**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs**

February 03, 2022

WebEx

**Opening**

Ms. Hammon called the meeting to order at 0900. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was held for POW’s, MIA’s, those deployed, their families, and all those killed in the line of duty.

**Members Present**

Pat Hammon, Chair

Sheila Scanlon, Vice-Chair

Lacey Golonka, Secretary

Longinos Gonzalez, Member

Sean Maday, Member

Jasmine Motupalli, Member

Raymond Taylor, Member

**Staff Present**

Greg Dorman, DMVA Interim Deputy Executive Director, Resource and Legislative Director

David Callahan, CDVA Director

Joanne Iglesias, WROS Property Administrator

Angela Ingalls, VMC Director

Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator

James Poteet, CDVA State Veterans Service Officer Supervisor

Brian Oney, CDVA Appeals Specialist

Debra Antista-Bianchi, State Veterans Service Officer - Northeast

Kristy Cunningham, State Veterans Service Officer – Southwest

Eric Moncibais, State Veterans Service Officer - Southeast

Drew Stem, State Veterans Service Officer – Northwest

Jessica Quackenbush, DMVA DEERS Specialist

Diana DeBor, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Beth Maxwell, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Carissa Snyder, CDVA Office Manager

**Guests Present**

Madeline Beasley, Office of the State Auditor

Bill Brown, Alamosa County Veterans Service Officer

Mary Cornum, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Jules Hoschauer, Sedgwick County Veterans Service Officer

John Haynie, Logan County Veterans Service Officer

Joshua Medina, Arapahoe County Veterans Service Officer

Ray Odum, Las Animas County Veterans Service Officer

Cindy Meyer, Teller Count Veterans Service Officer

Richard Nagley, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Steve Otero, Gunnison County Veterans Service Officer

Roxie Smith, Crowley County Veterans Service Officer

Rick Ward, Bent County Veterans Service Officer

Ed Wilkinson, Moffat County Veterans Service Officer

**Approval of Minutes**

Regarding the draft of the December 2021 minutes, Ms. Hammon clarified that under her UVC report, the names Sheila Scanlon and Mr. Robertson should read Shelly Kalkowski and Robby Robinson. Ms. Scanlon said that her comments should read “Marines and sailors” rather than “Marines and soldiers.” Mr. Gonzalez moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Mr.

Taylor seconded. The motion carried.

**Public Comments**

Mr. Wilkinson asked if veterans service officers could receive a current contact list of CDVA staff. Ms. Cunningham said an overview is available in the minutes from the recent VSO virtual coffee chat, and Ms. Hammon said that a formal list will also be distributed.

Mr. Odum said that he distributed two good citizenship awards last week and the story was covered by the local paper. The community in Las Animas County is very supportive of the veterans service office. He invited all in attendance to a Valentines’ dance at Fort Wootton on February 12. The event is free and music will be provided by the 4th ID rock band from Fort Carson.

**Old Business**

Restoration of Honor

Mr. Callahan said no applications have been received to date. Information on the program has been sent to the Center on Colfax and to the Colorado LGTBQ Chamber of Commerce. Applications can be sent to the CDVA administrative office in Lakewood to be distributed to the Board. The application consists of a copy of the veteran’s DD214 and affidavit regarding the circumstances of the discharge. Ms. Hammon said that the program was also announced in the UVC newsletter. She asked that information on the program and the benefits that could be made available to LGBT veterans be sent to veterans service officers statewide. Mr. Maday asked if a news release could be issued regarding Restoration of Honor and Mr. Callahan said that will be done.

Honor Guard Stipend

Ms. Ingalls said the program began on January 15 and there are currently three participating organizations. They are working on direct marketing to organizations that provide these services. There have been inquiries from groups that provide this service that are not associated with a congressionally chartered veterans service organizations. Only congressionally chartered veterans service organizations are eligible, so those groups are encouraged to consider operating in conjunction with an eligible organization.

**Reports**

Mr. Callahan said that with appointment of Dominic Edginton as the state veterans service officer for the Northwest Region leave one vacancy, the support services representative at the WROS. Interviews will take place in the near future. He visited the Northwest Region last week, meeting with veterans service officers in Grand Junction, Eagle, and Montrose. In Montrose he also met with Mike Trickey, Executive Director of Welcome Home Alliance for Veterans. On 08 July that organization will host Freedom Sings USA, where veterans’ stories are turned into songs by songwriters. He will continue traveling throughout the state and hopes to have the opportunity to meet reach of Colorado’s veterans service officers within the next six months.

Mr. Poteet said that as of 07 February the hiring will be complete for regional state veterans service officers. He presented Debra Antista-Bianchi, Northeast Region; Kristy Cunningham, Southwest Region; Dominic Edginton, Northwest Region; Eric Moncibais, Southeast Region; Drew Stem, Central Region. Each VSO then had the opportunity to provide a report.

