

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs (CBVA)

Meeting for January 2026

Date: 09 January 2025

Location: Virtual

Time: 9:05 AM

Break: 11:08-11:16

Members Present

Shelia Scanlon, Chair

Sheldon Smith, Member

Raymond Taylor, Vice Chair

Jasmine Motupalli, Member

Howard Richards, Member

Longinos Gonzalez, Member

Members Absent

Lacey Golonka, Secretary - Excused

Staff Present

Bruce Cowan - Director

Angela Ingalls, Veterans Memorial Cemetery of Western Colorado Administrator

Darin Collazo, Western Region One Source Administrator

Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator

Eric Winterrowd, CDVA Veteran Services Supervisor

Carissa Snyder - CDVA Operations Coordinator

Beth Maxwell, CDVA Operations

Alex Martinez - DMVA Webmaster/Archivist

Guest

Pat Hammon - VCLC Board of Commissioners, United Veteran Coalition (UVC)

Representative alternate

Shelly Kalkowski - President of the United Veteran Coalition (UVC)

John W Kennedy - Boulder Military Officer Association (MOA)

Richard Nagley - American Legion, San Luis Veteran Coalition

Marsh Unruh - Homefront Military Network

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the December meeting were approved by all with the changes previously emailed. Mr. Richards made the motion. Mr. Gonzalez seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comments

During the public comment portion of the meeting, the floor was opened for input from those in attendance; however, no members of the public came forward or offered remarks, and the session proceeded to the next item of business.

Collaboration on the CBVA website with DMVA Webmaster - Alex Martinez

The Board welcomed the new Webmaster, Mr. Alex Martinez, who shared his professional background in Information Technology. Mr. Martinez led a discussion to identify the board's vision for the website and define the primary target audience for vets.colorado.gov. To ensure the site remains intuitive and user-friendly, he proposed implementing surveys to collect data on user demographics, geographic locations, and overall navigation ease. This data will be used to transform the current sedentary page into an interactive resource featuring board member biographies, a blog of monthly events, and potential links to social media. Mr. Martinez noted that the site is currently hosted on Drupal, and he is evaluating the platform's stability and capacity for manual updates versus automated integrations. He concluded by requesting that board members submit their biographies, photos, and suggestions for a "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) section. Action items regarding these updates were distributed via Civic Round Table and email, with further discussion scheduled under Old Business for the February meeting.

Standing Reports

VCLC Board of Commissioners Minutes - Pat Hammon:

The Veterans Community Living Centers (VCLC), has increased staff spending has successfully reduced reliance on outside agencies. This shift is supported by the ongoing CNA program, which recruits staff immediately upon course completion. Facilities are seeing a rise in residency census, positively impacting budgets, while

customer satisfaction surveys continue to reflect top-tier ratings for the centers over several consecutive years.

Regarding Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) grants, the VCLCs have implemented a new tracking system to improve execution rates. Bruce McCandless (Rifle) and Spanish Peaks are on track for 100% fund execution, with Homelake also making significant progress. Fitzsimmons is currently at 90% execution, with planned spring landscaping projects expected to bring the facility to 100%.

Updates were provided on the Mental Health program (KK), which served 55 veterans through 713 visits last fiscal year, totaling \$50,000 in provided care. Healing Warriors has been added to the provider list for this program. Additionally, the Board noted the success of the Marine Corps birthday celebration at Fitzsimmons, which was attended by Governor Jared Polis.

A recent feature on Fox 31 highlighted a veteran receiving medical rehabilitation at a VCLC, drawing attention to the facility's rehabilitation services. It was noted that these medical rehab resources remain an underserved and underutilized asset within the VCLC system.

UVC Updates - Pat Hammon:

The United Veterans Coalition (UVC) presented several legislative goals, including a request for the state to pay all VSOs for work performed in lieu of County VSOs; however, the Board noted they are not in favor of this measure. Other UVC priorities include expanding Veteran Treatment Courts, increasing mental health funding, and advocating for veteran retirement pay to be income tax-free by 2027.

Discussions were held regarding the Service-Connected Veteran-Owned Small Business audit and HB26-1132, specifically concerning charitable gaming restrictions on corporate fundraising. Regarding the DMVA budget, the college tuition waiver appears favorable. A request was also discussed to increase funding for administrative and

maintenance staff at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery (VMC). Director Cowan confirmed that while Federal funds do not cover state salary increases, they do provide for maintenance; the VTF Cash Fund could potentially cover any deficits between Federal grants and actual VMC operating costs.

The Board reviewed the structure of the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF), which consists of a General Fund and a Cash Fund. The General Fund receives approximately 1% of the Tobacco Settlement Fund annually to support veteran organizations through VTF grants. Any unexpended balances at the end of the fiscal year roll into the Cash Fund to earn interest. Unlike the General Fund, the Cash Fund is not subject to mandatory allocation and can be redirected to cover program shortfalls in lean years.

