

**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs  
4 September 2020  
WebEx Meeting**

**CBVA Members Present:**

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

**DMVA Staff:**

Rich Tremaine, CDVA East Director  
Joanne Iglesias, CDVA West Director  
Carissa Snyder, CDVA East Office Manager  
Megan Fraser, CDVA East Administration  
Jessica Quackenbush, CDVA West Administration  
Gail Hoagland, Grant Administrator  
David Callahan, DMVA Strategic Operations  
Greg Dorman, DMVA Acting Deputy Executive Director

**Other Attendees:**

Steve Otero, CVSO Gunnison County  
Raymond Taylor, CVSO Archuleta County, Navy retired Nuclear Engineer

**Opening**

Mr. Rudder brought the meeting to order at 0902 hours. He expressed how much he is looking forward to meeting in person again. Proceedings began with a recitation of the pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence for POWs, MIAs, those killed in action and troops overseas. Mr. Rudder invited introductions from Board members, staff, and guests.

**Board Members -**

Ms. Scanlon, Vice President of CO Women Marine Association, Chief of Staff of CO Dept. of Homeland Security and emergency management. Served 32 years in the Marine Corps, retired after a tour in Afghanistan

Ms. Golonka, works for XCEL energy on their veterans programs. Still an active NG member, 16 years in with four tours overseas

Mr. Gonzalez, El Paso County Commissioner, Retired Air Force Intelligence officer did multiple tours in the Middle East and Latin America

Mr. Dailey, CVSO Grand and Summit County, US Army Medical Corps, Vietnam Veteran

Mr. Rudder, Former Air Force Electronics, 13 months in SE Asia during Vietnam, retired school teacher and Principal

Mr. Steen, 32 year commissioned service, Active Duty and NG, currently serving as Teller County Commissioner

Ms. Hammon, Eagle County VSO, Advisory Board for WROS in Grand Junction, US Army Nurse Corps Vietnam

The DMVA staff present introduced themselves with their titles.

### **Minutes**

Mr. Rudder expressed that the Board is accomplishing much, noting the substantive length of the minutes from last month. He noted the positive contribution of Mr. Callahan as Board support. Ms. Scanlon verified that Ms. Fraser had updated the minutes per her notes. Ms. Fraser verified these recommended changes had been made and a second draft distributed to the Board. Ms. Hammon motioned to approve, Ms. Scanlon seconded. The Board approved the minutes unanimously.

### **Public Comments**

Mr. Rudder invited the visitors to share if they had any comments. No visitors had anything to share.

### **Old Business**

Ms. Hammon indicated the By-Law discussion needed to be tabled until the next meeting.

### October Meeting

Next meeting: we had hoped to do a retreat in October. Mr. Hopkins provided direction that the travel restriction expands to the Board. Therefore the October meeting will be on WebEx.

### Strategic Plan

Mr. Callahan stated that both working groups met this week. Both meetings were productive.

In the meeting on the 31<sup>st</sup> they decided to outlook to 2023, that decision carried into the second meeting on Sep 2<sup>nd</sup>. The new baseline data is from 2020 with outlooks to 2021, 2022, and 2023. Mr. Callahan recommends to the Board and both working groups that they should meet every quarter to provide an update of where they are. He believes it will be more productive and help the various SPIs move forward. Establish and maintain a CBVA webpage in SPI 2 was the only addition to the outcome measures.

SPI 1 – Advocate for State Veterans: Pat Hammon, Longinos Gonzalez, Norm Steen

Congressional district coverage by meeting location. The working group recommends to count virtual meetings as well. Therefore we will still be able to count all seven congressional districts.

