**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs**

October 7, 2022

Western Region One Source

482 28 Road

Grand Junction, CO 81501

**Opening**

Ms. Hammon called the meeting to order at 0905. 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

Raymond Taylor, Member

**Staff Present**

David Callahan, CDVA Director

Joanne Iglesias, WROS Property Administrator

Angela Ingalls, VMC Director

Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator

James Poteet, CDVA Appeals Specialist

Dominic Edginton, State Veterans Service Officer – Northwest

Eric Moncibais, State Veterans Service Officer - Southeast

Drew Stem, State Veterans Service Officer – Front Range

Jessica Quackenbush, DEERS Operator

Dan Coulter, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Carissa Snyder, CDVA Program Assistant

**Guests Present**

Melissa Armstrong, Regional Director, Volunteers of America

Marshall Bosworth, El Paso County Veterans Service Officer/CCVSOA President/UVC Regional VP

Mary Cornum, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Destry DeWolf, Huerfano County Veterans Service Officer

John Haynie, Logan County Veterans Service Officer

Tim Hutchinson, Broomfield County Veterans Service Officer

James Kliesen, Cheyenne County Veterans Service Officer

Glen Marciniak, Kit Carson County Veterans Service Officer

Stephanie McAntee, Communications Director/PIO Western Colorado VAMC

Josh Medina, Arapahoe County Veterans Service Officer

Cindy Meyer, Teller County Veterans Service Officer

Richard Nagley, President, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley, Asst Chair American Legion Dept of Colorado, VA&R

Roxie Smith, Crowley County Veterans Service Officer

Courtney Stryker, Arapahoe County Division Manager of Senior Resources and Veterans Services

Rick Ward, Bent/Otero County Veterans Service Officer

**Approval of Minutes**

Corrections were provided by Ms. Hammon and Mr. Taylor. Corrections from Ms. Scanlon had been received prior to the meeting. Mr. Maday moved that the minutes be approved as corrected. Mr. Taylor seconded. The motion carried. Sheila lacey

**Address**

Ms. Iglesias welcomed the Board and its guests to the Western Region One Source. She said that the building was established as an armory in 1958 and became the Western Region One Source in 2019. The building has a full house of tenants. She said she would provide a report during the meeting and would be available for questions after the meeting as well.

**Public Comments**

Ms. Armstrong thanked the Western Region One Source for the space and thanked the Board for funding the triage specialist. VOA has enjoyed increased traffic and partnerships as a benefit of their location at the WROS. VOA has a VA grant that enables them to assist veterans at risk of homelessness. She said that Mesa County has recently been reclassified from a rural area to an urban area.

Mr. Nagley said that he would offer comment after the discussion of DVA Audit findings.

**Special Reports**

Audit Findings: Mr. Callahan said that audit began in December 2021 and he thanked both the Office of the State Auditor as well as all who assisted. There were six findings: VSO Training, Accreditation, Data Security, Support Payments to Counties, Deployment of Division Resources, Strategic Planning and Governance. The recommendations are enumerated in the audit report attached to these minutes and available online at [https://leg.colorado.gov/audits/veterans-services](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Furldefense.proofpoint.com%2Fv2%2Furl%3Fu%3Dhttps-3A__leg.colorado.gov_audits_veterans-2Dservices%26d%3DDwMBAg%26c%3DsdnEM9SRGFuMt5z5w3AhsPNahmNicq64TgF1JwNR0cs%26r%3D-8KI3hvglKOdsw4-4_wWVKVY0g_mKnVLkU7gamTNp78%26m%3DQ8WMVh3KdXM4tJZIvb1KAgIUYO27zoDcCay_uS2RWKo54qEMZ-ZCXZgV2_wJlzj3%26s%3Dsoh33TtL7WZZpRDNOMzJTHIuI8O0JvJHcJHvGTW64Jo%26e%3D&data=05%7C01%7CCarissa.Snyder%40dmva.state.co.us%7C3960c7b9785641e4822108daa1963643%7Cfe65e33df3e74667823ca2f35d705b2b%7C0%7C0%7C637999963982859126%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=JnwIVa2dfJJJymOOw70EG9AHs72bd%2Bm4IdjSMXsZvK8%3D&reserved=0). The Board has been asked to advise on and approve the new VSO Training Curriculum currently in development. The Board is also asked to advise regarding support payments to counties. Under Strategic Planning and Governance, Ms. Hammon spoke to Recommendation 8 which instructs the Board to create written policies and procedures for the content and design of its annual report as well as how to draw conclusions from the report and how to create recommendations therefrom. She said that she and Mr. Callahan attended the Legislative Audit Committee hearing on the findings on September 28. The Committee was supportive but expressed a concern that not all of the recommendations could be accomplished without additional staff. She said a work session would be held later in the meeting in regard to the annual report. Mr. Nagley said that the American Legion appreciates the audit. He said that an area of concern is that 2023 target dates are a long time away, and would like to see those timelines shortened if possible.

