

Colorado Board of Veterans
Affairs 02 February 2024
Arapahoe County Plaza
1690 West Littleton Boulevard
Littleton, CO 80120

Opening

Ms. Scanlon called the meeting to order at 0902. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was held for POWs, MIAs, those deployed, their families, and those killed in the line of duty.

Members Present

Sheila Scanlon, Chair
Sean Maday, Vice Chair
Lacey Golonka, Secretary
Longinos Gonzalez, Member
Jasmine Motupalli, Member
Raymond Taylor, Member

Staff Present

Parker White, DMVA Legislative Liaison
David Callahan, CDVA Director
Darin Collazo, WROS Property Administrator
Brandon De Bruyn, WROS DEERS Specialist
Emily Currier, WROS Administrative Assistant
Tina O'Dell, WROS Administrative Assistant
Angela Ingalls, VMC Director
Eric Winterrowd, CDVA Veterans Services Supervisor
Glen Marciniak, CDVA Claims and Benefits Manager
James Poteet, CDVA Appeals and Hearings Specialist

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Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator
Ralph Charlip, CDVA Policy Advisor
Carissa Snyder, CDVA Program Assistant
Beth Maxwell, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present

Marshall Bosworth, El Paso County Veterans Service Officer, CCVSOA
President, NACVSO Delegate

Ron Brown, Yuma County Veterans Service Officer

Mary Cornum, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Duane Dailey, Grand and Summit Counties Veterans Service Officer

Destry DeWolf, Huerfano County Veterans Service Officer

Tina Garcia, DAV Legislative Chair

Pat Hammon, Eagle County Veterans Service Officer, VCLC Board of
Commissioners

UVC Representative

Bill Holen, Commissioner, Arapahoe County

Greg Levine, Commissioner, Hinsdale County

Tim Marquart, Weld County Veterans Service Officer

Josh Medina, Arapahoe County Veterans Service Officer

Richard Nagley, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley, American Legion Dept
VSO

Stephen Otero, Gunnison County Veterans Service Officer

Perfecto Sanchez, Co-founder, Equity Quotient

Roxie Smith, Crowley County Veterans Service Officer

Sheldon Smith, Montrose and Ouray Counties Veterans Service Officer

Courtney Stryker, Arapahoe County Division Manager, Senior Resources
and

Veteran Services

Rick Ward, Bent and Otero Counties Veterans Service Officer

Approval of Minutes

Corrections to the draft of the December 2023 minutes were provided.

Mr. Maday moved that the minutes be approved as corrected. Ms. Motupalli seconded. The motion carried.

Equity Quotient

Ms. Motupalli introduced Perfecto Sanchez, co-founder of Equity Quotient. Equity Quotient recently presented at a meeting of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. She said the Minority Business Advisory Council and the CBVA have struggled to understand the demographics of their audiences and Equity Quotient may be able to assist. Mr. Sanchez said Equity Quotient currently has a partnership with Higher Heroes regarding gainful employment for veterans, one with a national bank regarding the state of military finance, as well as the Veterans Benefits Administration. The presenting question for the CBVA would be how data can help the Board serve veterans. He shared examples of Equity Quotient dashboards that can be used to help partners understand what is happening in their target communities. Integrated data platforms allow them to run analytics regarding effectiveness. Mr. Medina asked if the products are also available to smaller nonprofits. Mr. Sanchez said yes and that the accessibility of data is a focus of Equity Quotient. Mr. Winterrowd asked if other than county level data, if community data could also be gathered by city or zip code. Mr. Sanchez said they can.

Public Comments - None

Colorado Counties, Inc.

