadier General Laura Clellan, and asked the Board members to introduce themselves. In order:

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Mr. Rudder, Rio Grande County CVSO

Ms. Golonka, returning Board member

Mr. Steen of Teller County, 32 year army veteran, County Commissioner Teller County

Ms. Hammon, VSO for Eagle County, the western slope representative on the Board and a Vietnam US Army nurse, welcomed the new TAG

Ms. Scanlon, Marine, CO Dept. of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, in Colorado Springs

Mr. Dailey was having technical difficulties

Mr. Gonzalez, retired Air Force intelligence officer, went on deployments to the Middle East and Latin America, is presently a County Commissioner for El Paso County

TAG stated it was nice to meet the Board, she is having lots of tech issues this morning and is glad it's Friday. She is looking forward to working with the Board. She is about finding areas where the Board can make a difference. She is in listening mode right now and she'd like the Board members to let her know what we can do to get better and help out our veterans. It is a tough year. TAG looks forward to hearing from everyone over the next month. Ms. Iglesias said it is good to see TAG again, Mr. Tremaine and Mr. Robinson concurred. TAG reiterated, that this is a big job and she is listening a lot right now. She stated that she is not the smartest person in the room, that there are plenty of smart people that I want to listen to.

Mr. Hopkins apologized for hijacking the meeting from Mr. Rudder.

Mr. Rudder welcomed the new TAG, commented they like having a new TAG so they can train her themselves.

Minutes

Ms. Hammon motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Gonzalez seconded. Unanimous approval. The motion carried.

Guest Speaker – Mr. Bryan Spice, VA Mental Health

Mr. Spice gave gratitude for being able to speak with the group. He stated that historically every VA hospital has been tasked with putting on a VA mental health summit. Due to the issues this year the summits were initially put on a full stop however, they have now been cleared to put on a virtual conference. Mr. Callahan will be presenting the relative WIGs for the key stakeholders who will be attending. Additionally, there will be sessions related to veteran and military culture, and trauma informed care. Some of the stakeholders will be new to working with veterans and they need to become culturally attune to the veteran population. They also want to give time to race related trauma. Other topics include domestic violence, MST, and suicide prevention. A save the date will be sent out soon. It will be Wednesday, October 7th and is expected to last approximately 6 hours.

Mr. Spice invited feedback. Mr. Rudder queried about the software being used to host the virtual conference. Mr. Spice verified that it will be held online using either WebEx or Adobe Connect. Ms. Hammon reminded Mr. Spice about how many CO veterans use the Albuquerque facility. Regarding culture, Ms. Hammon said that there are two veterans at the University of Denver who teach a military

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culture course. She expressed concerns regarding the Cohen and Stern foundations as they only assist Post-9/11 veterans and not veterans from any earlier period. Mr. Spice said that Given Hour is pro-bono and can provide telehealth services across the state for older veteran populations. The goal is to bring together all resource options, not just the VA.

Mr. Stice provided his email for the Board. Mr. Tremaine inquired if Mr. Stice knows Mr. David Ayer. Mr. Tremaine doesn't think they can have enough information regarding mental health but he is wondering if they should have a single joint summit. Mr. Ayers is American Legion and as far as Mr. Tremaine can tell they are still having a separate summit regarding veteran mental health.

Mr. Robinson from the CO United Veterans Coalition he suggested getting in touch with Mr. Nagley who also deals with veteran mental health. Mr. Rudder said he knows Mr. Richard Nagley and that they can coordinate with him. Ms. Scanlon inquired if the summit addresses the special needs of women veterans. Mr. Stice said they covered that last year and had therefore not been discussed by the planning committee for this year. At the end of each summit they are given a survey that asks what topics they would like to have at future summits. Ms. Scanlon asked if this topic can be added back in. Ms. Scanlon inquired if he has women on his regional planning group. Mr. Stice responded in the affirmative. Mr. Rudder thanked him for his time and invited him to all future CBVA meetings.

