**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs**

July 09, 2021

WebEx Meeting

**Opening**

Mr. Rudder 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**

Jack Rudder, Chair

Pat Hammon, Vice-Chair

Sheila Scanlon, Secretary

Duane Dailey, Member

Lacey Golonka, Member

Longinos Gonzalez, Member

Sean Maday, Member

Jasmine Motupalli, Member

**Staff Present**

David Callahan, DMVA Interim Deputy Executive Director

Greg Dorman, DMVA Legislative Director

Joanne Iglesias, CDVA Interim Director

Angela Ingalls, Veterans Memorial Cemetery Director

Diana Debor, CDVA Administrative Assistant

**Guests Present**

Gary Harbert, Prowers County Veterans Service Officer

Tim Hutchinson, Broomfield County Veterans Service Officer

Richard Nagley, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Nickie Phillips, Weld County Veterans Service Officer

Jay Scott, Otero County Veterans Service Officer, President Colorado County Veterans Service Office Association

Raymond Taylor, Archuleta County Veterans Service Officer

**Report**

Mr. Callahan said that he will serve in the capacity of Interim Deputy Executive Director of DMVA until August, when he will be succeeded by Greg Dorman. He welcomed Mr. Maday to the Board and reminded the Board members that this meeting is Mr. Rudder’s last both as Chair and as a member of the Board. He said a recognition ceremony will be held for Mr. Rudder at Joint Forces Headquarters on 15 July. He thanked Mr. Rudder for his service and his leadership. He said that DMVA is pursuing funding for the Women Veterans Service Officer and that progress continues on recruitment and hiring for Division leadership and in securing office space for field service offices. Mr. Dorman welcomed Mr. Maday also and thanked Mr. Rudder for his service.

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Scanlon said that General Sherman’s name was spelled incorrectly in the May minutes. Mr. Dailey moved that the minutes of the May 2021 meeting be approved as corrected. Ms. Hammon seconded. The motion carried.

**Old Business**

Mr. Dailey said that he had some items to bring before the Board, including inquiries regard the grants. He asked if Mr. Callahan would be remaining throughout the Board meeting. Mr. Callahan said that he would.

Conflict of Interest Form

Ms. Scanlon said that the current draft of the new form has been presented to the Board, and that Mr. Dorman was checking it with the Attorney General’s office. Mr. Dorman said he has not yet received a response.

Bylaws Committee

Ms. Scanlon said that the committee should convene to consider the question of how many absences should be permissible for a Board member. Ms. Hammon agreed. Mr. Dailey asked Mr. Dorman if that was necessary in the bylaws or if the rule is made by the Governor’s office. Mr. Dorman said the Board should adjudicate the question and he will confirm that the decision does not conflict with instructions from the Governor’s office. Ms. Scanlon said the bylaws currently do not mention this and that any bylaw regarding the matter should refer to unexcused absences. Mr. Rudder said that in his opinion absences with advance notice could be excused. Ms. Hammon said she will call a committee meeting. Ms. Hammon reminded the Board that the current bylaws have been distributed and are in effect.

**New Business**

Election of officers

Mr. Rudder nominated Ms. Hammon for the position of Chair. Ms. Hammon accepted the nomination. Ms. Scanlon seconded. Ms. Hammon was elected by unanimous vote.

Mr. Rudder opened nominations for the office of Vice Chair. Ms. Hammon nominated Ms. Scanlon. Ms. Scanlon accepted the nomination. Ms. Golonka seconded. Ms. Scanlon was elected by unanimous vote.

Mr. Rudder opened nominations for the office of Secretary. Ms. Hammon reminded the Board that per the bylaws, the Board can request clerical assistance from the Division so the position does not necessarily contain much secretarial work, but the Secretary has the duty of writing letters on the Board’s behalf. Ms. Scanlon said that the Secretary also needs to ensure that minutes are taken at committee meetings. Ms. Hammon asked Mr. Gonzalez if he would accept a nomination. He said he would accept but invited other nominations. Ms. Hammon inquired whether Ms. Golonka would accept a nomination. Ms. Golonka said that she was willing but was concerned regarding drills occurring on first Fridays. Mr. Rudder said that may not be an issue since Division staff will take meeting minutes. Ms. Hammon nominated Ms. Golonka for the office of Secretary. Ms. Scanlon seconded. Ms. Golonka was elected by unanimous vote.

Meeting Schedule

Mr. Rudder invited suggestions for 2021-2022 meetings, including whether the Board would like to resume meeting in person. Ms. Hammon said that she recommends meeting in person beginning in August. She proposed either the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC, where DVA is slated to have a field service office, or the VA Regional Office, as that office had a new director. She added that the Board might also like to select a more distant location while good weather is likely to hold for travel.

Ms. Scanlon asked which locations the Board was schedule to visit before the pandemic required remote meetings. Mr. Rudder he did not have the complete list but he knew that two of the locations were Burlington and Cortez. Mr. Rudder suggested Burlington and the other Board members concurred. Mr. Dailey said that location is important because there were no grant applications received from northeastern Colorado.