- 1.1 Feedback from VSOs – multiple ways to provide data. Face to face, digitally, call-in, add a link to signature blocks is being explored. This year we had 31 counties provide feedback. The goal for this year is 90% which means 58 counties need to provide at least one survey each. The base goal of one survey per each of these counties is in recognition that some of these counties do not have many veterans in them.
- 1.2 Identify programs providing services to Colorado veterans. We don't have this data so are starting at 0. The numbers for the next three years (45, 51, and 58) equate to 70, 80, and 90 percent of counties responding.
- 1.3 In CRS 28-5-703 it does talk about the Board submitting reports, this is where the language for this SPI came from. The board shall report on the status of all programs related to veterans (to the legislature). This is a 'yes' as this has been happening in the December letter and plan to continue
- 1.4 This SPI uses the terms 'communicate recommended changes to CO VA Director' however, no such position exists. Perhaps, this should be incorporated into SPI 1.3.

Mr. Callahan invited questions on SPI 1 only before he moves onto SPI 2. Mr. Steen inquired regarding SPI 1.3 what all state funded programs are, he said this might be a very extensive list and very difficult to accomplish this. Mr. Callahan agreed citing CRS 28-5-703 that this would take a special concerted effort. He inquired how the Board would like to proceed with this and how he can assist. Ms. Hammon suggested that the Dept. send out letters to the other depts. asking which programs they have that work with vets. Mr. Callahan and Mr. Dorman liked this idea stating it may be able to provide about 90 percent of the programs.

SPI 2 – Advance Communications: Pat Hammon, Longinos Gonzalez, Norm Steen

Mr. Callahan recommended a 5-10 minute check-in every quarter for the sub-committee/working group.

2.1 – Branding. Mr. Callahan suggested that multiple Board members work on this in breakout groups or a sub-committee and that he would be happy to join those meetings. Mr. Rudder said that he would gladly follow Mr. Callahan's suggestion on this.

2.3 – Mr. Callahan recommended another separate working group for the website. It could be on the DMVA website or stand-alone but the latter would have additional requirements. The maintenance of this is also an aspect to be considered.

2.1 – Resource booklet is getting pushed back to 2023. He referenced the working group led by Mr. Brian Oney in Grand Junction. They want to ascertain that the West and East are both fully represented, not just the Front Range. Mr. Callahan recommended using the JCF resource book for now. Ms. Hammon expressed concern that it not end up being I-25 centric and that it doesn't end up being the size of the Denver Phone Book. Mr. Callahan recommended another sub-committee. Ms. Scanlon stated she would like the CBVA to have their own drop down on the CDVA webpage. Mr. Callahan said that was definitely within technical capabilities.

2.1 Increase awareness and understanding of CBVA.

2.2. Expand Outreach – 2 each/board member in 2021, 4 each/ board member in each 2022 and 2023

SPI 3 – Improve Performance of Grant Programs –Mr. Rudder, Ms. Scanlon and Ms. Golonka

3.1 Increase CBVA board members knowledge of Veterans Trust Fund grantees.

Mr. Callahan stated the group discussed being able to do these online. The group is recommending letting the Board members decide which groups they want to work with instead of artificially choosing a region for each Board member to cover. Ms. Hoagland said that this year they have so many new grantees that she would like them to have more time to get established. She is prepared to give the Board members one grantee each and discuss how it went before they move forward with others. Her concern is ensuring that multiple Board members don't contact the same grantee and that new grantees have time to figure things out. Ms. Scanlon inquired how many new grantees there are. Ms. Hoagland stated nine. Ms. Scanlon further inquired how many in total. Ms. Hoagland stated 21 not including the VCLCs. Ms. Scanlon stated that she can work with Ms. Hoagland on dividing them all between the Board members she does not believe this will be difficult to accomplish. Ms. Hammon concurred. Ms. Scanlon said they could wait a few months and then contact the new grantees. Ms. Hammon said they can contact all the old grantees now.

3.2 Receive grantee feedback regarding effectiveness of VTF program. This can be done in conjunction with a non-monitoring site visit. There was some discussion about coming up with a list of questions. Ms. Hammon suggested this feedback be structured and they look at the questions Ms. Hoagland submitted with her Grants report.