Public Comments

Mr. Rudder invited public comments. None were provided.

Unfinished Business

Strategic Plan –

Mr. Callahan said that he had captured everything discussed at the last meeting and wanted the Board to be able to review it for corrections. It was dispersed prior to the meeting by Ms. Fraser.

SPI 1 –

Mr. Callahan requested the Board members notify him if there were any errors on SPI 1. None were provided. Mr. Callahan added an additional fiscal year to the plan so that it lays out future goals. He suggested the Board consider having it go out three more years.

Mr. Rudder stated that as VSOs we don't always know what county and state services are being utilized because the veterans don't always go through our office anymore. Between eBenefits, my healthy veteran and all of the geographical options, the veterans are frequently not going through their CVSO to access their benefits and programs available to them.

SPI 2 –

Mr. Callahan said data was still being researched for 2.1 and 2.2. He inquired if the Board had a data update and also inquired if the Board wanted to table 2.1. Mr. Steen said these objectives require funding and resources which are a concern with the current fiscal projections. Mr. Rudder suggested tabling 2.1 due to the pandemic.

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SPI 3 –

There were several unknowns with this SPI. Mr. Callahan inquired if some of these goals could be done virtually. Mr. Rudder said it would have to be done remotely. Mr. Callahan inquired for data updates, Mr. Rudder said there were none and that they should move on. Mr. Callahan suggested thinking outside the box to achieve this SPI, he believes it is achievable.

SPI 4 –

Mr. Hopkins said this is probably a dead issue for at least a few years. Mr. Callahan accordingly recommended they drop SPI 4 and focus on the first three strategic plan initiatives. At the next CBVA meeting he recommends being able to say if they want to continue the first three objectives and look out three years at that point. Ms. Scanlon said she knows money is tight for the state but believes this objective is important and that they should keep it. Mr. Hopkins said he doesn't disagree. Keeping the SPI helps to get it more attention and he recommends leaving it but wants to be transparent with the Board, letting them know that from a state general fund prospective that the funds will not be there. Mr. Callahan inquired if they want to move out to the FY 22-23. Mr. Rudder said he would like to project for the next 3 years. Mr. Callahan said Ms. Fraser or Ms. Snyder can help set up a meeting with the various board working groups. Ms. Hammon agreed with keeping this SPI and suggested Mr. Callahan be the staff member who attends those meetings. Ms. Golonka will be replacing Ms. Caldwell in the working groups.

Meeting Locations FY 20-21

Mr. Rudder turned the Board's attention to the meeting locations for FY 20-21 and pointed out that due to the current pandemic, they have even been unable to schedule the meetings for the rest of this calendar year. He inquired if anyone is apprised of when they will again be allowed to travel. Ms. Scanlon said the state government is continuing to recommend to work from home until Oct. 31st. Mr. Hopkins concurred, those who can need to continue to work from home. Mr. Hopkins is expecting there to be updated guidance provided by the state in the middle of October as to whether that deadline will extend again. Ms. Hammon said that there is no reason the Board can't meet in Grand Junction in October for their training as the WROS has been approved to hold large meetings. She recommended the staff be on Zoom if they are not allowed to travel with the Board. Mr. Hopkins said he sees no problem with that alternative but that per the direction of the Governor the staff would not be allowed to join. Ms. Hammon said the WROS has excellent resources for virtual meetings. She suggested the Board travel to Grand Junction from their training and meeting in October and that the staff can attend remotely. Ms. Scanlon stated she understands the Governor's request that they work as remotely as possible does in fact apply to the Board as well in spirit if not in letter. Mr. Rudder inquired if anyone else had further comments. None responded. Mr. Rudder reminded the Board that in November they normally meet at Wings Over the Rockies but that they still might not be allowed to travel then. He suggested they go meeting by meeting through the end of the year. Ms. Hammon pointed out that the event at Wings Over the Rockies could be cancelled. Mr. Rudder suggested that September and October both be virtual meetings on WebEx as the pandemic continues to play out.

