**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs**

June 3, 2022

Doubletree Hotel

**501 Camino del Rio**

**Durango, CO 81301**

Virtual Option via 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 POWs, MIAs, 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**

David Callahan, CDVA Director

Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator

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 – Front Range

Dan Coulter, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Beth Maxwell, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Carissa Snyder, CDVA Program Assistant

**Guests Present**

Dana Berry, Office of the State Auditor

Nina Frant, Office of the State Auditor

David Girard, Arapahoe County Veterans Service Officer

John Haynie, Logan County Veterans Service Officer

Josh Medina, Arapahoe County Veterans Service Officer

Duffy Laudick, Larimer County Veterans Service Officer

Richard Lemieux, Public

Cindy Meyer, Teller County Veterans Service Officer

Richard Nagley, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Hammon asked if there were any corrections to the draft of the minutes. Mr. Taylor provided corrections on page 3 and page 5. Ms. Hammon provided corrections on page 3 and page 4. Ms. Scanlon moved that the minutes be approved as corrected. Ms. Motupalli seconded. The motion carried.

**Public Comment** - none

**Old Business**

Ms. Hammon said that the strategic plan committees are expected to meet for the new fiscal year.

**New Business**

Ms. Hammon said the Board anticipates hearing from VHA regarding the recommendations of the AIR commission. The commission has not yet been approved by the Senate.

Ms. Hammon said that the annual NACVSO conference will be held in Denver in 2024 in coordination with DVA.

**Reports**

Mr. Callahan said that DMVA has appointed a new Deputy Executive Director. Michael Bruno assumed the position on June 1. Currently still vacant are the positions of legislative liaison and chief operating officer, both of which the department intends to fill in June. These functions were both previously covered by Greg Dorman. A new Controller, J.T. Davis, was appointed May 31. Mr. Callahan and Mr. Bruno will attend Missing in America at the WROS on June 6. Mr. Callahan said that decision items for the next legislative session include additional staff at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery and restoration funds swept from the Veterans Trust Fund and the Veterans Assistance Grant in 2020. DMVA has recommended Sheila Scanlon and Raymond Taylor for additional terms on the Board. The announcement for a Women’s State Veterans Service Officer should be posted next week. Mr. Callahan and General Clellan, Adjutant General, attended the Memorial Day event at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The Division will be seeking approval from the Board for a Training and Certification Plan for new veterans service officers. Ms. Hammon suggested that include a minimum number of hours of training with an experienced VSO.

Ms. Antista-Bianchi said that she attended a community Memorial Day event in Larimer County that presented good opportunities for future partnerships. She complimented American Legion Post 22 and Qualified Listeners for their help in assisting a veteran in need. She currently has one woman veteran client.

Ms. Cunningham reported on behalf of Dominic Edginton. In community partnerships he is working with local VHA on enrollment, with the Vet Center to assist veterans who may need to file claims for compensation, and with HUD/VASH at the WROS to assist with housing. There was a resource tour in Moffatt on May 22 with seven claims completed in four hours of outreach. Attendance at the Grand Valley Highland Games resulted in two claims. He attended the CCI conference and reported positive engagement with commissioners from around the state regarding DVA’s goals to make resources and training available to county VSOs. He will attend the NACVSO conference in June. In success stories, a local veteran submitted a WROS sunset review statement that was very complimentary of the services provided. He recognized Huerfano county commissioner Gerald Cisneros for his extraordinary efforts in helping a local family obtain a grave marker for their veteran family member.

From her region, Ms. Cunningham reported that Veterans Outreach Day in Saguache was on May 25. It was attended by 14 organizations including the Albuquerque VHA. Approximately 45 veterans attended. Outreach in Silverton on May 24 resulted in contacted with 15 veterans, two of whom she is working with personally. She has VBMS access and there are now three VSOs with this access in the 10-county region, with both Montezuma VSOs working toward that access as well. She will attend the NACVSO conference next week and will be at Gunnison Veterans Resource Day on June 15. Between her office and Montezuma County they are currently working with 15 woman veterans, with other counties yet to report.

Mr. Stem said in community partnerships his office is working with the office of social work at the Denver County Jail to help veterans reintegrate. In outreach he has connected with MSU and DU to secure VSO space to help student veterans with claims and VHA enrollment. In success stories, he has been working with VOA and Denver County to assist homeless veterans in the field on housing as well as claims. Some metro area counties have month-long waits for appointments and his office has been assisting.

Mr. Moncibais said that community partnerships include Mount Carmel Pueblo, which has requested an increased VSO presence and has joined the VSO rotation at the Pueblo Vet Center. He attended a memorial service at the riverwalk in Pueblo, resulting in eight new eight clients. He also gained 18 new clients at a veterans event in Port Arthur, Texas. In May he provided in-person training to seven counties. He is collecting photos from Memorial Day events to include in the next DVA newsletter. In success stories, he has been conducting outreach to incarcerated veterans has was able to secure in in-facility C&P exam for a veteran who has a claim under appeal. He is currently working with four woman veterans, all of whom have MST claims.