The UVC urged the Board to advocate for a change in how excess funds are handled to prevent them from being swept by the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) or the Governor's Office. The proposed solution is to reallocate excess VTF funds to the Veteran Assistance Grant (VAG). This would allow organizations to expand their services and serve more veterans, ensuring that 100% of the funds are expended each fiscal year rather than reverting to the Cash Fund where they are susceptible to reallocation.

Legislative Report - Bruce Cowan

Director Cowan reported on the current legislative session, noting that most legislators have already finalized their five-bill limit, making the introduction of new legislation challenging. Major General Robert Davis, the new Adjutant General (TAG), proposed a renewed marketing push for the PACT Act in FY27 to re-engage veterans following a decline in initial outreach. Discussions also focused on increasing the Veteran Assistance Grant (VAG) and Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) allocations. The strategy involves requesting that excess, unexpended VTF funds—which currently roll into an inaccessible trust—be reallocated to the VAG. For FY26, this would involve

shifting approximately \$240,000 of the \$1.25 million balance to the VAG, potentially allowing the VCLCs and VAG grantees to serve an additional 500 veterans at an average assistance rate of \$200 per person.

Director Cowan further noted that the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) typically requires a defined capital project or similar scope to release funds held within the trust. There is a specific concern among VAG recipients that legislators may focus on the VTF Cash Fund to finance the VAG, while the Board's preference is to maintain the General Fund at a 100% execution rate. The United Veterans Coalition (UVC) expressed concern regarding the transparency of the trust funds, noting that while unspent money is intended for a secondary account for future use, the actual destination of these funds remains unclear. Consequently, the UVC is exploring amendments to the current plan to ensure excess VTF funds are directed to the VAG rather than the \$4 million trust fund, which currently cannot be spent.

Director Report - Bruce Cowan

The Director of Veterans Affairs expressed his gratitude to The Makery for the donation of the cake for the Marine Corps birthday celebration at Fitzsimmons VCLC. Looking ahead, site visits to the VCLCs are scheduled for April 8 and 9, with specific aircraft details (potentially two Chinooks, two Blackhawks, or a combination) to be confirmed in March.

Veteran Services - Eric Winterrowd:

The "Look, Listen, and Learn" tour within the metro area, specifically discussing lessons learned from the FCI Englewood visit for future programming. Spring Training is scheduled for April 14-16 in Grand Junction. The report included that the Women Veterans Coordinator will speak at the Student Veteran Association and will travel to

receive a national Bronze Award from the National Veterans Memorial and Museum in recognition of the 307 biographies of Colorado women veterans submitted. Regarding technical updates, training for the Civic Round Table (CRT) platform will occur during the January 27 "Coffee Time" session with full CVSO access granted on January 28; additionally, as the Veteran Service team updates the FY27 Policy and Procedure (P&P) manual, the Board requested a review of their specific section to ensure organizational alignment.

Western Region One Source - Darin Collazo:

The December activities at the Western Region One Source (WROS), noting successful holiday partnerships with Toys for Tots and participation in the Wreaths Across America ceremony at the Veterans Memorial Cemetery. Outreach efforts were further expanded through a new partnership with the Western Colorado Community Foundation and continued support for military awareness via Silkies Hikes in Grand Junction. Additionally, the WROS is currently modifying the DEERS position description to a Marketing and Communications role and finalizing plans for office renovations to add more workspace; these transitions are being implemented as the facility refocuses its internal administrative priorities.

Veterans Memorial Cemetery (VMC) of Western Colorado - Angela Ingalls

The Veterans Memorial Cemetery of the Western Slope (VMC) had a productive December, highlighted by the Wreaths Across America (WAA) event where 100 volunteers placed wreaths in just 15 minutes. The cemetery has successfully established the Veterans Memorial Cemetery Foundation (VMCF), a nonprofit formerly known as "Friends of the Cemetery." Additionally, progress continues on the "Saluting

Soldier" statue, which is currently in the modeling phase, and the VMC is utilizing a new work-study position to upload critical data into the new OIT software system. Ms. Ingalls presented a request for up to \$50,000 from the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) for two specific projects. The first is a sustainable wreath program designed to solve the recurring costs and disposal issues associated with annual donations. The VMC proposed purchasing reusable wreaths and splitting the cost over two fiscal years: utilizing the FY 2026 budget for storage containers and groundwork, followed by the purchase of the wreaths in FY 2027. Ms. Stamm confirmed that sufficient funds were available in the budget, Ms. Motupalli made a motion to approve \$32,000 for the VMC sustainable wreath program. The motion was seconded by Mr. Smith and officially approved by the Board.

Regarding the second project, a \$22,000 request for the foundation of the Saluting Sailor statue, the Board determined they were unable to vote at this time as the provided documents had not been reviewed prior to the meeting. The Board requested to review the documentation and postpone the vote on the statue foundation until the February meeting.

Ms. Stamm confirmed that sufficient funds were available in the budget, Ms. Motupalli made a motion to approve \$32,000 for the VMC sustainable wreath program. The motion was seconded by Mr. Smith and officially approved by the Board.