3.3 – Take best practices and share them with other grantees. Perhaps Ms. Hoagland can comment on this in her Grant report.

Mr. Callahan invited any further commentary on SPI 3. None was given.

SPI 4 – Increase state funding in support of veterans: Mr. Rudder, Ms. Scanlon and Ms. Golonka

Mr. Callahan reminded the Board that at their last meeting there was extensive discussion on whether or not this SPI should be kept at all. Maintaining this SPI would be more about retaining situational awareness. At the working group meeting Ms. Golonka suggested using a target percentage increase, even something small like 1%.

Mr. Dorman said the problem is well-known. The budget is hurting, the economy is hurting, resources are slim and planning for cuts continues. Ms. Scanlon said they are aware of that but they don't want to give up just because there is a budget deficit. Mr. Dorman said he is in the business of expectation management. He understands the need but doesn't think it will be warmly met by the legislature.

Mr. Steen commented on 4.2. He suggested moving increased funding as the goal and let the means change such as receiving monies thanks to federal legislation. Mr. Callahan said that this measure was just against an increase therefore it was a Yes/No measure. Mr. Rudder said that his issue with this is that people are paid at the county rate, not what this number is. Mr. Steen concurred. Ms. Hammon said it depends but counties can be more amenable to the promotion for the CVSO if more monies are coming in from the state. Mr. Taylor, VSO Archuleta County, said that because it goes to the general fund for the county, it doesn't end up helping veterans. Mr. Rudder said it is up to the CVSOs to

advocate for themselves. Ms. Hammon concurred that it is up to each CVSO to be cultivating the relationships with their commissioners. Mr. Callahan stated that he could understand Mr. Steen's recommendation and would be happy to change the wording on those SPI.

Mr. Callahan renewed his recommendation to touch this on a quarterly meeting. He said he is willing to attend as many of these meetings as the Board would like. Mr. Rudder expressed gratitude for Mr. Callahan.

Ms. Scanlon thanked Ms. Fraser for coordinating everyone's calendars so the working groups could meet. Ms. Hammon concurred; as did Mr. Rudder stating that Ms. Fraser has three jobs, handling CDVA East, supporting the Board and dealing with Mr. Rudder.

Ms. Scanlon inquired if Ms. Hammon connected with Sen. Bennet's office on the Deborah Sampson Act. Ms. Hammon said she did and is waiting to hear back, and inquired if there is anything further they can do to promote it. Ms. Scanlon said Senator Gardner is already on Board so bringing on Sen. Bennett would be the best.

Mr. Rudder inquired if there is any further new business to discuss, there was none.

### **New Business**

HR 5516 – Mr. Steen presented. The bill title is: Commitment to Veterans Support and Outreach (CVSO), as of last month it passed the Senate and is awaiting action in the House. Mr. Steen prepared letters to each of the Congressional Representatives for the Boards consideration to send out in support. He acknowledged that he has not talked to Mr. Dorman about this and he is eager hear Mr. Dorman's thoughts on this matter. Mr. Dorman stated that he will have to look into this. Ms. Scanlon stated that they have already sent a letter on this earlier this year.

Mr. Dorman made inquiries regarding the longevity of the grant monies from the federal government and what would happen to the new CVSO positions if these monies were to disappear. He further stated that funds could be swept at the state level because the CVSOs had received a grant. Ms. Hammon suggested they get the money then work on being strategic about it. Mr. Rudder concurred with Mr. Dorman that this needs to be a strategic process at every step. Mr. Rudder congratulated Mr. Steen on the quality of the letters. Ms. Hammon motioned that we send the letter to the House of Representatives. Ms. Scanlon seconded the motion. Unanimous approval, the motion passed. Mr. Dorman says the companion bill is S.3020 and is currently in committee. Ms. Hammon motioned that Mr. Steen write two letters to the CO Senators and the Committee on Veterans Affairs. Ms. Scanlon seconded. Unanimous approval.