On behalf of the WROS, Mr. Callahan reported that three additional leases in the final stages of execution. Only one office remains vacant. Liberty Mutual has signed a new 12-month lease. Events that continue to see success include Veterans Coffee Club, VA peer support, Vets for Vets, Tai Chi, Guitar for Veterans, Women Veteran Coffee Hour, and Yoga. The Adjutant General visited the WROS earlier in the week. DVA is still working to get the DEERS office at the WROS operational. A contractor has been identified for the parking lot gate project. Ms. Hammon reminded the Board that the JBC is conducting a sunset review of the WROS and the report should be available by the end of the summer.

On behalf of the Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Mr. Callahan reported that veterans were honored at the Memorial Day Service. Within the past 20 years the cemetery has seen 5,459 interments. There have been 138 so far is 2022 and there were 375 in FY 21-22. Improvements to the committal shelter are complete. The bronze eagle statue is in place overlooking the committal shelter. Corrective actions from the NCA audit continue. The June interment schedule is full and they are now scheduling into July. The stipend program is almost fully expended and will be renewed for the new fiscal year.

Ms. Stamm said that May has been busy with the approaching close of the fiscal year. She is in frequent communication with grantees. Final reimbursements need to be submitted by June 15. During May 40 payments were processed. The VTF grants for 2022-2023 have been finalized. The final approval of VAG for 2022-2023 was on June 1. The VAG received 30 applications. There was $957,000 to award and requests exceeded that amount by $424,165. Of 12 applications from new applicants, eight were funded. Kickoff trainings for both grants have been scheduled for June 22 and June 23. She is working strategies to improve execution rates. Possibilities might include midyear budget revisions or allowance of some administrative costs. She said that the VAG applications that were denied were largely administrative costs. Ms. Golonka asked if applicants can be funded with administrative costs excluded and Ms. Stamm confirmed that they can.

Mr. Callahan reported that he and Mr. Moncibais attended VHA briefs on the AIR Commission recommendations. The soonest the recommendations could be implemented if approved is 2026. The recommendations must be accepted or declined as a whole. If the recommendations are implemented, the primary effects in Colorado would be the closure of CBOCs in Burlington, La Junta, Lamar, and Salida. There are additional concerns regarding resources for the Grand Junction VAMC and the Albuquerque VAMC.

*The Board recessed at 10:30 a.m. and resumed at 10:50 a.m.*

**Remarks**

Mr. Maday said the Google’s Veteran Network will be holding a Career Week June 11-23 regarding how to transitions in a civilian careers for veterans a military members. The event will be virtual and a link will be provided. There is still a lot of wildfire cleanup underway; many homes were underinsured and the rebuilding process has been gradual.

Ms. Golonka apologize for her remote attendance that was due to a delayed flight. Xcel Energy volunteered for Memorial Day flag planting and pickup at Fairmount Cemetery as is looking ahead to wreath laying in December. Xcel is sponsoring the Veterans Day Parade. She is working on the administrative aspects of newly reinstituted the Women Vets of Colorado.

Ms. Motupalli said that Memorial Day provides an opportunity for reflection and assessment. She has decided to step down as chair of Gusto’s veterans’ affinity group effective May 31 due to an increase in personal and professional responsibilities.

Mr. Gonzalez said on May 20 he participated in a fundraiser for Citizen Solder Connection, a Colorado Springs nonprofit that supports military families. He attended a food insecurity panel at Mount Carmel on May 26. He was the keynote speaker at the Memorial Day ceremony in Fountain and attended both the Colorado Springs Memorial Day ceremony and a flag raising by a local American Legion post.

Ms. Scanlon said she attended a Memorial Day Ceremony at the U.S. Marine Memorial; the guest speaker was Lieutenant General Lewis Craparotta, USMC (R). The Colorado Women Marines Association has expended their Veterans Assistance Grant as is looking ahead to the upcoming grant year. She is completing her six-week class at War College and it is going well.

Mr. Taylor said that the veterans CLCs are having continuing difficulties with staffing and it is affecting admissions. The local American Legion placed 341 flags at the local cemetery for Memorial Day in partnership with other veterans organizations. More than 150 people attended the Memorial Day ceremony. The addition of a new superintendent promises increased partnerships in local schools. His county has lost 22 veterans within the last 12 months, including veterans from WWII, Korea, and a veteran lost to suicide.

Ms. Hammon said that the Board did send a letter to the legislature’s Appropriations Committee in support of the resolution to extend eligibility for the disabled veterans property tax exemption to Gold Star families. The resolution passed and it will proceed to the ballot. UVC is having a fundraising banquet on October 08 at the Gaylord Hotel. The legislative committee is collecting goals and ideas for the next sessions. She is serving on a committee that is considering establishing a memory care CLC in the Grand Junction area. The local veterans coalition placed 280 flags for memorial days in combination with their community partners. She reported that Mr. Robinson is recovering well.

**Upcoming Meetings**

Ms. Hammon said that the next meeting is scheduled for August 5 in Steamboat Springs. Routt County VSO has already secured a meeting room.

Upcoming Meetings: August 5, Steamboat Springs

 September 9, Colorado Springs

October 7, Northeast area

**Executive Session**

The executive session consisted of information confidential to the Board by the Office of the State Auditor, pursuant to 2 C.R.S. § 3-103(3) and 2 C.R.S. § 103.7.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:36 p.m.