**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs**

January 07, 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

Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator

James Poteet, CDVA State Veterans Service Officer Supervisor

Debra Antista-Bianchi, State Veterans Service Officer - Northeast

Kristy Cunningham, State Veterans Service Officer - Southwest

Diana DeBor, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Beth Maxwell, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Eric Moncibais, State Veterans Service Officer - Southeast

Jessica Quackenbush, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Carissa Snyder, CDVA Office Manager

**Guests Present**

Marshall Bosworth, El Paso County Veterans Service Officer, Regional Vice President UVC

Mary Cornum, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

David Girard, Arapahoe County Veterans Service Officer

Megan Gurka, Larimer County Veterans Service Officer

Jules Hoschauer, Sedgwick County Veterans Service Officer

John Haynie, Logan County Veterans Service Officer

Tim Hutchinson, Broomfield County Veterans Service Officer

Duffy Laudick, Larimer County Veterans Service Officer

Joshua Medina, Arapahoe County Veterans Service Officer

Cindy Meyer, Teller Count Veterans Service Officer

Richard Nagley, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Darrick Peterkin, Pueblo County Assistant Veterans Service Officer

Roxie Smith, Crowley 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**

Marshall Bosworth greeted all in attendance. He said he will attend NACVSO’s legislative summit as the state delegate from Colorado at the end of February and will report on that after his return. He expects to have additional information on the CVSO Act, which is intended to route federal funding to county veterans service offices.

**Old Business**

Restoration of Honor

Mr. Callahan said no applications have been received to date. Application information is available on the DVA website.

Honor Guard Stipend

Mr. Callahan said implementation will begin on 15th January. Participating organizations can apply for a vendor number on 10 January and can submit for reimbursement as early as 15 January. Information has been widely distributed via email and a news release should follow. A hard copy reimbursement process is available for any organization that may encounter a technological barrier.

**New Business**

State Veterans Service Officers

Ms. Hammon asked if the new state veterans service officers could introduce themselves to the Board and invited them each to provide reports from their regions at upcoming meetings.

Kristy Cunningham is the service officer for the southwest region, based in Durango. She has been working remotely with plans to move into her office this month. She has been visiting the county veterans service officers and has initiated conversations with tribal nations in her area, including the Southern Ute, the Navajo Nation, and the Ute Mountain tribe. They would like be involved in state veterans activities and are also interested in hosting a meeting of the Board. Kristy served six years in the USAF working with radar systems. She used to work with Volunteers of America and is very familiar with the region she serves.

Debra Antista-Bianchi is the service officer for the northeast region, based in Windsor. She previously work with the Alzheimer’s Association and has worked in many different parts of Colorado. She is a veteran of the Coast Guard, where she was the first female to serve at a small boat station in New Hampshire. Her daughter is Air Force veteran and her husband is an Army veteran. She is in her third week with DVA and has meetings scheduled with the county veterans service officers throughout the region.

Eric Moncibais is the service officer for the southeast region, based in Pueblo. He is retired from the Marines and recently worked at Fort Carson in Army community service. He saw his current position as an opportunity to continue to help fellow veterans. He has attended various meetings of veterans organizations and Chambers of Commerce in his region.

Also on board is Drew Stem, service officer for the Denver metro region and Front Range, based in Aurora at the Rocky Mountain Regional Medical Center. Mr. Stem was not able to attend the meeting.

Ms. Hammon said that hiring in underway for a service officer for the northwest region, based in Grand Junction. Former state VSO Brian Oney has been promoted to appeals specialist.

Information Resources

Mr. Dorman forthcoming legislation proposes the use of an existing service to fulfill the information clearinghouse requirement that exists is statute. He asked if the Board has any feedback on the services that the Board has investigated. Ms. Hammon asked what the connection is between The Home Front Military Network and Trilogy IR. Mr. Dorman said that The Home Front Military Network is a customer of Trilogy. She asked how Network of Care in connected. Mr. Dorman said that Trilogy produces Network of Care and it is one of their primary products. There is the possibility of a fiscal note to add an FTE to manage the process.

Mr. Maday said each of the resources appeared to have a good mobile experience. The NRD.gov option was full-featured and has the ability to submit a resource, though it still might need staff to manage local content. He also said the readability can be an advantage for users with sight impairment. Ms. Hammon said she thought the content should be more robust and that local management would be helpful. Mr. Dorman said it is not known if NRD, as a government resource, would be able to bid on the project if the bill should pass. Ms. Scanlon asked if it was possible that the bill could pass without a fiscal note and Mr. Dorman said that it could.

**Reports**

Mr. Dorman said that DMVA is maximizing telework. The Guard is mobilizing to support more testing sites statewide and was heavily involved in the Marshall Fire efforts. DMVA is monitoring the decision item for a state women veterans service officer. The SMART Act hearing will be held on January 18. There will a JTC briefing on January 24. February 4 is Military and Veterans Appreciation Day at the capitol, with virtual attendance utilized similarly to 2021. Mr. Gonzalez said that legislation regarding extending the property tax exemption for disabled veterans to gold star spouses will be reintroduced this year as well. Mr. Robinson said that item is the #1 legislative effort this year for the UVC.