Community Living Center Visits: Ms. Hammon said that prior to the pandemic, Board members were afforded the privilege of visiting Community Living Centers around the state with the Adjutant General. Those visits were suspended during the pandemic but resumed in September. Over two days, the group visited the CLCs at McCandless, Walsenburg, Homelake, Rifle, and Fitzsimons. Mr. Maday thanked the department for the opportunity to attend and said he enjoyed meeting the residents. The event helped to underscore the value of the services provided by the CLCs. Mr. Callahan expressed appreciation for the services provided to veterans at each of the locations.

PACT Act Communication to County Commissioners: Mr. Callahan said that a letter has been sent to county commissioners that explains the PACT Act and the additional benefits that have been made available to veterans. It encourages counties to assess the capacity of their veterans services offices to help ensure that Colorado is able to meet the increased demand. Ms. Hammon concurred that many VSO offices are already overwhelmed.

Ms. Cunningham said that community partnership events included hosting the monthly Southwest Veteran Collaborative, a meeting with the Ute tribes that included the DVA Director, and participating in the monthly meeting of Veterans for Veterans and the Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs. Outreach included the San Miguel County Veterans Resource Day, a DVA Director Meet and Greet with Dolores, Gunnison, and Hinsdale Counties, and letters of appreciation delivered to organizations that contributed to the Veteran Outreach Day. Successes include having met all of the county VSOs, Ute tribe leadership and veteran organizations in the region.

Mr. Edginton said community partnerships include collaboration with the Veterans Outreach Coordinator at the VAMC as well as connections with the Vet Center, the Student Veterans Association at Colorado Mesa University, local veterans service organizations, and WROS tenants including VOA, HUD-VASH, and caregiver support. Upcoming outreach events include Grand Junction Farmers Market Military Night, the Eagle County Veterans Resource Tour, a WROS Bootcamp BBQ Sendoff, and a Routt County Veterans Resource Tour. Successes include having participated in the first Bootcamp BBQ Sendoff, positive results from claims files, and the hire of Ron Epplin, a new county veterans service officer in Rio Blanco County.

Mr. Moncibais said community partnerships include the Senior Resource Development Agency in Pueblo and an increased presence at Mount Carmel. Outreach included attendance at 9/11 memorials in Alamosa, Huerfano, Las Animas, and Pueblo Counties and at American Legion Post 2’s POW/MIA Recognition Day in Pueblo. Successes include positive results in VA Administrative Process Reviews, where incarcerated veterans have had their service declared Honorable for VA purposes, and effectively connecting veterans with Volunteers of America, giving them access to medical care and housing.

Mr. Stem said community partnerships include VHA, VBA, DAV, and the Chamber Defense Council in Aurora. In outreach he will be providing VSO support at DU and Metro State University once a month. Successes include positive claim decisions and the completion of NACVSO training.

Mr. Bosworth said that NACSVO now allows service officers from state organizations to join as members. They are hosting virtual information events on the PACT Act and on Camp Lejeune. El Paso County has created a briefing to help inform veterans about the PACT Act. The Colorado County Veterans Service Officers Association will meet in conjunction with the state VSO training and he will meet with the state veterans service officers as well.

