**Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs**

September 9, 2022

Mount Carmel Veterans Service Center

530 Communication Circle

Colorado Springs, CO 80905

**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

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

Dan Coulter, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Beth Maxwell, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Carissa Snyder, CDVA Program Assistant

**Guests Present**

Dana Berry, Office of the State Auditor

Matthew Ball, Public

Marshall Bosworth, El Paso County Veterans Service Officer

Michele Colin, Office of the State Auditor

Mary Cornum, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Nina Frant, Office of the State Auditor

James Kliesen, Cheyenne County Veterans Service Officer

Bob McLaughlin, Mount Carmel VSC Executive Director

Josh Medina, Arapahoe County Veterans Service Officer

Richard Nagley, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Hammon corrected the date and location on page 1. Ms. Scanlon moved that the minutes be approved as corrected. Ms. Taylor seconded. The motion carried.

**Address**

Mr. McLaughlin welcomed the Board. He served on the Board in 2016, has been executive director of the Mountain Carmel Veterans Service Center since 2014, and is also a regional vice president of UVC. He provided an information packet to attendees that included a map of veterans resources and a bubble chart showing the competencies of the Mount Carmel Veterans Service Center. Primary legislative issues of interest are transitioning to civilian employment and suicide prevention. With the assistance of public-private partnerships, there is also intent to establish at least one more veterans’ One Stop in southern Colorado as well as Veteran Connections, to assist veterans with needs not addressed by VA benefits. The priorities are speed and effectiveness of service.

**Address**

Ted Robertson thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend. Mr. Robertson hosts the Veterans Voice podcast in Colorado Springs, which focuses on improving the lives of military members, veterans, and their families. One of the emerging challenges for the veteran population is available housing. The podcast is available on major podcasting platforms or online at [www.veteransvoice.us](http://www.veteransvoice.us).

**Reports**

Ms. Hammon moved some of the staff reports up in the agenda to accommodate schedules.

Ms. Iglesias thanked Mr. McLaughlin for the continued partnership with Mount Carmel. August marketing and outreach for the WROS included a mention in the local paper, a presentation at the Military Officers Association meeting, and a feature in that organization’s magazine. Since opening in the first week of July, the DEERS office has served 277 customers. There has been one Saturday clinic and another one is scheduled for November. The WROS recently partnered with VA for Cultural and Diversity seminar with tribal nations. Administrative Assistant Dan Coulter will attend the state VSO training September 13-16. The WROS served 507 people during the month of August and in total served 1,162. They are looking forward to hosting the Board for the October meeting. Ms. Scanlon asked what the biggest issues are for veterans and for the WROS. Ms. Iglesias said housing and mental health services are a significant need. The WROS has been very busy with triage with the addition of more tenants and is considering adding more staff, including work study and temporary employees.

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.

*The Board recessed at 11:07 a.m. and resumed at 11:15 a.m.*

**Old Business**

DVA Training Curriculum: Mr. Callahan said that the adjustments recommended by the Board in August have been made to the training curriculum for new veterans service officers. The changes are highlighted in the distributed copy. Ms. Hammon said that prompt training will be valuable to new VSOs, particularly in the format presented in the curriculum. Mr. Maday moved to accept the training curriculum as presented. Ms. Scanlon suggested waiting for feedback from county VSOs at the annual training before approval, which met with consensus. Ms. Motupalli asked what feedback methods the Division uses. Mr. Callahan said it is usually direct feedback. Ms. Motupalli offered to assist with methods and quality of feedback. Ms. Hammon said she would also like the Board to receive regular reports on training, particularly using the curriculum once approved.

Veterans Trust Fund Administration Costs: Ms. Stamm said the prospect of allowing administrative costs for the Veterans Trust Fund Grants has been discussed with the state grant management office and state fiscal rules have been consulted. She recommended that the VTF allow a Supplies line item not to exceed $1,200.00 per year. The expenses would have to be justified and documented for reimbursement in the same manner as all other grant funds. Ms. Motupalli moved to add a supply category to the Veterans Trust Fund Grant not to exceed $1,200.00 annually. Ms. Scanlon seconded. Ms. Stamm’s recommendation for the Veterans Assistant Grant was to allow a direct program cost category up to the 10% of the requested budget. These would also require the standard documentation for reimbursement. Using the direct program cost category would avoid VAG funds being used for other functions. Mr. Maday asked if other state departments might have sample rules around program costs that could be consulted. Ms. Stamm said she will inquire. Mr. Gonzalez asked if there are example of VAG grantees unable to deliver services without assistance with program costs. Ms. Stamm said there have been former grantees who said they did not reapply because of the cost burden of the program, and others who were not able to maintain service delivery. She will confirm what policies are used by other departments.