Ms. Scanlon suggested that the September meeting be held in the Denver metro area to help avoid excessive holiday traffic, as the first Friday in September is Labor Day weekend. Ms. Hammon suggested Routt County, as it was also one of the cancelled locations last year. Ms. Hammon said accommodations might be difficult because of the holiday. Mr. Rudder said the meeting could be moved to September 10. The Board members concurred.

Mr. Dailey asked when the Board would do annual training, which would include orientation for the newer Board members. Ms. Hammon said October could be a good time, with the meeting held in the San Luis Valley. Training could be on 30 September with the stated meeting following on 01 October. Mr. Rudder said he would secure a meeting location.

Mr. Scott asked if veteran service officers are invited to every Board meeting. Mr. Rudder said they are and Ms. Hammon added that they are encouraged to participate.

Mr. Maday asked if it would be possible to get a list of local veterans events so that Board visits could then coincide. Mr. Rudder said that the Division might be able to assist. Ms. Hammon said she would also reach out VSOs. Mr. Dailey agreed that aligning with community events could be an effective strategy.

Annual VSO Training

Ms. Iglesias said that the annual training conference for VSOs is scheduled for 21-24 September with both in-person and virtual options. The in-person event will be held at Joint Forces Headquarters. Mr. Dailey asked if a central hotel would be selected for the event. Ms. Iglesias confirmed that is the case but that the Division in researching adjacent hotels for those who wish to travel.

DACOWITS

Ms. Scanlon said that in January the Secretary of Defense discontinued the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service (DACOWITS). The mission of providing advice and recommendations regarding women in the service was reassigned to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. She said that DACOWIS had been in place since 1951 and she has made preliminary inquiries about requesting that Congress reinstate it. If the Board is interested in supporting the position, she volunteered to write the initial draft of the letter to then be referred to the new Board secretary. Ms. Hammon asked how DACOWIS was funded. Ms. Scanlon said was funded through the Department of Defense, and funding includes two staff and supports expenses for 15 volunteer board members. Ms. Hammon said it did sound better as a stand-alone committee but asked if the Board could get more information. Ms. Scanlon said she will prepare a preview and recommendations for the Board to consider at the next meeting.

**Reports**

Mr. Dorman said the legislature is preparing for the next session. Ms. Scanlon asked for an overview of passed legislation that was supported by or affects DMVA. Mr. Dorman said the bills supported by DMVA all passed. The primary that affects the Department is the new program established stipends for honor guards. The deadline for implementation is 15 January. Ms. Scanlon asked if there were any issues for next year. Mr. Dorman said any new legislation from the Department would be made public on 01 November.

Ms. Iglesias said that DVA has two temporary administrative assistants in place at the Denver office and that Carissa Snyder has been relocated to the VARO while working on the grant program in the administrator’s absence. VSO Richard Armijo accepted a position with Family Programs. WROS Property Administrator also resigned and a temporary administrator has been installed there. The job announcements for Division Director and VSO Supervisor closed on 30 June. Interviews for the VSO Supervisor will be scheduled for next week. Jessica Olsen and Jessica Quackenbush at the WROS have been finishing the year’s property tax applications with support from a temporary employee. The application deadline was 01 July. The DEERS office served more than 400 veterans within the past month. Regarding the reorganization, DVA has secured an additional office suite at the VARO to house the Director and VSO Supervisor. An office has been secured for the Denver Metro Field Service Officer at the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC and that VSO will be located there beginning the first week of August. The Division has met with leadership from La Plata and Pueblo Counties regrading prospective field offices and both have been receptive and have made offers of office space. Greeley is being considered as the office location for the northeast region. Mr. Dailey asked when the selection process for the Director would take place. Mr. Dorman said he is working with a panel on this project but summer travel has interfered. Ms. Scanlon asked how many candidates would be interviewed for the position of VSO Supervisor, and Ms. Iglesias said there would be six. Mr. Dailey asked if there is a target date to hire a Director and Mr. Callahan said it could be by the end of July. Mr. Scott asked how many candidates were being considered for the position of Director. Mr. Dorman said the referral list from Human Resources is not yet available.

Ms. Ingalls said the cemetery has been receiving positive feedback regarding services and the grounds. There has been an increase of nearly 20% in interments from the end of the prior fiscal year to the end of the one that just closed. An NCA site compliance audit is scheduled for 10-11 September. The improvement to the committal shelter has been postponed due the extensive use of the shelter. Fort Logan is scheduling six weeks out for interments and VMC is scheduling four weeks out. Mr. Maday said that the increase in interments must be difficult for the cemetery staff and inquired if there was any way that the Board could recognize their contribution, perhaps a letter of recognition. Mr. Rudder said that honor guards have also been very busy with multiple services in a day. Ms. Ingalls agreed and expressed her appreciation. Ms. Scanlon thanked Ms. Ingalls for her leadership and extra effort and offered to assist with the letter. Mr. Maday said he would prepare an initial draft. Mr. Dailey said that perhaps a letter could also be sent to honor guards. The Board members concurred. The letter will be prepared and referred to the Division to distribute.