**Old Business**

DVA Training Curriculum: Mr. Callahan said that the VSO team in incorporating feedback from county veterans service officers under the leadership of VSO Kristy Cunningham, and that the final revision should be ready to present to the Board in November. He thanked the Colorado County Veterans Service Officers Association and county veterans service officers for their advice and expertise.

Veterans Trust Fund Grant Administrative Costs: Ms. Stamm said that she has discussed the prospect of adding office supply costs to eligible costs for the Veterans Trust Fund Grant and direct program costs to the eligible costs for the Veterans Assistance Grant with the state Grants Management Office. They reviewed the proposed language and provided examples from other departments. They advised not to use a prescribed list since it is difficult to make a strict list sufficiently exhaustive. Ms. Stamm said both categories would be considered under the usual grant application review. She proposed allowing for $1,200.00 per grant year in office supply costs for the Veterans Trist Fund Grant that would be audited and reimbursed in the same manner as other grant-related expenses. The amount is based on a survey of current Veterans Trust Fund grantees. Ms. Hammon asked about allowing car insurance and/or fuel expenses for grant administrators. Ms. Stamm said that the Grants Management Office said that is allowable. Ms. Hammon invited a motion. Mr. Taylor moved to establish an office supply category not to exceed $1,200.00 annually. Ms. Golonka seconded. The motion carried. Ms. Stamm said the recommendation under consideration for the Veterans Assistance Grant is up to 10% of direct program costs. Ms. Hammon to accept this adjustment to the VAG rules. Mr. Maday seconded. The motion carried.

**New Business**

Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Tribe Representation: Mr. Callahan said that he and Kristy Cunningham visited the veteran’s organization for the Southern Ute tribe. They have requested a position on the Board to represent both the Southern Utes and the Mountain Utes. They have been informed of recurrent vacancies to which any eligible person may apply. Ms. Hammon said to create a new member slot would require a statutory change and the Board would also need to ensure that fair opportunities are provided to other tribal nations. Ms. Hammon asked if any progress had been made with establishing a recurrent VSO presence for either tribe. Kristy Cunningham said that neither tribe has a space available for a VSO. In the interim, La Plata County Greg Dotson has been meeting with tribal members monthly at the library in Ignacio. The Southern Ute Tribal Council has approved an office space for this purpose, with the details currently under consideration.

State Veterans Issues: Ms. Hammon said that at each meeting the Board will endeavor to collect information on veterans issues throughout the state. Two issues mentioned in September in the increased workload for VSOs, difficulties with VA Community Care, economic threats to veteran-owned businesses, and a more effective veterans services survey.

**Standing Reports**

DMVA/DVA: Mr. Callahan said that DMVA plans to announce a vacancy for a Chief Operating Officer to fill one of roles vacated by the former resource director. DVA is working on the selection process for VSO Supervisor. The announcements for Womens Veterans Service Officer and Northeast Veterans Service Officer both closed on October 2 and those applications are now being screened. He has requested sample position descriptions from both DPA and CDOT for a certification and training officer and that position description is being developed. OSBP has requested a supplemental budget request for other requested positions and that has been submitted. Additional information should be available by mid-November. Ms. Hammon encouraged the Division to be sure that job announcements are circulated to the Board and to county VSOs.

NAVSCO/CCVSOA: Mr. Bosworth said on 22 September he participated with NACVSO and VHA on a panel outreach attended by approximately 10,000 Colorado veterans about what county VSOs and VHA each provide. The panel received a lot of questions about the PACT Act and Camp Lejeune. NACVSO has provided targeted information about Camp Lejeune he will share that presentation with the group. On 03 October, he met with members of the VA Congressional and Legislative Affairs team about the PACT Act and the lack of funding provided to support local veterans services. He attended a Meet and Greet with Senator Hickenlooper and had the opportunity to communicate those funding concerns. Ms. Hammon said she has been in communication with Senator Bennett’s office about predatory practices in regard to potential Camp Lejeune lawsuits. HR 8736 is being drafted now to address this issue and the senator’s office has asked for information about organizations that may be engaging in such practices.