### **Board Reports**

Mr. Dorman stated that November 1<sup>st</sup> is the release date for the proposed budget for FY 2021. He suggests a discussion at the November meeting regarding what comes out in the budget. He invited questions from the Board members. Mr. Steen inquired with Mr. Hopkins gone how is it working with Mr. Dorman wearing three hats. Mr. Dorman said he did this for several months in the last year as the Interim Deputy Executive Director, he feels capable and requested the Board to please continue to engage, never stop. He is in constant communications with Mr. Hopkins but is empowered to act as needed and he has retained all the signature authority he had as interim director and thus can approve

grants if needed next year. Mr. Steen asked if there is any emerging guidance from TAG. Mr. Dorman said she is still assessing and prioritizing. TAG has talked about innovation, inclusion, diversity and mission readiness. He expects her to put together a plan for the way ahead. Mr. Dorman said he would love TAG to be able to do her annual speech in Nov. at Wings Over the Rockies but it is unknown if the November meeting will happen there.

Ms. Iglesias submitted a written report to the Board. At the cemetery the new columbarium is going up. They are in the selection process for the second part of the construction process – mitigating the pond liners, etc. She hopes work will begin on that in October. They have been struggling with getting Federal reimbursements in a timely manner and Ms. Ingalls is working on that. The cemetery was up for their triennial review with the national cemetery foundation but that was cancelled due to Covid. The cemetery and the WROS are both approved for VA Work study and they do have a veteran student working 25 hours/week at the two facilities. The VA HUD/VASH program will be moving into the WROS in November. Volunteers of American and Rocky Mountain Human Services are both working on renewing their leases. Ms. Iglesias is working on the annual report from the cemetery to the Board with Ms. Ingalls which is due in October. Ms. Hammon congratulated Ms. Ingalls on her presentation for the annual training conference for CO CVSOs. Mr. Rudder concurred.

Mr. Tremaine said that sadly given the state's budget we probably won't be seeing a One Source in Denver despite the need. Mr. Tremaine gave kudos to the staff that put the conference together including Ms. Murrietta, Mr. Armijo, Mr. Casino, Mr. Sutton and Ms. Snyder for all of their work. He reported there were some concerns about NACVSO certification vs. the state certification expressed by the CVSOs; they of course acknowledge and support the CVSOs but their primary focus is the veterans of Colorado through the state of Colorado. The entire office will be meeting next week and review all questions and concerns about the conference. Mr. Tremaine stated they have gotten lots of positive responses. He couldn't be more proud of the staff and everything that they put together. Mr. Tremaine said that the state staff are working to send out the PowerPoints for the various training videos as requested by the CVSO's.

Ms. Scanlon inquired who is handling Women Veteran Issues in the DVA East office. Mr. Tremaine said they have a multi-pronged response to that: they put together the Diversity and Inclusion VSO to handle all vulnerable groups. This individual is putting together a list of those in the Denver Metro area who can be a resource if someone would like to work with a woman and Ms. Murrietta is of course available. Ms. Scanlon said she received his introductory email and it never mentions women veterans in his intro. Mr. Tremaine said he would follow up.

Ms. Hammon said she is looking forward to the evaluation form coming out soon for the conference; the elephant in the room is that during the DVAWest meeting and during the CVSOA meeting there were lots of concerns about the conference shared; she recommended to everyone that they fill out the evaluation form and submit it. Mr. Tremaine stated that after the testing is completed they will send out a survey to all of the counties he also provided the update that since the meeting began that all PowerPoints have already been converted into PDFs and distributed to the CVSOs.

Ms. Iglesias stated that any additional feedback she receives from the Western CVSOs she will forward on to Mr. Tremaine and Ms. Murrietta.