Ms. Antista-Bianchi said that January was her training month. She completed her TRIP training and is now accredited. Her office in Windsor is set up and she has been focused on meeting all of the county veterans service officers in the Northeast Region. She has found that many service officers struggle with the TRIP training as it laborious and entirely on the computer. A five-county group is setting time aside to do the TRIP training together. She has attended the Northeast Collaborative for Veterans headed by the Cheyenne VHA with the VSOs from Morgan and Phillips Counties and has joined the region’s Continuum of Care Collaborative, which focuses on services for homeless persons. She has also attended the Aging Well Collaborative and networked with the local Area Agencies on Agency. She is a participant in the Leadership Northern Colorado Collaborative, which is a six-month long training cohort with a 10-year cohort of alumni.

Mr. Stem said he has been visiting each of the county veterans service offices in his region, somewhat hampered by COVID restrictions. His office has a lot of traffic and he has had a lot of work with disability claims. He invited veterans to seek him out in his office anytime when they are the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC. The proximity to VHA resources has been helpful for many veterans who also need health care services. In outreach, he has connected with MSU Denver and DU and has reached out to CU to offer assistance to student veterans.

Ms. Cunningham said she also has completed her training and is accredited, but is awaiting her PIV card. She has been working with La Plata County VSO as time permits and her office has a high call volume. Connecting veterans with their county VSO has helped her to become acquainted with service officers even outside of her region. Outreach is a focus for the upcoming year and new promotional materials have been ordered. The DMVA webmaster has helped create QR codes to provide to veterans. Her office is now set up and she is assisting VOA by taking over local veteran collaborative meetings.

Mr. Callahan said that CDVA will hold its spring training 28-29 March at the WROS. Both in-person and virtual participation will be available. Hotel information will be forthcoming.

Ms. Iglesias said that Volunteers of America has leased three more offices at the WROS. There is now a total of three vacant offices, but VA social workers should be moving in soon and at that point the facility will be fully leased. Most of the tenants are open for in-person engagement with clients. Additional programs for veterans that began in January are two yoga classes and two tai chi classes. Starting soon will be a women veterans group, a men’s health group, and a moms group. The veterans coffee club has approximately 50 attendees each week. In January the WROS served approximately 340 veterans. Interviews for the support representative should take place within the next week. The DEERS office is not yet open as DEERS specialist Jessica Quackenbush is still in training. The WROS is undergoing its sunset review, which is progressing on schedule.

Ms. Ingalls said that in January the number of interments were limited due to staffing. There were no complaints from customers regarding that new limit. The VMC intends to add staff as soon as possible. She said that while the VMC had requested VTF funds for work on the committal shelter. The improvements are incomplete because the committal shelter has been in constant use, and due to the high need for services it could not be shut down and made unavailable. Work can now resume but material costs have risen, so the work completed this year may be limited. Planning is underway for an in-person 2022 Memorial Day celebration. She invited those attending the spring training in person to visit the cemetery.

Ms. Stamm said in January she held four application trainings each for the VTF and VAG grant programs. Training is continuing on the state’s CORE finance system so that grant payments can be entered by grants staff. Payments are now caught up and current. She has reached out to grantees who are not projected to expend their grant funds this year to see if any will be returning funds. If funds are returned it is possible to reallocate funds to other grantees who have already expended. To date, American Legion Post 62, Costilla County, and Columbine Women Marines History Chapter have expressed interest in additional funds. No grantees currently have outstanding issues. Mr. Wilkinson said his post has submitted their application and would like to confirm receipt. Ms. Stamm said she would confirm. Ms. Antista-Bianchi thanked Ms. Stamm for all her work to bring the grant payments up to date. Mr. Taylor said he has attended most of the application webinars and he thanked Ms. Stamm for the guidance she has provided to prospective applicants. Ms. Hammon recommended that veterans service officers attend the webinars as well to increase familiarity with the grant programs and processes. Ms. Stamm said the next webinars will be on 08 February and 10 February, with VTF at 0900 and VAG at 1300. The meeting links are on the web site.

Ms. Hammon said that UVC will have a fundraising banquet and separate awards dinner in 2022. Regional vice presidents are in place to try to elicit participation from more veterans service organizations. UVC focuses on veteran-related legislation and has several that they are following this session.

Mr. Oney said that BVA is returning to a block schedule for hearings and he is working with the hearing coordinator to attempt to minimize overlaps. Recent hearing have been virtual. He has been learning some of the intricacies from Mr. Poteet while transitioning from his former role as the Northwest VSO.

**Remarks**

Ms. Golonka said Xcel Energy’s Veterans Resource Group will hold a Salute to Veterans event comprised of providing care packages to veterans who are VHA patients; the event begins with the assemblage of the care packages on Friday. They are also preparing for their Memorial Day flag planting.

Mr. Maday said his family has had COVID in the wake of the evacuation from the Marshall fire. He brought to the Board’s attention Patriot Boot Camp, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in Colorado that focuses on helping military veterans build technology companies through technological entrepreneurship. The have been acquired by the Disabled American Veterans charity to expand the program nationwide.