Mr. Gonzalez said he attended a recent meeting of Colorado Counties, Inc. where attendees received an update on SB24-004, which concerns support to county veterans service offices. The opportunities for increased funding and

the requirement for state certification were generally well received, with some concern among counties with part time VSOs regarding the amount of time it might take to complete the training. The other item of interest was payments to counties being based on an hourly rate rather than a flat rate for full time and part time. Ms. Scanlon asked Mr. Callahan to address the issues of interest connected to SB24-004. Mr. Callahan said the bill has passed the Senate and may be amended in the House. He said that accreditation for VSOs is required by the bill, which has caused concern for counties whose VSOs may not work the federally required 1,000 hours per year for accreditation. County Veterans Service Officers would still be required to be veterans, but other supporting staff would not. Ms. Scanlon asked how smaller counties are reacting to the legislation. Mr. Callahan said the response has been varied. Some are working to partner with other counties to create shared VSO offices that will provide enough working hours to make VSOs eligible for accreditation. Ms. Scanlon said the Board would like updates on how smaller counties are affected if this legislation goes into effect. Mr. Callahan said yes and that Regional State Veterans Service Officers can also assist.

Arapahoe County Board of Commissioners

Mr. Holen said that Arapahoe County has the second largest veteran population in the state, and after the passage of PACT Act their veterans service office saw a large increase in claims. He complimented the veterans services office on their efforts to add staff and reduce wait times for veterans, which have declined from seven weeks to 30 days. He said that Arapahoe County supports the hourly pay rate for funds distributed to county veterans service offices. Ms. Stryker said that adding new VSOs through ARPA grant funds has been helpful and that they may add more if the CVSO Act passes. Mr. Medina agreed that the additional staff and increased state funding have been helpful.

VCLC Board of Commissioners

Ms. Hammon said staffing issues are still a serious concern for the VCLCs. Some VCLCs still need to use agency staffing to cover shortfalls, which is very expensive to procure. The new memory unit at Rifle has been delayed to due staffing and may open in June.

Fitzsimons has a new website that features an online application for prospective residents. Ms. Scanlon asked if there has been any progress in allowing a greater number of spouses to become residents. Ms. Hammon said that effort is at the federal level and she will inquire about the status.

Standing Reports

Ms. Scanlon said that Standing Reports have been moved up on the agenda to allow DMVA staff time to report and then leave the meeting if necessary.

DVA/DMVA/Legislative: Mr. Callahan said that that a bill has been introduced to continue the Veterans Assistance Grant. DVA staff will attend the annual training conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs 17-23 February. The next version of the Division's Policies and Procedures will be available in July and the Division is still collecting feedback.

Women and Marginalized Veterans: Mr. Callahan reported in the absence of Ms. Demenge. In regard to the recommendations being actioned from Mr. Charlip's assessment of women veterans, he reported that concerning the Colorado National Guard MST programs, the decision was to continue with the current staff, since there are a spectrum of perpetrators and victims involved in sexual assault. In regard to benefits education, Ms. Demenge is liaising with several nonprofit and is engaging in TAP briefs. The Women Veterans web page has been updated, and Ms. Demenge is working with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment regarding work opportunities. She is also working on sharing best practices between the Eastern Colorado Health Care System and both Albuquerque and Cheyenne.

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Ms. Scanlon asked if there was anything the Board could support. Mr. Callahan said a peer navigator is a good prospect, which will require a new FTE. Mr. Charlip's suggestions were the peer navigator, employment and apprenticeships, and work to improve veterans preference for veterans applying for state positions.

UVC: Ms. Hammon said that the UVC legislative committee is tracking the Veterans Assistance Grant sunset recommendations, and she was able to testify at that hearing. She also attended the hearings regarding SB24-004 and will update the Board as the bill proceeds. UVC supports the Purple Star School program, which would recognize public schools that provide an employee to support military families. Another bill being considered by UVC would establish reciprocal professional licensing for military spouses.

WROS: Mr. Collazo said that tenants at the WROS remained consistent, including VBA, HUD-VASH, VA Caregivers, VOA, Rocky Mountain Human Services, Medicare Mentors, Spectrum Sound, Reserve Component Transition Assistance Advisors. January events included Tai Chi, the Art of Mindfulness, Vets 4 Vets Peer Support Group, Guitars 4 Vets, Veterans Coffee Club, Women's Coffee, VA Caregiver Support Group, RANGE Group, VBA assistance, and the new Gold Star/Surviving Families group. DEERS Specialist Brandon De Bruyn has accepted the Chief of Protocol with DMVA and will begin that role on 01 March. Federal DEERS Specialist Sara Baker is still located at the WROS.

