

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs

February 3, 2023

Virtual via WebEx

Opening

Ms. Hammon called the meeting to order at 0901. 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

Longinos Gonzalez, Member

Sean Maday, Member

Jasmine Motupalli, Member

Raymond Taylor, Member

Staff Present

David Callahan, CDVA Director

Angela Ingalls, VMC Director

Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator

Dan Coulter, Interim WROS Property Administrator

James Poteet, CDVA Appeals and Hearings Specialist

Kristy Cunningham, State Veterans Service Officer-Southwest

Glen Marciniak, State Veterans Service Officer-Northeast

Eric Moncibais, Interim VSO Lead, State Veterans Service Officer-Southeast

Drew Stem, State Veterans Service Officer-Central

Carissa Snyder, CDVA Program Assistant

Beth Maxwell, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present

Erin Cavit, Hinsdale County Veterans Service Officer

Destry DeWolf, Huerfano County Veterans Service Officer

James Kliesen, Cheyenne County Veterans Service Officer

Adrian Medina, Pueblo County Veterans Service Officer

Richard Nagley, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Sheldon Smith, Montrose/Ouray Counties Veterans Service Officer

Public Comments:

None

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Taylor corrected typographical errors on pages two, three, four, five, and six, and a grammatical error on page four. He clarified that the issue listed in the report from the Central VSO is that the Division was waiting for the governor's budget, and asked that pre-d be specified as pre-determination on page five and that "coffee" on pages three and six be modified to "coffee times." In her remarks captured on page six Ms. Hammon asked to add "in Grand Junction" to the reference to the VMC, to specify that the 380 wreaths were placed in four cemeteries in Eagle County, and to clarify that the local government is installing the commemorative plaques, not a coalition. Mr. Maday corrected typographical errors on pages two, three, four, five, and six.

Mr. Taylor moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Mr. Gonzalez seconded. The motion carried.

State VSO Reports

Southwest VSO: Ms. Cunningham said that January outreach included attending the Durango American Legion luncheon on the 25th and the monthly women veterans' Meet and Greet in Cortez. Upcoming in February are the Vets 4 Vets meeting in Archuleta County and a Ute VA event. Opportunities include partnering with the Southern Ute Veteran Collaborative on a prospective veterans' community center and springtime visits to county veterans service offices and to county commissioners. Successes include an effective appeal of a denied claim based on toxic exposure resulting in a 100% service connection with back pay. Continuing issues are the lack of Veteran Directed Care in the region, no DEERS office, limited shelters, and limited availability of mental health care.

Northwest VSO: Mr. Moncibais reported on behalf of Mr. Edginton. He said that outreach included the vet center, VOA, HUD-VASH, and Caregiver Support, the Colorado Mesa University Student Veteran Alliance, and the local VFW. Opportunities include attending the National Guard Association of Colorado conference in April and the CCI spring conference in May. Successes included a new partnership with the VFW service officer in Steamboat Springs. Issues continue to be access to VSOs and to mental health care.

Southeast VSO: Mr. Moncibais said new outreach has been initiated with both Sangre de Cristo and Veterans Voice while established partnerships continue. Opportunities include communication with funeral homes and hospices in regard to listing all contributing causes on death certificates and reinvolving the community in the Pueblo Stand Down. Successes include new accreditations of two county veterans service officers. Issues are businesses that charge veterans for claims assistance and death certificates that do not have all contributing factors listed.

Northeast VSO: Mr. Marciniak said outreach included two face to face meetings with county veterans service officers and a meeting in Logan County regarding a recent reduction of VA

medical services in Sterling. Opportunities include a long-term project to improve transportation in rural northeastern counties, 1:1 VetraSpec training sessions, and building VHA relationships in Cheyenne. Successes include introductory meetings with CVSOs in the region are 70% complete and proactive relationship building with local Relationship building with local American Legion and VFW posts. A recent issue is weather delaying some face-to-face CVSO meetings.

Central VSO: Mr. Stem said outreach has included continuing partnerships with VBA, VHA, and Community Care, and a new partnership in palliative care. Opportunities include the addition of a new VSO in Arapahoe County. Successes include effective high level reviews on PACT Act claims. A continuing issue is waiting for finalization of the state budget and a need for more veterans service officers in the Denver area.

Old Business

Customer Surveys: Mr. Callahan said that more than 600 responses have been received to date and a net promoter score should be available by the end of the month. There should also be information available on what services veterans have been seeking in what parts of the state as well as their satisfaction level with those services. He thanked Ms. Motupalli for her assistance. Ms. Hammon asked that county veterans service officers be notified in advance of future surveys.

New Business

Ms. Motupalli said she has been contacted by a nonprofit that assists veterans in locating service dogs and is seeking new community partners. She offered to vet the organization and communicate any information to state veterans service officers. Mr. DeWolf offered to discuss service dogs with any interested VSOs.