Mr. Gonzalez queried as to the deadline if they were going to decide to meet in Grand Junction in October. Mr. Rudder stated no later than mid-September. Ms. Scanlon said she must still disagree with planning to meet in person in October per the Governor's request. Mr. Rudder suggested putting the

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retreat off because he doesn't know how it can be accomplished virtually. Mr. Rudder stated he would be in touch with Ms. Fraser and Mr. Hopkins about October. Ms. Hammon said if they do allow for travel beginning at Halloween then they could schedule the retreat to be at Wings Over the Rockies. Mr. Rudder agreed that was a possibility.

Mr. Steen stated that he is dealing with this daily as a County Commissioner. He stated that life does not stop, we don't quit, just because life throws us curveballs. The challenges must be accommodated. He suggested meeting in person in Grand Junction with proper social distancing and staying in the open hotels.

Mr. Rudder reiterated that he will work with the Denver staff and Mr. Hopkins regarding the next meetings and that the Board will do what it can regarding scheduling per the Governor's directives.

New Business

Protocols –

Mr. Rudder stated that things are running well today and inquired if the other Board members had any concerns over today's meeting. Mr. Rudder said it seems like the video issue he was having was his old computer. He is going to work on getting a new one. Things are going smoothly, we will take our first break shortly.

WIG items –

Mr. Rudder inquired as to the Board's opinions on the WIG items. Ms. Hammon inquired if everyone has a copy of them. Mr. Hopkins explained that as part of the SMART act, an accountability act for the Governor, – the Dept. has to develop wildly important goals that tie into the governors bold 4. There is only one that ties into the Board of Veterans affairs and that affects the CVSOs. He said that involves the state offices are moving into a teach/coaching role for the counties which is difficult with the current pandemic. They will be collecting various data points with the goal of being able to go to the state government and collect more funds for the CVSOs. Ms. Hammon stated that she is very concerned about the WIGs and how they are written, talking of 'mature' veteran service officers is insulting. Mr. Callahan asked Ms. Hammon to put together a group of CVSOs to discuss this WIG with him. She advocated that the level of 'maturity' cannot be based off of how many veterans the CVSOs deals with each month. There are wildly different veteran populations in the different counties across the state leaving some CVSOs meeting with three a year while others may see many more.

Mr. Rudder said he has concerns. He understands as a veteran he should be able to walk into every office across the state and receive the same level of service. Mr. Rudder further stated that as a VSO he has concerns understanding this is unrealistic. Mr. Rudder said he recently spoke with a Mr. Mike Atwater, Mineral County CVSO, and asked him how many compensation claims he has done recently. Mr. Atwater replied that he has not done any in over a year. How can Mr. Atwater's workload be compared to Douglas or Jefferson County? Ms. Hammon said the other aspect is how often they call the state office. She shared that she calls the state office about four times a week. She wants to do everything exactly right, she doesn't want to do anything wrong that could delay the veteran getting assistance. There are things that come up such as burial at sea that are just not done frequently but need to be done correctly.

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Mr. Tremaine commented that the mission of the state office is really education, training and support. There are a limited number of state veteran service officers. They will always be available for training and support for complex cases. They are preparing to unveil their YouTube channel and stated that there they will have different videos available on various processes. This will be available for County Veteran Service Officers as well as veterans. This is not about not wanting to answer questions, limiting or counting calls, we are there for the CVSs, there is not question about that. We utilize that time we have, that we can afford to the counties as an educational opportunity, not an assistance opportunity. We will still be working with the counties on appeals, there are lots of complexities there, Mr. Poteet will continue to assist statewide on appeals. He does not want anyone to have the impression that we are grading them. We are about the highest level of customer service that we can provide. The video library will assist with answering basic questions while the state office will be able to help with the more rare cases. They are trying to be as comprehensive as possible with the video library and the Board can expect that more videos will be generated over time.