Veterans Services and Training: Mr. Winterrowd said that several TAP briefs have been provided at Buckley and that Wreaths Across America was held in multiple locations. The veterans service offices hired for the Central East, Central West, and Northeast Regions are now accredited. Beginning 01 January, Glen Marciniak assumed the role of Claims and Benefits Manager and Eric Moncibais that of Appeals Assistant, leaving vacancies for regional state veterans service officers in the Northeast and the Southeast. He will

attend the upcoming conference of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs and the state will host the NACVSO training conference in May. Current issues include long wait times for veterans to see a VSO, lack of knowledge of veterans services among county leadership, lack of fully operational regional state veterans service officers, and needs that could arrive from the possible passing of the CVSO Act. Under Training he reported that the training officer is still filling in as the Southwest Region VSO and is currently working with Operations on accreditation accuracy, working on an in/out Processing checklist for county and state VSOs, and coordinating VSO Spring Training, which will be virtual. The VSO Liaison is working on the NACVSO conference, attended the CCI conference, and is contacting legislative liaisons, VBA representatives, and VHA representatives, while engaged in a warm handoff of the two Central regions. The Women Veterans Coordinator visited and decorated the first Service Women's Monument in Collbran, presented at two regional meetings, hosted a first informal Women Veterans Meet-up, updated the Women Veterans web page, worked on securing sponsorship for the Women Veterans Day legislation, and visited the Military Family Clinic Visit. Appeals saw awards totaling nearly \$5,000,000 from BVA Grants in 2023, with 39 cases still waiting for decisions. NVLSP has worked 35 cases so far for CDVA clients at the Court of Appeals for Veterans claims, 11 of which have succeed with 24 pending.

VMC: Ms. Ingalls said that there were 374 internments in 2023. More than 3,200 wreaths were placed for Wreaths Across America including more than 200 community volunteers. Wreaths collected in January were repurposed into fish hatcheries with the assistance of the Department of Wildlife. The Military Honors stipend has been working on enrollment and so far this fiscal year has paid for 648 services. There were 11 participating units for January. Additional organizations are showing interest in supporting the planned memorial walk. The cost to sponsor a plaque will be the actual cost of the memorial and content approval will be required. These additional

contributions can be made after the Memorial Day dedication of the initial DAR plaques. VFW Post 3981 is still in the beginning stages of designing an OEF/OIF memorial for donation to the cemetery. Headstone lithograph fading continues to be a concern with the cemetery receiving an average of two complaints a week. The request for a dedicated, and specially trained, FTE to care for the stones will not be pursued this legislative session. There will be a training for cemetery staff to help learn how to maintain and restore the lithographs.

CCVSOA/NACVSO: Mr. Bosworth said that the CCVSOA has installed the new Board members and met in January. The NACVSO conference in-person option is full but virtual enrollment is still possible. He will attend a NACVSO leadership conference next week and will receive briefings from the VA Secretary and Undersecretaries. He and CCVSOA Vice President Ray Odum will also meet with Congressional representatives in Washington, D.C. Ms. Scanlon asked if there are any issues or concerns from counties regarding pending legislation. Mr. Bosworth said the main item of interest is the CVSO Act.

Grants: Ms. Stamm said a bill will be introduced to continue the Veterans Assistance Grant until 2031. During January, office hours were held five times and four application webinars were held. There was also a presentation on the application process for both grants held at the VSO Coffee Training on 31 January. 14 units of technical assistance to new applicants and current grantees over the reporting period. Interviews for the Grant Specialist II will be held on 05 February.

The Board recessed from 1111 to 1121

Old Business

Bylaws - Transcription of Records: Ms. Scanlon said that there was a request for a draft of the December 2023 minutes. She recommended an addition to

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the Board bylaws that would specify that records are not released until approved by the Board. Ms. Motupalli so moved. Mr. Gonzalez seconded. The motion passed.

How to Discuss Upcoming Legislation: Ms. Scanlon said that she has discussed the issue with DMVA leadership, and while there is nothing pending now that cannot be discussed publicly, when that occurs discussion will be held in Executive Session.

