

Board Minutes
March 4, 2016
Mountain Resource Center
11030 Kitty Drive, Conifer, CO 80433

Dana Niemela, Chair, called the meeting to order at 0936 hours. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for our POW, MIA, troops in battle or harm's way and all service members.

Roll Call of Members and Introduction of Staff & Guests

Board Members Present:

Dana Niemela, Chair
Duane Dailey, Vice-Chair
Rene Simard, Secretary
Hollie Caldwell, Member-Not Present
Christopher Holden, Member
William "Robby" Robinson, Member-Not Present
Jack Rudder, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

Reuben Mestas, CDVA Director
Gail Hoagland, DMVA, VAG Administrator
Claire Dean, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present:

Lauren Ferguson, Integrated Services Manager, Mountain Resource Center
Wes Carter, National Chairman, C-123 Veterans
George Clark, Vice Chair, Mountain Resource Center
Sharon Smith, Executive Director, Evergreen Christian Outreach "ECHO"
Janice Kaup, Client Services Manager, ECHO
Lindy Goeller, Veteran's Advocate, Mountain Resource Center
Lorye McLeod, CEO, Mountain Resource Center
David Mason, Veteran's Advocate, Mountain Resource Center
John Powell, Veteran
Theresa Rudder, Jack's wife
Bruce Thoms, ECHO

Approval of Minutes from February

Unanimously accepted

Lauren Ferguson: Developed in 1990, Mountain Resource Center began by helping the community become more self-sufficient and offered emergency assistance. Over time, more veterans moved into the area and its purpose shifted to provide aid to a wider list of unique needs. The saturation rate of veterans in Jefferson and Park Counties is well-above the state average. In collaboration with Jefferson Center for Mental Health and ECHO, a series of roundtable discussions were set up for community input. The biggest challenge has been to communicate with isolated veterans, who are further away from resources. Monthly events are held at the Center on Fridays to resolve socialization issues. Other challenges include transportation, employment and emergency assistance. The two part-time Veteran's Advocates have served 70 Veterans so far, most being from the Vietnam era. After meeting with the veteran one on one, a service plan is developed based on their needs. Some of the services they provide include financial coaching to help with budget implementation as well as employment assistance. The Community Veterans Coalition was recognized for starting the Rendezvous Resource Fair and the next Rendezvous Resource Fair, which will team up with the 9News Health Fair, will be held at the Mountain Resource Center in Conifer on May 21. A brief discussion regarding homelessness in communities followed.

Mr. Dailey asked for more information on the Veterans Coalition Group, specifically if the VFW and/or American Legion are involved. The group was formed in order to bring VA Services typically found Denver to the mountain community. Mr. Dailey asked if the two Veteran's Advocates are accredited to process claims. Those veterans who wish to file a claim for benefits are directed to the VA Regional Office in Lakewood. Neighboring Park County is currently without a Service Officer.

Mr. Carter mentioned that Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald has established EMT house calls to veterans in Arizona and that it might be a possible solution to those veterans who require healthcare in rural communities. Ms. Niemela explained that the Board has very limited influence on the Federal level.

A discussion ensued about the lack of foster care in the Clear Creek area. There is a definite gap between independent living and community living centers. Ms. Niemela stated that the Denver University has partnered with the Sturm Family Foundation to help fill gaps in veteran's mental health coverage. Therapists who provide mental health care for veterans at the Mountain Resource Center are paid through grant funding and do not have to pay monthly office rent. Mr. Rudder added that the San Luis Valley has a lot of the same issues with transportation, homelessness and medical care as the Conifer area.

Wes Carter: Mr. Carter asked for clarification on Referendum E, the Property Tax Exemption for Disabled Veterans. Mr. Mestas explained that in order for those veterans who are rated with Individual Unemployability to qualify for the Property Tax Exemption, the law would have to be changed by Colorado Legislature.

John Powell: Mr. Powell expressed his gratitude for the Mountain Resource Center, which he found by word of mouth. Ms. Niemela asked what could be done to reach out to other

veterans. Mr. Powell suggested USO involvement or anything else that would generate comradery. Ms. Smith added that many veterans have a basic distrust, but with positive veteran endorsements, they usually follow suit. Ms. Niemela added that communication between community partnerships and coalitions is essential.

Let the record show that here the Board recessed at 10:56am, and resumed to labor at 11:35am.

Ben Mestas: There is not enough time for the Board to review the grants. Possible solutions would be to adjust the cutoff date, move the March Board meetings to the second Friday of the month and/or move all grant information electronically. Ms. Niemela stated that she would not like to see the cutoff date changed. The solution will be voted on by all Board members with change(s) made in July 2016.

Jack Rudder: Mr. Rudder recommended that small group interactions with State Service Officers be implemented at the annual training conference. He also stated Regional Training last fall was a success in part by meeting in smaller groups and tailoring the training towards what each region was dealing with.

Duane Dailey: Mr. Dailey mentioned that some of the CVA 6 forms that are returned to him are very confusing. Mr. Mestas said that the Division uses the CVA 6 forms to track recurring problems that can later be addressed in training and to keep every county consistent and uniform.

Gail Hoagland: Contractually, there is nothing that says grantees cannot wait until the last minute to use funds. Mr. Simard suggested flagging those grantees who are supposed to use funding on a monthly basis if they have not. Ms. Niemela will contact American Legion Post 1. Ms. Hoagland will send the scoring sheet to all Board members electronically. The Grant Review Committee will need to turn in their grant scores by March 10. All scoring from the entire Board are due by noon March 24. A map was provided detailing where funds are being spent and on what. In some instances, new grantees are taking over the existing grantees and some of those who apply for funding are not the same person(s) spending the funds.

Dana Niemela: Following a discussion with Greg Dorman, there will be potential changes to the Board's Annual Report to the Governor making it more valuable and cohesive. It is the opportunity to promote the Board and have a dynamic presence. Issues, goals and actions should be clearly stated. Mr. Simard wondered if the number of homeless in rural areas has been brought to the Governor's attention and if there is any involvement. Mr. Rudder added that there are 400 homeless in the San Luis Valley. Ms. Niemela will meet with Mickey to discuss changes to the Board Annual Report to the Governor.

Future Meetings

01 Apr – Aurora Chamber of Commerce

06 May – Grand Junction

03 June – San Luis Valley, Homelake

Old Business

Mr. Dailey felt that the Board meeting in Sterling failed in outreach of that region. Proactive outreach is difficult, but the Board will do their best to follow up with Sterling and the area.

New Business

Ms. Niemela announced that she will be stepping down from the Board at the end of June.

Meeting adjourned 12:40pm