Mr. Dailey expressed concern over the release timing of the conference between the East and West divisions. He also highlighted that not all presentations had audio.

Mr. Robinson submitted a written report only.

Ms. Hoagland stated there will be changes in the next grant cycle. Grantees who do not attend the mandatory grantee training nor submit the handbook certification and acknowledgement form stating they have read it will be required to do so in order to receive reimbursements. This was done due to a recommendation by Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Dailey inquired the total number of grantees who did not attend the mandatory training. Ms. Hoagland said 75% of grantees attended the webinars, the handbook certification was at 50%. Regarding the non-monitoring site visits Ms. Hoagland stated she has reached out to the grantees letting them know they will start hearing from the Board Members. Some have provided information as to when would be the best time for those calls and Ms. Hoagland will share that with the Board members. Ms. Hammon thanked her for all of her work on this. Mr. Rudder commented that one of the grantees is about to have two new staff running it instead of any person with knowledge of the VTF grant, he is concerned about this development. Ms. Hoagland also sought clarification from the Board regarding grantee feedback surveys as noted in the strategic plan. The grant program seeks feedback annually. The survey monkey was shared with the Board. That process should provide the Board with the information for the strategic plan, if the Board desires. The Board was in agreement.

#### **Board Member Remarks**

Mr. Gonzalez stated that veteran activities are opening back up in El Paso County.

Mr. Steen said there is another bill opening that he is working on with the AL. HR 5610 is called the Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act was presented by CA Rep. Harder. It is proposing to expand the presumptive diseases for Agent Orange. Mr. Steen is also participating in discussions between the VA and CDOT in which they are working to synchronize transit for veterans across the state to ease access to veteran medical facilities.

Mr. Dailey stated that the state training conference was outstanding. His only issue was that his county normally blocks YouTube and he had to be given special access. He loves that he can watch what he needs whenever he needs it.

Ms. Scanlon stated she dislikes WebEx and would like to use Google Meets instead.

Ms. Hammon echoed Ms. Scanlon's comment and said she would like to use Google Meets or Zoom. She is back from medical leave and pain free. She did have the honor to moderate a Zoom listening tour for Senator Bennett which went very well. Ms. Scanlon congratulated Ms. Hammon on how she ran the call, however Ms. Scanlon wished they had opened it up for questions from the general populace.

Ms. Golonka congratulated Ms. Hammon on how she ran the meeting with Senator Bennett. Ms. Golonka said the SPI working group meeting went well and she hopes to maintain momentum on those.

Mr. Rudder said last week they had a female vet who needed to get home from the VA hospital. He had someone volunteer and drove 9 hours in one day in order to pick her up. He said that transportation is a real issue for the rural counties. Mr. Rudder further stated that he had two veterans who had funerals recently, the only people present following Covid protocol were the staff, as all family and friends were

mask-less and not engaging in social distancing. He is unaware if anyone got sick from these events. He stated Covid has run its course and it's time to be done with it.

Mr. Steen added that they are looking for a good VSO in Teller County as theirs has retired. Mr. Rudder said they have recently lost three VSOs in the Alamosa Valley. Ms. Hammon said they will all miss Mr. Bartol and thanked Mr. Steen for going full-time with the new one. Ms. Hammon added they now have five new VSOs on the Western Slope and it is a challenge getting them all up to speed; Mr. Brian Oney is working very hard to provide them quality training.

Mr. Otero, CVSO Gunnison County, thanked the Board for allowing him to attend the meeting.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

October - WebEx

November- The Annual meeting at the Wings of the Rockies has been cancelled. If travel is allowed Ms. Hammon suggested meeting at the WROS in November. Mr. Rudder stated that for now, a virtual meeting will be planned on, subject to travel restrictions being lifted.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Rudder expressed appreciation for everyone present. Ms. Hammon motioned to adjourn. Mr. Steen seconded. Unanimous approval. The meeting adjourned at 11:08 AM.