Mr. Gonzalez said on 27 January he attend a meeting of Air Force Academy graduates. The guest speaker was the Academy Superintendent Lieutenant General Richard Clark. On 19 January he attended Governor Polis’s state of state address, in which the governor highlighted the presence of Space Command in Colorado.

Ms. Motupalli said this is the busiest time of year for Gusto with quarterly and end of year filings. They have been working more broadly with their Veterans Affinity Group leadership team to see how they can partner with other affinity groups, as the Veterans Group has a lot of intersectionality. This month they are celebrating Black History Month. Next month they will host the broader affinity group meeting, where they will ensure that veterans issues are represented along with others. She and her spouse are becoming certified as foster parents so that they can adopt a minor niece.

Ms. Hammon said that her office has hired Jackie Allen as the new associate VSO. Housing is still at a crisis with little housing or resources available as cold temperature continue. On February 18 there will a parade to celebrate the 77th anniversary of the Battle at Riva Ridge that will include a ski down in the afternoon. Project Health waters, equine therapy, and trauma-informed yoga classes are ongoing.

Mr. Taylor said that local veterans have been meeting with eighth grade class to explain the components of service and to describe the experience. The local American Legion and Veterans for Veterans of Archuleta County have expanded their scholarship program to include trade schools. Veterans of Archuleta County has been nominated Nonprofit of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce for the 10,000 hours of volunteer service performed in 2021. The local skating rink now features a banner recognizing three veteran organizations in the community.

Ms. Hammon said that Military and Veterans Appreciation Day will be held on February 4 at the capitol. Public are welcome to attend in person with masks and social distancing. The session will be available virtually on Colorado Connects and the link will be sent out. The Board will hold its statutorily required annual training beginning at 1:00 p.m. and the public is invited to attend. The meeting link is available on the web site.

**Upcoming Meetings**

Ms. Hammon said that the March and April meeting will be virtual and the April meeting will feature decisions for the Veterans Trust Fund Grant.

04 March 0900 Virtual

01 April 0900 Virtual (VTF grant decisions)

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, the business meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m. with the training portion scheduled to start at 1:00 p.m.

**Training**

The Board reconvened with all members present at 1:00 p.m. Also present were CDVA staff David Callahan, Lisa Stamm, and Carissa Snyder.

Strategic Plan

Mr. Callahan and the Board members reviewed the extant plan and refined the mission, vision, and goals. The SPIs from the original plan will be reframed as Wildly Important Goals (WIGs).

The vision statement was reworded as “Colorado remains an environment that cares for those who served and sacrificed.” The mission statement was revised to, “Advocate for veterans and their families to improve their quality of life throughout the state of Colorado.”

The statement of values will be edited to align the TAG’s values to make all feel Welcomed, Valued, Respected, and Heard. A strategic plan committee will be established to finalize this statement.

Each of the WIGs and the accompanying goals were reviewed. Committees were formed to finalize the wording of each WIG and its goals. The committees are:

WIG 1 – Advocacy – Sean Maday, Jasmine Motupalli, Longinos Gonzalez, Pat Hammon

WIG 2 – Communications – Lacey Golonka, Sheila Scanlon, Sean Maday, Pat Hammon

WIG 3 – Grant Programs – Lacey Golonka, Sheila Scanlon, Jasmine Motupalli, Longinos Gonzalez, Raymond Taylor

Ms. Hammon reminded the Board that the committee meetings need to be public noticed and minutes taken.

Statutory Training

Mr. Callahan began the statutorily required training with a review of C.R.S. § 24-3.7-102, which requires the training and establishes the best practices. This was followed by C.R.S. § 28-5-703, the duties of the Board.

Conflict of Interest, Open Records, and Open Meetings

LeeAnn Morrill, First Assistant Attorney General, joined the meeting. Ms. Hammon moved that the Board move into executive session to receive legal advice regarding compliance with conflict of interest, open records, and open meetings laws. Ms. Scanlon seconded. The motion carried. The Board entered executive session at 2:31 p.m. Regular session resumed at 3:21 p.m. Ms. Morrill exited the meeting.

Statutory Training

Mr. Callahan resumed statutory training resumed with a review of C.R.S. § 28-5-703, the duties of the Division followed by a review of C.R.S. § 28-5-103, Restoration of Honor. Ms. Stamm then discussed the DMVA grant programs, including grant guidance and best practices, a discussion of C.R.S. § 28-5-712, the Veterans Assistance Grant, and C.R.S. § 28-5-709, the Veterans Trust Fund Grant. Carissa Snyder reviewed and C.R.S. § 26-12-402(3)(b)(I), coordinating with the Board of Commissioners for the State Veterans Community Living Centers, and C.R.S. § 24-40-1401(2), coordinating with the Veterans Monument Preservation Trust Committee.

Appointment of Committees

Ms. Hammon appointed Longinos Gonzales and Raymond Taylor to serve with her on the VTF committee and appointed Raymond Taylor and Sean Maday to serve with her on the Veterans Assistance Grant advisory committee.

**Adjournment**

There being nothing further, the annual training session adjourned at 3:54 p.m.