SW VSO: Ms. Cunningham said that community partnership events include the Montezuma Stand Down in Cortez, which had about 330 veterans and 22 providers in attendance and she presented the You Rock Award to Montezuma County VSO Sarah Kuhn. The La Plata County Stand Down was attended by approximately 100 veterans and 25 providers. Training Plan feedback has been received from 10 county VSOs and 44 have returned the survey sent after the September training conference. The Veteran Collaborative Group continues to meet every second Tuesday. Outreach includes meeting with the New Mexico Tribal Liaison, a presence at the DAV Outreach Center, a letter of appreciation and DVA coin presented to the Veterans Relief Committee, and assistance in the northwest region.

Central VSO: Mr. Stem said ongoing community partnerships include VHA, VBA, and Community Care. His office is moving to appointments only and he is taking benefits training with the National veterans Legal Services Project. In outreach he provides VSO support at DU and Metropolitan State University once a month and has recently completed site visits at El Paso, Park, and Teller Counties. Wait times for VSO services in the metro area are an issue of concern, with most office scheduling at least a month out.

NW VSO: Mr. Edginton said community partnerships include VHA, the Vet Center, VOA, HUD/VASH, and Caregiver Support. Training for the new VSO in Rio Blanco County is scheduled for 20-21 October.

Upcoming outreach events include ANG Transition Assistance in Montrose 22-23 October and a Bootcamp BBQ Sendoff at the WORS on 29 October.

SE VSO: Mr. Moncibais said community partnerships include the Pueblo Veterans County, Mount Carmel, Veteran Upward Bound, and a recent approval to visit the Fremont Correctional Facility. He is providing training in Cheyenne and Kiowa Counties. Outreach included the Pueblo Stand Down and a Lunch and Learn at the Senior Resource Development Agency in Pueblo. He has been invited by Colorado State University to speak at a Veterans Day event.

Mr. Maday asked if it would be possible to collect appointment wait times at veterans service offices throughout the state and Ms. Hammon suggested the information could be added to the CVA -26 monthly report.

*The Board recessed at 11:05 a.m. and resumed at 11:15 a.m.*

WROS: Ms. Iglesias said tenants are in process of lease renewal and all offices are fully occupied. There is a need for an additional triage specialist and a maintenance technician. The WROS has received a grant for a sign that will list all the tenants housed there. The facility is a year into a sunset review and is about to enter the final stage of the review. The Grand Junction Stand Down will be held at the WROS on October 18 in partnership with VA the VFW. The DEERS office is open and Ms. Iglesias invited Jessica Quackenbush to report. Ms. Quackenbush said that in the 15 days the office was open in September she processed 121 transactions. The DEERS office is almost fully functional but is in need of authority for overrides. The office is open 10 hours a day, four days a week. The office will hold its next Saturday office hours on 5 November.

VMC: Ms. Ingalls said there cemetery has two groundskeeper positions vacant. Burial reimbursements will increase to $893 per burial beginning 1 January. Honor Guard stipend funds are projected to be expended by the end of May. The cemetery is currently scheduling interments about six weeks out. Saluting Branches was completed on 28 September and 50 trees were planted.

Grants: Ms. Stamm said 40 payments were processed in September. A lot of time has been spent provided 1:1 technical and reimbursement assistance for new grantees. She presented on the grant programs at the September training conference and has since received questions from county VSOs. Both annual reports are complete. Revised application materials for VTF will be provided to the Board for review prior to the November meeting and application trainings will be scheduled. Ms. Scanlon asked if there are any concerns and Ms. Stamm said not at this time.

**Board Member Remarks**

Ms. Golonka said she has been working on the United Way campaign for Xcel and a featured organizations has been Hero’s Puppy for Life, a former VAG grantee. She participated in the recent groundbreaking for Veterans Community Project in Longmont building tiny homes for veterans.

Mr. Gonzalez said on 12 September, he attended the local Chamber Military Affair Committee’s Hails and Farewells event honoring local installations’ senior leadership. On 20-21 September he attended an annual Chamber DC fly-in where he served on the Defense track, focusing on both Space Command and quality of life issues. On 30 September, he attended the 20th anniversary of the stand-up of U.S. Northern Command. On 3 October, he attended the VA conference regarding the PACT Act and on 4 October he attended the military roundtable with Senator Hickenlooper.