Mr. Rudder stated that his very first thought on hearing the WIGs is that they want to fire all the old guys and get in a bunch of new hot shots. Mr. Tremaine reassured him that it couldn't be further from the truth. He also stated that there aren't many young veterans that step forward and want to be involved as evidenced by their own recent hiring process.

Mr. Pohl inquired of Mr. Tremaine if the videos will replace the annual mandatory training. Mr. Tremaine stated that this year's conference will be virtual and that the state has waived all fees for this year. Mr. Tremaine informed the Board that the goal is to go completely virtual for all conferences in the future. Mr. Hopkins stated that this year they will be virtual, there is no other way. Due to the pandemic and that most of the attendees are in the high risk category. Mr. Hopkins further stated that in regards to future conferences no decisions have been made. Budget will be a factor but he does understand that professionally it is very helpful to have the in person conference.

Mr. Pohl further inquired if there is any way to get all the State VSOs back to the office as it has been very difficult to reach them. Mr. Tremaine suggested that Ms. Fraser may be able to provide further information on this. Mr. Tremaine did suggest that email is a good way to reach the SVSOs but they are still in back to back meetings all day. He also offered that if a CVSOS needs something they can email Mr. Tremaine directly and he will farm it out. Ms. Fraser provided that Diana Debor has been answering the phone for DVA East during the pandemic. Ms. Fraser now has a line that works from her house and will provide that number to all CVSOSs and Board members. Mr. Rudder stated that Ms. Fraser is his go to any time he needs anything.

Covid – 19

Mr. Rudder asked if the Board needs to cover anything related to Covid-19 although he expressed concern that this does not fall within the purview of the Board. Mr. Hopkins said he would provide details when he gets to his report.

Legislative Issues –

Mr. Dorman brought up the legislation he has been working on in regards to the Space National Guard. He state that unfortunately the National Defense Authorization Act has been submitted in both the House and Senate and it does not include a Space National Guard provision. Accordingly they are

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already working on this legislative goal for next year. This is not to be confused with Space Command, Mr. Dorman has been coauthoring the state supplement regarding Space Command with OEDIT. They have submitted this to both Aurora and CO Springs which are two communities which are both submitting to be the permanent home of the US Space Command. They have worked to collect lots of information to support these bids.

Joining Community Forces which is through our office of family programs has already put out their 2020 resource guide – something he has already received very positive feedback about. Ms. Hammon inquired how she can get a copy of the resource guide. Mr. Dorman referred her to the Colorado JCF webpage.

There has been some movement around Restore Honor. Kristen Gillibrand is doing work on the federal side, if you got a BCD due to sexual orientation, she is trying to change that. The state of New York subsequently did a bill called the restoration of honor act and it goes beyond sexual identity. Mr. Dorman is looking to do something similar in CO in regards to sexual orientation and gender identity. He also sent the by-law information from the attorney from the AGs office. Mr. Steen inquired about Senate 785, the VA Mental Health Act, he asked if CO is at all engaged in that conversation. Mr. Steen said that both CO Senators are sponsors and that it is now in the House. Mr. Steen suggested supporting this. Mr. Dorman said the Board could choose to support it. The House bill in HR 5122.

Ms. Hammon requested the By-Law information be put on the agenda for the next meeting so the Board members have time to study it. Mr. Rudder placed the By-law discussion on the agenda for the next meeting.

Ms. Scanlon asked that the Board support the bill currently under consideration requiring the VA to provide gender specific services at every VA medical facility. Mr. Steen and Mr. Longinos both requested to be able to read the information first.

Mr. Tremaine expressed his regrets that he had to leave the meeting due to another engagement. He informed the Board that DVA is now the agency that will be issuing letters for Disabled Veteran License plate qualification in the state of Colorado. Mr. Tremaine said that Ms. Snyder will be giving the report for DVA East.

Mr. Rudder called for a ten minute break at 10:25am.

The meeting resumed at 10:40am.