Grants - Lisa Stamm:

The Veteran Assistance Grant (VAG) is at 55% execution while the Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) is at 43% execution. In December, 35 grant reimbursements were processed, and it was noted that VTF returns will be available to assist other grants. Mental health reimbursements totaled 69 at Fitzsimmons, 9 at Florence, and 2 at Rifle. Following the briefing from Ms. Hammon, it was confirmed that the mental health

coordinator is now working with Healing Warriors, who have been officially added to the provider list.

The Military Stipend Program reported participation from 14 Honor Guard units. To date, 29 applications for payment have been submitted, covering 80 individual services provided to veterans. Currently, \$4,110.00 has been expended, leaving a remaining balance of \$31,335.00 for the program. Recent administrative efforts included hosting office hours and conducting meetings for new grantees to ensure program compliance and support.

Updates were provided on the transition to the Neighborly platform, which is scheduled to go live on January 20. To support this rollout, applicant training sessions are scheduled for January 21, January 28, and February 4. Ms. Stamm reviewed the Neighborly application interface with the Board to familiarize them with the new system. Additionally, formal Board training is scheduled to take place during the April 10th Board meeting, where members will specifically review the rubric for the grant application review process.

Colorado County Veteran Service Officer Association (CCVSOA)/National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NASCVSO) - Josh Medina

Mr. Winterrowd reported on behalf of Mr. Medina, that the Colorado County Veterans Service Officers Association (CCVSOA) report will be presented at the next meeting. Additionally, it was noted that the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NASCVSO) is currently finalizing its report for future review.

Old Business

Women Veterans Subcommittee - Sheila Scanlon

There was no report provided for the Women Veteran Subcommittee during this meeting.

Transportation Grant - Dir Bruce Cowan • Southwest Regional One Source (SWROS) - Sheila Scanlon and Director Bruce Cowan

The Division is seeking partners to maximize the impact of federal transportation grant work, specifically looking at a potential collaboration with the United Veterans Coalition (UVC). This initiative focuses on the Federal Transportation Bill and exploring the feasibility of federal assistance for veteran transportation in rural areas. Currently, the Division is working with Ouray and San Juan counties to determine if applying for these federal transportation funds is feasible and how they can best serve veterans in those locations.

Southern Region One Source - Director Bruce Cowan

The Division of Veterans Affairs (DVA) is evaluating the possibility of owning rather than leasing a new space, as part of a strategic effort to secure a permanent location for future operations. Additionally, the DVA is exploring staffing requirements for the Southwest Regional One Source (SWROS) to ensure the facility is adequately supported to meet the needs of veterans in the southwest region.

Albuquerque VHA collaboration with Colorado Division of Veteran Affairs - Raymond Taylor

The planned visit to the Albuquerque Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has been delayed until late March or early April. While the meeting with the Director did not occur in December as scheduled, Vice Chair Raymond Taylor is continuing to coordinate with the Director to advocate for and support veterans facing unique or complex situations. This ongoing collaboration aims to ensure Colorado veterans in the southwest region receive tailored assistance and improved access to federal health care resources.

Strategic Plan - Sheila Scanlon

Ms. Scanlon stated once she received Mr. Richards and Mr. Smith's biographies and photos. The plan would be ready for publication.

New Business:

Annual Report

Board Chair Sheila Scanlon informed the Board that she will upload the draft to the Civic Round Table (CRT) platform for final review by the members. This review process will take place prior to her officially signing the transmittal letter for the report's submission.

CBVA - January Minutes - Draft

SDVOSB Contracting Report Review

Regarding the annual Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) contracting report. Board Chair Sheila Scanlon reviewed questions sent by auditors concerning the state's progress toward the statutory goal—established by C.R.S. § 24-103-905— with a goal of awarding at least 3% of all state contracts by dollar value to SDVOSBs.

The Board noted that while they have not used this specific data in past Annual Reports, they acknowledge the 3% requirement. However, it was clarified that the Board has historically lacked the necessary information and verification data to report on these metrics accurately.

Future Speakers and Presentation Schedule

The Board discussed a new initiative to invite external agencies to present at the beginning of each monthly meeting. The goal is to host one agency per month to provide insights and updates directly to the Board, with this practice scheduled to commence in February 2026. This regular engagement is intended to strengthen partnerships and keep the Board informed of various veteran-related services and programs across the state.

Board Remarks

The Board remarked on events they attended in December.

Statewide Veterans Issues:

Access to VA Prescriptions to include providing pharmacies in rural areas

Veterans on the Fringes

Homelessness

Mental Health Service

Transportation

Food Insecurity

Upcoming Meetings

12 February 2026

VCLC Florence, Colorado

04 March 2026

RMR Aurora, Colorado

10 April 2026

Buena Vista, Colorado

08 May 2026

Joint Force Headquarters

05 June 2026

VCLC Rifle, Colorado

Adjournment

Mr. Smith made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Taylor seconded. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 11:50 AM.