Standing Reports

DMVA/DVA/Legislative: Mr. Callahan said an administrator has been hired for the Civil Air Patrol. DMVA is reannouncing the vacancy for Chief Operating Officer. The VSO Supervisor position is currently on hold with Human Resources and updates will be provided as they become available. There has been no selection for Women's Veterans Service Officer and that

vacancy will also be reannounced. The VA Secretary visited for a Point in Time survey at the end of January. That effort was assisted by Mr. Callahan and executives from VISN 19, the CRRC, VHA, and VBA. DVA is hiring a temporary Operations and Training specialist who will focus on training, policies and procedures, and audit review. Mr. Callahan will join VHA at their upcoming town halls the second week of February and will also meet with local CVSOs. He attended the VHA town hall in Castle Rock on 30 January concerning the new clinic that will be built there. He will attend the NASDVA winter conference in Washington, D.C. the following week. DVA has a doctoral candidate doing a needs assessment for women veterans in Colorado. Mr. Callahan recently testified in support of the WROS sunset review (SB23-154), spending authority for the VMC regarding gifts, grants, and donations (HB23-1053), and modifications to the application process for the property tax exemption for qualifying disabled veterans (SB23-036). He also testified at a SMART Act hearing regarding funding for eight additional FTE for DVA. Ms. Scanlon asked if any of the legislative efforts need Board support at this time. Mr. Callahan said a letter from the Board is always useful but so far all these initiatives have unanimous support in committee. Ms. Hammon said it would be helpful for the Board to submit a letter in advance of any floor vote. Mr. Callahan asked the Board to consider planning meeting locations 12 months in advance to assist with communication and planning and to distribute the meeting agendas one week prior. Ms. Hammon said that the Board could accommodate those requests.

WROS: Mr. Coulter said that the new administrative assistant at the WROS has been a great addition to the team. Participation in veteran events at the WORS continues to increase, with new veterans arriving regularly for the weekly coffee club. The facility will host a free legal clinic for veterans in the spring. They have recently partnered with Operation Gratitude, which produces care packages for veterans.

Grants: Ms. Stamm said that application training sessions have been well attended and she has provided a lot of 1:1 technical assistance to applicants as well. She held a virtual monitoring meeting with the Salvation Army. The organization is a new VAG grantee this year and she was able to assist them with the reimbursement process. Their spending is now on track. She has begun weekly grantee check-ins and in January met with three grantees: the McCandless CLC, VFW Post 12063 in Westcliff, and Douglas County. The CLC will expend their grant. They have

established a coffee bar and massage room as planned. Residents at the CLC are very involved in the process. Several attended the check-in and the residents are holding a vote on what funding they will apply for in the upcoming cycle. VFW Post 12063 will need to find a new grant manager for the upcoming year and their Board is currently deciding whether they will apply for funding. Douglas County has seen a high demand for assistance with heating costs and is considering establishing spending caps in their program. She provided technical assistance to Gunnison County and to Telluride Adaptive Sports regarding their application. Budget modifications are under way. She referred the Board to the written report indicating that among VTF grantees DAV Chapter 21, DAV Chapter 44, American Legion Post 22, the VMC and the WROS can all use additional funds. Ms. Hammon encouraged Board members who have not had the opportunity to attend a VTF application webinar. Ms. Stamm said the DORA representative heading the sunset review for VAG may be contacting Board members as stakeholders.

VMC: Ms. Ingalls said January was a good month for VMC. The ADA doors are now complete. The second jeep in in for repairs. She same vendor will provide a quote about repairing the paint on the torpedo from the U.S. Naval Museum. The VMC partnered with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the local Elks lodge to repurpose the wreaths used in Wreaths Across America. Jennifer Lesko now has her PIV card. Ms. Ingalls met with the local DAR chapter, which will be donating benches to the cemetery this year. HB23-1053 has passed in committee. The VMC has been approved for a third year of VA work study. She confirmed that VSO offices are also eligible to use VA work study.

Board Member Remarks

Mr. Gonzalez said he attended a Mount Carmel fundraiser on 07 January. He is now the Board of Commissioners' liaison to the Chamber's Military and Veterans Affairs Committee and attended his first meeting of the committee serving in that capacity on 19 January.

Ms. Motupalli said she is preparing to be interviewed for a podcast that features veterans in her year group. The interview will focus on her experience as an academy cadet and as a black woman in the military. She said she was one of 9 or 10 in black women in her class at West Point and when she returned 10 years later as an assistant professor there were 50 entering black

women cadets. She complimented the VSOs on the work they are doing in support of Colorado veterans.

Mr. Maday said he met last week with the National Director of the Air National Guard in Washington, D.C. In March Colorado will host the Air Force Association's air warfare symposium.

Ms. Scanlon said the Women Marines Association will celebrate the birthday of women in the reserves with a luncheon on 13 February. She will give a presentation on leadership prior to the luncheon. Her appointment to the Board will be reconfirmed at the state capitol on 02 March.

Mr. Taylor said his office engaged in a new outreach. They were contacted by a local school seeking a Vietnam veteran to speak with the high school class. The event was very successful and they will try to continue it with additional time frames. Problems continue with trying to fund providers to fill Tricare prescriptions. Utility costs are up 35-40% in the area with a corresponding increase in housing costs. Other ongoing issues are transportation difficulties, particularly in weather conditions. A new issue is water shortages caused cistern and well problems, which necessitate expensive repairs.

Ms. Hammon said next week she will attend the HSR&D/QUERI National Meeting in Baltimore, where she will present a paper concerning the ASCEND project and facilitating veterans engagement. She has presented four local awards for the VFW's Voice of Democracy essay contest. The most significant present problem in Eagle County is housing; there is none available. The closest available housing for veterans experiencing homelessness is in Silt, which is more than 50 miles away.

Upcoming Meetings

The next stated meeting is scheduled for March 3, possibly to be held at Joint Forces Headquarters. The Board discussed upcoming meetings and established a draft schedule through the end of 2023. It was decided to meet in Phillips County in April to avoid conflicting with planting season. That meeting will be held on a Wednesday since that is when the local veteran's group meets.

March 3, JFHQ or elsewhere Denver area

April 5 – Phillips County

May 5 - Denver area

June 2 – Lincoln County

July – no meeting

August 4 – Pueblo

September 9 – Eagle County

October 6 – Moffatt County

November 3 – Denver (tentative: Sobriety House)

December 1 – Arapahoe County

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.