Mr. Hopkins, DMVA -

Mr. Hopkins apologized for his absence last month, things were hectic. He had a conflict on his calendar, he has rectified that situation going forward. He will not however be able to make of all these meetings. The reason for that is that two weeks ago he formally assumed command of the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (*Mountain*). That is 4200 soldiers spread across 6 states all of whom will be deploying within the next 12 months. Unfortunately the drill weekends fall on track with the Board meetings. Mr. Hopkins can guarantee the complete support of the DMVA staff. Mr. Dorman will provide Mr. Hopkin's updates. He would like to highlight the following: Now Lieutenant General Loh has been confirmed promoted and assumed position as DANG all in the last two weeks. As far as working with the Governor's office the budget is currently the primary focus although a side item being worked closely is

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taking care of the statue destroyed by the recent riots. They are looking at potentially replacing that with a Sand Creek Massacre Memorial but this is still a work in progress as to what will happen with the original statue. The budget forecast is still bad. The long bill was signed in June. They are looking at an additional ten percent budget cut where they already are. They have already started working on next year's budget. Brey has already stopped overtime, stopped pay differentials and cannot provide monetary compensation to exceptional employees. Brey has eliminated the travel budget, which is easier to do during the current pandemic, eliminated all membership to professional organizations, and the potential still exists for voluntary furloughs and some limited restructuring as well. As the budget process continues Mr. Hopkins has two primary focuses for DMVA – customer service, both internal and external. The second focus is to preserve our work force talent. The DMVA is a small department compared to others in the state, only 44 of 194 employees are true state employees because the others are paid by federal funds to some degree.

Potential still exists for voluntary furloughs and potentially some restructuring as well. Just over 50% of the DMVA workforce is eligible for retirement in the next 5 years. Brey is working to retain higher quality individuals to bring into these emptying positions. Before the pandemic they were operating on a rope diameter budget, now shoe string, next year fly fishing line diameter. The budget impacts the Executive Directors office, DVA and our ability to provide state match for federal funding – maintenance and upgrade of facilities and construction.

There are still 84 airmen supporting the Covid response. Up till now they have been fully federally funded. This has just changed to 75% federal and 25% state. The state has to make budget decisions around this because this will quickly cost over 500k and 750k. Our Covid response is going to be limited by budget availability.

A large percentage of state employee workforce are continuing to flex work / telework. About 55% are still doing this. As part of the Covid mitigation strategy this will continue until at least Halloween. Mr. Hopkins opened for questions. Ms. Scanlon inquired with the budget reduction does that reduce the Boards budget also for travel this year. Mr. Hopkins said that currently, as an external customer, they have not impacted their travel budget for this year. However, the more virtual of these meetings that occur the more money is being saved. Ms. Scanlon further inquired as to who will be Mr. Hopkins representative when he is unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Hopkins replied that Mr. Dorman will be the primary representative for him. Mr. Steen said that Mr. Hopkins is a great American, congratulated him on his command.

Mr. Hopkins said for the next 6-8 months Mr. Dorman will be his primary representative. Mr. Hopkins said he is deploying next May and they have not yet filled the interim Deputy Executive Director position for when he is gone.

DVA West – Joanne Iglesias

Covid has not affected the construction project at the cemetery. They started breaking ground this week on their project. The WROS has had its door open, weekly support groups are meeting and clubs are meeting, the new administrative staff is on board. Ms. Iglesias opened for questions. Ms. Hammon asked Ms. Iglesias for the clearance she has received to host events by the Dept. of Health. Ms. Iglesias explained the process, reporting they had received a perfect score for not needing to alter anything to make anything safer for the staff and customers at both the WROS and the cemetery. Both facilities

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have now been visited three times and they will continue to stop by every few weeks. Mr. Stice inquired about the support groups and how veterans can get involved. Ms. Iglesias assured him his counterpart is already involved. Ms. Iglesias said that Mesa County loves the WROS that it is a very safe place. Mr. Steen congratulated her on her work.