Mr. Taylor asked what office locations are being considered in Durango. Ms. Iglesias said they are the Commons building adjacent to VOA, the county office, and the DAV resource center.

Mr. Rudder said there was no report from Mr. Robinson. Ms. Hammon said she would provide an article from Colorado Sun regarding the new statue in Lincoln Veterans Park. It is dedicated to General Rose and currently being bronzed in Loveland.

Ms. Hammon said UVC held a successful banquet at the end of June with General Sherman as the keynote speaker. For the benefit of new members she explained that UVC is the United Veterans Coalition, originally founded for the purpose of advocating for veteran-related legislation, and which later provide instrumental in the establishment of the Rocky Mountain Region VAMC. The current focus is both legislation and veteran community events. They are currently compiling a statewide event calendar, which would complement Mr. Maday’s suggestion to align Board meetings with community veteran activities. UVC has a new slate of officers: Admiral Dick Young is the new president and Bob McLaughlin from Mount Carmel Veterans Service Center is the new vice president.

Mr. Dailey requested a discussion regarding grants. Ms. Iglesias relayed the grant report submitted by Carissa Snyder, which noted that the VTF grant program was impacted by the absence of the grant administrator particularly in the prompt payment of requests for reimbursement. Grant agreements for 2021-2022 have been distributed. Mr. Dailey said that at one point, the Division had sought an additional staff person to support the grant program, but the current draft of the organization chart does not show such a position. He said that with current Grand Administrator out on leave, the assignment of another staff member to serve the grant program has caused a gap in other areas. He said the delay in reimbursements is a significant problem. Ms. Iglesias said that moving forward, the Division is considering a redistribution of workload among the administrative staff so that at least one position will contain a duty allocation for grant support. Mr. Dailey asked how much that allocation would be and Ms. Iglesias said 50%. Mr. Dailey said emphasis must be placed on serving veterans in need and that a plan is needed so that a staff absence does not put the program in disarray. He inquired whether the difficulty is with the Department or with the Division. Mr. Callahan said continuity is needed in various parts of the Division and the reorganization is designed to address that. Mr. Dorman said that lack of available training in the grant program is a complication. Mr. Dailey recalled the 2013 audit and the myriad findings that had to be repaired. He said that the grant administrator used to have support but a few years ago that was removed. He asked where the grants fall in DMVA priorities. Mr. Callahan said it is of primary importance and will receive additional attention and resources.

**Remarks**

Ms. Hammon said she has been on medical leave for the past month and working intermittently. Eagle County has also been busy with funerals and with resuming in-person veterans services. The July 4 parade usually presented by the VFW was cancelled this year in favor of a “static parade” consisting of booths. She suggested an overview of Board roles and terms for Ms. Motupalli and Mr. Maday. She thanked them both for their participation and attendance.

Ms. Scanlon thanked Ms. Hammon for recent assistance with specific veterans, including her husband and a 92-year-old veteran who was hospitalized. The Women Marines Association does not meet in July but did receive a Veterans Assistance Grant again this year. She said she is leaving for Army War College Carlisle, PA to teach a graduate seminar.

Ms. Golonka said she enjoyed seeing people at the UVC banquet. August 6-9 is her sergeant major’s academy orientation, so she may be calling in to the next meeting. She will soon have formal invitations to a 05 November event heralding Xcel energy’s new program to offer interviews to recruits once they compete their AIT.

Ms. Motupalli said she is happy to assist in plans to measure impact of veterans programs particularly with underserved populations.

Mr. Gonzalez said he attended an art exhibit and fundraising event at Mount Carmel on 02 July. On 05 August he will attend a fundraising dinner at the Home Front Military Network. The El Paso County Fair and Pikes Peak or Bust Rodeo will occur over the next few weeks, with discounted entrances and appreciation days extended to veterans.

Mr. Dailey said the American Legion Post 88 from Granby/Grand County ventured to Jackson County and performed an honor guard in May for five rediscovered veteran from World Wars I and II. Ms. Iglesias also attended. The Memorial Day event in Grand Lake was held successfully with a good turnout. The parade site will henceforth be known as Veterans Memorial Park. Local posts are also very busy with honor guards, already scheduled into September. The western side of the Grand Lake cemetery was burned out in recent fires and efforts are underway to repair and replace veteran headstones. The July 4 parade in Granby was very well attended. He thanked Mr. Rudder for his outstanding leadership of the Board under unprecedented conditions.

Mr. Maday thanked the Board and said he is looking forward to serving in this venue.

Mr. Rudder said that Homelake has been busy with funerals as well as honor guards. He expressed appreciation for his time on the Board and the friendships he has gained during his tenure.

Ms. Hammon said that know and working with Mr. Rudder has been an honor and that he will be missed. She appreciates his effort for veterans and for the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Ridder thanked her for her compliments.

**Upcoming Meetings**

06 August Burlington

10 September Routt County

01 October San Luis Valley (training on 30 September)

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.