Ms. Scanlon said the Women Marine Association continues to experience high demand for assistance and will run out of funds before the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Taylor said that on Monday he received a phone call from the daughter of a veteran. The veteran was from Wyoming and died in Nevada. Through cooperation among veterans service offices and the American Legion, they were able to locate documentation of the veterans service connection and assisted the family with burial benefits.

Mr. Maday said he attended the Air/Space conference in DC also attended by former TAG General Loh. He thanked Mr. Callahan and the Division for the opportunity to visit the CLCs in September.

Ms. Hammon said VSO services have been very busy and Veterans Day activities are occurring in 18 schools throughout Eagle County. She has been working with VA’s Ascend project, which recently produced a survey on suicide and suicidal ideation. Return rates have been high and she will report on those results. She invited Ms. McAntee to report on the Western Colorado Health Care System.

WCHCS: Ms. McAntee that patient census was recently affected by low staffing in their lab. That has since been corrected. They have just extended an offer to a new chief of mental health and on just recently posted or a program manager. Departing Outreach Manager Vicki Becoat has been replaced by Nadia Owens, recently from patient advocacy. There are plans to extend the Women’s Health section of the Western Colorado VAMC. WCHSC will attend the VA Benefits Fair in Ignacio on 25 October.

**Upcoming Meetings**

The next stated meeting is scheduled for November 4 at the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC. Ms. Hammon said that the meeting there cannot be accommodated until 11:00 a.m. and asked for opinions on the time change. There were no concerns with the changed start time. There will be a tour of the facility held in association with the meeting.

November 4, Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC, Aurora, CO – 11:00 a.m.

December 2, TBD

**Work Session: CBVA Annual Report**

Ms. Hammon said that under Audit Recommendation 8 the Board agreed to:

* Establish and implement written policies and procedures for the content and design of the annual reports, including which veterans programs to report on, what types of information all

68 Colorado Office of the State Auditor programs should provide, and adding a designated section for the Board’s overall conclusions on the status of the programs and any recommended changes in programs, policies, rules, or statute.

* Establish and implement written policies and procedures for using the information collected and compiled for the annual report to identify recommended changes in policy, procedure, or law. For example, the Board could consider the need for any policy recommendations or Board action related to background requirements of veterans service officers (VSOs) and equitable payments to counties for VSO services, as discussed in the report.
* Establish and implement written policies and procedures for bringing any recommended policy changes identified to the attention of the Division of Veterans Affairs and/or the General Assembly, as needed.

Ms. Hammon said that this is a significant change from past reports, which have focused on service delivery of state programs. She suggested that for the current year’s report, the Board keep the format but modify the information request to ask for recommendations or issues noted by the departments providing services.

Mr. Maday asked which departments have services that are currently included in the report. Ms. Snyder said that those are DVA, the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Local Affairs, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Revenue, and the Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

Ms. Scanlon said that the Board could use the information from the individual reports and well as other information brought to Board’s attention to discuss the Board’s perception of veterans’ issues in Colorado. Those conclusions and/or recommendations could be included in the Board’s section of the annual report. She agreed with asking contributing agencies for their suggestions, recommendations, or identified issues.

Mr. Taylor asked about requesting information from other veterans service organizations. Ms. Hammon agreed that might be future goal but there would probably not be time by the end of 2022.

The Board agreed to ask contributing agencies for recommendations on changes in programs and policies to benefit veterans engaged in their agency’s programs.

Ms. Hammon asked if there are other state agencies that should be approached to contribute to the report. Ms. Scanlon suggested the community living centers and Ms. Hammon suggested federal veterans cemeteries, the WROS, and VAMCs with catchment areas in Colorado. Ms. Scanlon suggested including UVC. Ms. Hammon said it might work better to include all veterans service organizations at the same time for the following year. Ms. Hammon said she will work with DVA on modifying this year’s information request.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Scanlon moved to adjourn. Mr. Gonzalez seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:24 p.m.