VCLCs, Robbie Robinson –

With regard to the damage done in June any repairs on that will depend on the final settlement with the insurance company that insured that structure. He hopes that no monies will be needed from the trust. With regards to the VCLCs, 62 residents at Fitzsimmons have tested positive and 22 staff. 34 residents have recovered and 27 have died. The 27 number is lower than previously listed as they reviewed the cause of death and in some instances Covid has been a secondary cause. For veterans, listing as Covid is a substantial disadvantage because this is not service connected. Homelake had one employee who tested positive, and they were sent home for 14 days. At Rifle 3 employees have tested positive. Walsenburg has one resident that have tested positive. A related issue is the sale of the Ft. Logan property, the 7.9 million dollars from this sale is now gone. They have written a letter requesting that this be repaid with interest, he doesn't have much hope of it but will try. Michelle Barnes didn't even acknowledge receipt. Mr. Robinson opened for questions. Ms. Scanlon provided that coroners are doing autopsies on everyone they think died from Covid to verify if that was the cause so the state has two running numbers. Ms. Scanlon asked him to discuss the agency banquet. He said it was scheduled for the 23rd of August. He stated that is not happening but they will have the program pieces presented virtually.

Ms. Scanlon further inquired if he is monitoring any state legislation that the Board should be paying attention to. He stated that they are in their final phase of deciding what they will be focusing on. He knows that they will be focusing on having a women's program coordinator at DVA, the other is the veterans hiring preference. He knows anything with a fiscal note has no chance of passing. Supporting business owners who want to give a veterans hiring preference without retribution.

Mr. Steen commented regarding HB 1220 which is the bill 'the study bill' it was lost this year due to funding it had a 300k fiscal year. There is still a discussion to look for a site for this. Is there any discussion with the VCLCs on that topic? The dept. position is that they need to do the need study – that is ongoing, it is due in November. It will illuminate the need for where specific services are. It is obvious that El Paso County will show specific needs. He doesn't believe there will be a location recommendation. That study is on track. Ms. Hammon pointed out that a big problem at Fitzsimmon's is the number of employees who have tested positive, due to the contact tracing, they are having serious staffing problems. Mr. Rudder expressed his appreciation to Mr. Robinson.

DVA East – Carissa

Ms. Snyder apologized. She knows the Board received the written report. It mentioned they did some work with the DMV allowing vets to use a state issued letter instead of a federally issued letter. This has been an ongoing issue for a while, Motor Vehicle now understands that our office can look at the same thing that the VA looks at to verify. Ms. Snyder said this problem has been exasperated by the pandemic. Mr. Rudder said this is going to be a very big deal for rural Colorado. Ms. Hammon inquired how soon this letter is coming out – today or Monday. Under training the written report says that 21 august they will receive the times for the training, she hopes it will come sooner. Ms. Snyder said that it

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is the uploaded content that will be published on Aug 21, which the agenda will come out in the next day or two. Ms. Snyder stated that there will be no fee this year.

Grants – Ms. Hoagland

Hopes everyone checked out the link on the survey monkey results. The grants were fully in effect as of July 1 and things are moving forward. Ms. Scanlon inquired how much money was returned last year. Ms. Hoagland said that was covered in the written grant report. For the VTF the execution was about 58%, the VAG was about 88%, the remainder was returned. Mr. Robinson said the director of the VCLCs that something they need is more iPads and laptops so that veterans can stay in better touch with their families. He inquired if they could use their funds to purchase these technology needs instead of the other items they were going to buy. Ms. Hoagland stated this would require a reapplication process. The Board can say that they will consider a reapplication process to existing applications. This means it must go through the governor's office and come back, it would not be an expedient process. Ms. Hammon said she would consider facilitating this process due to the current need. She notes however that Rifle did not spend any of their money. Ms. Hoagland said this is incorrect, that all VCLCs spent all of their money.

Board Member Remarks –

Ms. Golonka – working on getting up to speed. Happy to jump back in on the strategic plan. Mr. Rudder noted things have changed a lot since she left.