Women Veterans Survey: Ms. Scanlon said she is willing to meet with Ms. Demenge regarding the recommendation. Ms. Motupalli said that the recommendations were largely qualitative, and it could be helpful to discuss how success will be measured. Mr. Winterrowd said that the 2021 Deborah Sampson Act addresses many of the recommendations, with plans that extend in 2025 and 2026. He said that Ms. Demenge would be able to provide details. Ms. Scanlon asked that Ms. Demenge attend the next meeting of the Board to address these issues. Ms. Motupalli suggested that the Board create a separate working group for these issues. Ms. Scanlon said a committee will be appointed.

Albuquerque VAMC: Mr. Taylor thanked Mr. Callahan for his assistance in renewing this communication. There was a meeting with both VISNs on 11 January. Topics covered included communication, access to care, travel pay, specialty care, and pharmacy services. He has sent Albuquerque a detailed letter about the issues and has monthly calls scheduled with the director. Ms. Scanlon thanked him for his work on this project.

Flyer for Grant Programs: Mr. Maday shared a flyer drafted to advertise the Veterans Assistance Grant. It met with the unanimous approval of the Board. Mr. Medina asked if a like flyer could be created for the Veterans Trust Fund Grant and Mr. Maday agreed.

Annual Report: Ms. Scanlon said the annual report was submitted on time and should be ready to publish. Ms. Snyder will see that it is published to the web site.

State of Clearinghouse: Mr. Winterrowd said the contracted vendor began work in January and a progress report should be forthcoming. The due date is 30 June but the vendor expects it be completed prior to that date.

Policies and Procedures: Ms. Scanlon said that the Policies and Procedures Committee had technical issues. New dates will be sent and the committee will attempt to meet in advance of the March meeting.

New Business

Members Directory: Ms. Scanlon said the Board needs an updated member directory. Ms. Motupalli offered to create an Excel form to make it easy for members to submit the information.

Board Member Remarks

Mr. Gonzalez said that on 03 December he attended the 4th Infantry Division's holiday reception, on 09 December he attended the Air Force Academy Superintendent's holiday reception, and on 12 December he attended the Air Force Academy's Holly and Ivy reception and concert. On 25 January he attended the monthly meeting of the local chamber's Military Affairs Council.

Mr. Maday said that he brought challenge coins, patches, and stickers featuring the Board's logo.

Ms. Motupalli said that she has facilitated contact between Emily's Way and Ms. Demenge. Emily's Way provides in-person resiliency in leadership programs for women and wants to hold an event in the Denver area next year. She has been working with a Vietnam veteran who hadn't engaged with the VA and who has now enrolled in mental health services. During the

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Board's visit to the VMC, she met a Marine veteran who has had difficulty with employment. She has provided mentoring and resume revision and it has resulted in multiple upcoming interviews.

Ms. Golonka said that she returns to work next week.

Mr. Taylor said that the county has lost six veterans since early December. Some of the spousal assistance has been difficult when the veterans were not service connected. His office has moved from the community center to a county building, as veterans services is now with the county's Department of Health.

Ms. Scanlon asked if the nomination for a new Board member has progressed to Boards and Commissions. Mr. Callahan said it is waiting for TAG's signature. She said that she testified regarding the Board's response to the state audit on 11 December. She supported and attended the Christmas breakfast for Marines and sailors at Buckley SFB on 13 December. She attended TAG's promotion ceremony on 05 January and Mr. Callahan's retirement celebration on 27 January. She attended the Sunset Review hearing for VAG on 11 February. The Women Veterans Conference at the Doubletree on 10 February is free to women veterans and has an easy online signup.

Veterans Issues

Issues captured at the meeting include access to prescriptions, getting in contact with VSOs, homelessness, lithograph issues, mental health services, transportation, and recommendations from the women veterans needs assessment.

Upcoming Meetings

The March meeting will be held on 08 March and will be held virtually. The April meeting will be held on the afternoon of 09 April in Pagosa Springs, to align with the scheduled meeting of Vets for Vets of Archuleta County. The May meeting may be held in Chaffee County, if the Cars for Coffee event has resumed by that time.

Currently scheduled:

08 March – Virtual

09 April – Archuleta County (1:00 p.m.)

05 May – Chaffee County?

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Maday moved to adjourn. Ms. Motupalli seconded. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.