**New Business**

Ms. Hammon asked if the Division could send a letter to county commissioners addressing the anticipated increase in work burden for veterans service officers due to PACT Act. Mr. Callahan agreed.

Ms. Hammon asked for an update on the DVA customer service survey. Mr. Callahan said the survey will be updated per recommendations by the State Auditor.

Ms. Hammon said the DMVA strategic planner will join the Board in October and she also invited the new Legislative Liaison.

**Reports**

Mr. Callahan said that decision items for DVA for the upcoming year will be updated when the governor’s budget is released in November. This includes staffing for the cemetery and for grants. The grant item needs to be modified to ask for funding for additional staff rather than increase the administrative allocation from the grant. Ms. Hammon asked about additional staffing for the WROS. Mr. Callahan said that the WROS only has two vacancies and its income should suffice to include the triage administrative assistant from operating funds. The VSO training conference will be held September 13-16 in Colorado Springs, hybrid in person and virtual. Visits to the CLCs are scheduled for September 29 and 30; Board members are invited to attend. Debra Antista-Bianchi has received a promotion to the position of executive director of the Alzheimer’s Association in Wyoming. The announcement for the state veterans service officer in the northeast region has been posted. The Women’s VSO position will also be reannounced. Mr. Maday asked whether there were not enough candidates. Mr. Callahan confirmed that there were not enough qualified candidates. He thanked Ms. Gonlonka, Mr. Maday, and Mr. Bosworth for participating in the interviews for VSO Supervisor. A hiring decision will be made after the training conference. A position is being developed to specialize in operations and training. They will oversee and manage training and continuing education for state and county veterans service officers. On behalf of the VMC, he reported that interments are up to 40 per month. The electrical repair and installations are being scheduled. There are 11 honor guards participating in the stipend program with approximately $10,000 remaining for the year. Ms. Scanlon asked if the Board could receive detailed reporting on veterans services in the eastern part of state. Mr. Callahan said that would also be developed after the release of the audit report.

Ms. Stamm said that all of the final reports are in from 2021-2022. The statistics have been compiled and are in the report. She will assist grantees with training on how to categorize emergency financial assistance, as it is a significant category for both grants. Ms. Scanlon asked what type of assistance falls into the emergency category other than housing. Ms. Stamm said that food, fuel, and car repairs are recurrent items. Ms. Scanlon asked for a breakdown of what was spent on administrative costs last year. Ms. Stamm will have that information at the next meeting. Mr. Taylor thanked Ms. Stamm for her work.

**Remarks**

Mr. Gonzalez said on 12 August he attended the Honoring the Brave Concert benefiting Home Front Military Network. On 18 August, he attended a farm to table community leaders dinner hosted by the superintendent of the Air Force Academy. On 02 September, he attended the Patriot Day giveback event hosted by Mount Carmel. On 07 September, he attended the Pikes Peak Area Community Discussion with ECHCS Director Michael Kilmer

Mr. Maday said that in the interest of time he would save his report for October.

Ms. Scanlon said she served on the interview board for the Women’s State Veterans Service Officer. The Women Marine Association of Colorado is seeing a large increase in need with veterans needing greater amounts of money than in previous years.

Mr. Taylor said that housing continues to be a difficulty. Rents are too high for housing vouchers to cover a sufficient amount. The county is making good use of VAG funds for mental health support for veterans, with four counselors now involved in the program.

Ms. Motupalli said she is continuing to monitor economic indicators of recession with concern for small businesses. The Board may want to consider how to support resiliency for veteran owned small businesses. She has recently provided information to the Minority Business Advisory Council on effective surveys and will revisit it for the purposed of veterans services.

Ms. Golonka attend the American Military Family fundraising event in August. She is leading Xcel’s United Way 211 campaign this year with a goal of raising goal 200 million. On this date, she is working with the Veterans Community Project groundbreaking for tiny homes.

Ms. Hammon said gave a report at the Military Officers Association meeting and shared the DVA slide deck. The VA resource tour took place in Edwards and was well-attended by both local nonprofits and VA. She also participated in Senator Bennett’s veterans round table in August.

**Upcoming Meetings**

The next stated meeting is scheduled for October 7 at the Western Region One Source. A tour of the cemetery will be available at 7:30 with a tour of the WROS to follow the meeting.

Upcoming dates are:

October 7, Grand Junction

November 4, Northeast Colorado

December 2, TBD

**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 1:04 p.m.