Mr. Callahan said DVA is building a people-first culture, assuring that all team members and customers feel welcomed, valued, respected, and heard. He thanked the Board and the Division’s community partners for their support during the reorganization process. Once the state veterans service officer for the northwest region and the administrative triage specialist for the WROS are hired, the Division will be fully staffed. He said that three more leases have been established in the WROS. The triage position will be announced next week. There are no volunteers at the WROS right now due to COVID conditions. Subzero temperatures have caused HVAC issues at the WROS and some events have had to be moved to other parts of the building. The electronic parking gate project is going out to bid this month. The weekly coffee club continues to be held on Wednesdays. The sunset review requests have begun and data is being provided in support of that review. The VMC has had a record-breaking year for interments and will try capping interments at 25 a month due to the number of staff. The Division is preparing a decision item to increase the number of staff at the VMC. The improvements to the shelter and administration building were completed in December.

Ms. Stamm was introduced to all in attendance. She has background in grant writing for organizations that serve military families. She has worked as an independent contractor with agencies receiving federal grants. She joined the DVA team on December 6. Emphasis for the first month has been on training and speed of grant payments. The DMVA Controller has been training Ms. Stamm and Ms. Snyder to enter payments into the state payment system, and it is anticipated that in the next few weeks they will be able to enter payments independently. The goal is to process reimbursements within 10 business days of receipt. She has asked grantees to put their grant number of their reimbursement requests to help speed up the process.

Mr. Robinson said that there is no update from the Veteran Monument Trust committee, although the park is now open and is regularly policed. The CLCs continue to struggle with COVID conditions. They are open to visitors under strict conditions. Staffing shortages are a continuing problem. CDHS has requested a salary increase for dietary and housekeeping staff. Cash flow has been affected because patient census is down. He emphasized the quality of care available the CLCs and asked attendees to make sure their clientele understand how many veterans and dependents are eligible. He said his current term on the CLC commission will expire in 2023 and encouraged an interested board member or designated party to consider applying. There are upcoming vacancies.

Ms. Hammon said that UVC has a real mailing address rather than a post office box and may soon have an office at the Bill Daniels Center in Denver. Regional vice presidents are reaching out to local veterans service organizations. UVC has a veterans resources web page that relies on local organizations and event sponsors submitting their information for publication. The banquet and award ceremony will be separate events this year.

**Remarks**

Ms. Scanlon said the Women Marines Association held a breakfast at Buckley for Marines and sailors just prior to Christmas with about 80 in attendance. On February 12 the Associatin will celebrate the 79th anniversary of women in the Marines. The guest speaker will be Lieutenant General Laurie Reynolds (Retired). Tickets are $35 per person. She thanked the COAG for their efforts in regard to COVID and the Marshall fire.

Mr. Gonzalez said he attended the local Chamber’s Military Affairs Committee on 08 December and on Wednesday there was a legislative update.

Mr. Maday said his neighborhood was evacuated during the Marshall fire. His home survived but neighbors suffered significant losses. It was reassuring to see the Guard at the entry control points. In December he attended the Reagan National Defense Forum at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley. He has been volunteering as a mentor for startup companies working through TechStars and encountered a veteran who is building an eLearning platform for veterans who are visually impaired.

Ms. Motupalli said she had coworkers evacuated by the fire and as a result has begun to update her family’s emergency plan. Gusto’s Veteran Affinity Group has wrapped up its giving campaign for International Rescue Committee. The total contribution with matching if $4,000, and they will also sponsor a few families.

Ms. Golonka said she has been working with Red Cross Service to Armed Forces program. She is now a caseworker with that program. She has begun a new role with Xcel and their social investments lead, which included the space heater distribution provided by Xcel in the wake of the Marshall fire.

Mr. Taylor said local schools have switched to remote learning due to COVID. He met with his commissioners and was able to report that he has 206 more veterans and more than $2 million more in revenue than on the previous report. During Wreaths Across America every veteran’s grave in the main cemetery was covered. There are 22 cemeteries across the county with veteran graves, and the next effort will be to cover them all. He had all branches except the Space Force represented. Local veterans have been meeting with eighth grade class to describe the experience of serving the country.

Ms. Hammon said that interviews are being conducted now for an assistant VSO in Eagle County. Extreme temperatures and large amounts of snow have been a problem particularly for veterans in mobile homes. Christmas baskets were prepared with the Salvation Army and distributed by local veteran volunteers. The 10th Mountain Legacy Parade is a ski-down with active duty 10th Mountain will be held in February. The DAR and the Boy Scouts assisted with Wreaths Across America and 480 wreaths were distributed across four cemeteries.

**Upcoming Meetings**

Ms. Hammon asked the Board’s preference in regard to the February meeting and annual training. Both were originally scheduled for February 4 but are now in conflict with Military and Veterans Appreciation Day at the Capitol. The consensus was to hold the regular meeting at 9:00 a.m. on February 3 and the training at 1:00 p.m. on the same day. Both will be virtual.

03 February 0900 Virtual (annual training 1300, virtual)

04 March 0900 Virtual

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:56 a.m.