Ms. Scanlon congratulated Mr. Hopkins on his new command and inquired as to who is his representative on our Board? Mr. Hopkins stated that in the short interim it will be Greg Dorman. The decision has not yet been made as to who the interim Deputy Executive Director will be when he deploys. The actual deployment begins in May. He does not know when the orders will begin, but expects them to commence anywhere between January and March.

Ms. Scanlon shared that The One Marine Assoc. is meeting virtually. She now has the Women Veteran license plate on her car! She sent it to the DMV with her ID card and DD214 but found that was insufficient, she had to go in person and sign the form.

Ms. Hammon reported that the VA did a resource fair and a town hall at the One Source. She is scheduled to have one in Eagle County on September 9th. Approximately 80 people attend the one in GJ. The advisory council met the next day and everyone is grateful to have the two new employees. She also met with the new Director of the VA Hospital in GJ, she was impressed with him and his sensitivity to the rural issues. The hospital is still following Covid protocols. There is a new VSO in Garfield, Delta and La Plata. They are all being trained this week by the State Officer in GJ. Ms. Hammon is working on cases with the cvso in Garfield county. Pitkin is behind in interviews, all of them are excited about attending the state training virtually. The local VFWs are not able to function normally due to Covid. Ms. Hammon inquired of Ms. Hoagland if any of the grantees will be unable to take care of their grants due to Covid. Ms. Hammon said there are lots of alternative options for grantees to still assist their veterans.

Mr. Gonzalez welcomed Ms. Golonka. On 23 July Mr. Gonzalez participated in reviewing the nominations for the El Paso County Veteran of the year, on 25 July he attended the local Korean War

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remembrance ceremony. He also attended a teleconference with the head of the Air Force Academy. Lt. General Richard Clark has been nominated to replace the current commanding officer there.

Mr. Steen stated the day before they had their regular veteran's community engagement board. Dr. Linda Davis, the chief veterans experience officer was the primary speaker and discussed mental health extensively. Mr. Steen expressed gratitude having Dr. Stice on the call. PREVEN task force was established by the President the year before, just a few months ago they rolled out the REACH program, both of these pertain to reducing suicide among veterans. Mr. Steen said his county just reached their national average and it is only the first week of August. He would love to see the Board spend more time addressing veteran suicide mitigation efforts. Mr. Steen announced that is County Veteran Service Officer Mr. Bartol is retiring at the end of this month. They hope to have a new part-time CVSO on by January 1, 2021. Ms. Hammon says the Governor does have a mediator that is tasked, amongst other things, working on suicide, she will try to send this information his way. Mr. Stice offered suggestions for networking on this as well. Mr. Hopkins shared that he sits on the Behavioral Health Task Force of the state. Mr. Hopkins further shared that a service member in CO did commit suicide this week. One of the Governor's specific challenges he is focusing on is suicide prevention.

Mr. Dailey expressed regret that he missed Mr. Kilmer's WebEx meeting the day before. He further expressed disgust at the changes being made in the state office and disappointment that the Board was not involved in directing these changes. Mr. Dailey welcomed Ms. Golonka back and said he had missed her.

Mr. Rudder stated Mr. Frank Muniz of Alamosa County has decided to retire. There are a couple of new CVSOs in his area and he has been trying to help them learn the basics. He expects a big turnover in VSOs over the next few years. Mr. Rudder gave gratitude to Ms. Fraser and Ms. Snyder for going above and beyond for all the technical help they have provided to make this meeting happen. Mr. Rudder is having difficulty with his arthritis which is causing typos in his messages and he apologizes for this. He is attending funerals again as an honor guard. He is still working from home. Ms. Scanlon gave her back to Mrs. Rudder.

Mr. Stice provided links to VA resources that can assist with Covid related issues.

Mr. Steen provided a phone number for the White House.

Mr. Rudder congratulated everyone for the smooth meeting and encouraged everyone – Board members and staff to hang in there.

Ms. Hammon motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Steen seconded. Unanimous approval. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 11:45 am.