

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs

03 November 2023

Sobriety House

121 Acoma Street

Denver, CO 80223

Opening

Ms. Scanlon 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 those killed in the line of duty.

Members Present

Sheila Scanlon, Chair

Sean Maday, Vice-Chair

Longinos Gonzalez, Member

Fred Korb, Member

Jasmine Motupalli, Member

Raymond Taylor, Member

Members Absent

Lacey Golonka, Excused

Staff Present

Michael Bruno, DMVA Deputy Executive Director

David Callahan, CDVA Director

Darin Collazo, WROS Property Administrator

Angela Ingalls, VMC Director

Eric Winterrowd, CDVA Veterans Services Supervisor

Amy Demenge, CDVA Women's Veterans Service Officer

James Poteet, CDVA Appeals and Hearings Specialist

Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator

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Ralph Charlip, CDVA Research Assistant
Carissa Snyder, CDVA Program Assistant
Beth Maxwell, CDVA Administrative Assistant
Tina O'Dell, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present

Mary Cornum, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley
Stephen Dill, Pueblo County Veterans Service Officer
Jacob Frye, Sobriety House Director of Operations
Tina Garcia, DAV Legislative Chair
Pat Hammon, Eagle County Veterans Service Officer, VCLC Board of Commissioners
Rick LaBounta, Sobriety House Counselor
Richard Nagley, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley
Ray Odum, Las Animas County Veterans Service Officer
Sheldon Smith, Montrose and Ouray Counties Veterans Service Officer

Approval of Minutes

Corrections to the draft of the October minutes were provided.

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

Public Comments

Mr. Nagley said that 8:00 a.m. was the posted meeting time online despite the 9:00 start time. He asked that the posted start time be double checked in advance of the meeting dates.

Ms. Cornum asked if additional information is available about Sobriety House. Mr. Frye said anyone needing information can contact him by email.

Dr. Garcia said that the DAV in cooperation with the UVC has been discussing veterans' preference in contracting. The VA and Small Business

Administration are asking for support to promote veteran-owned businesses. Veteran-owned businesses have the highest rate of success in the state. Ms. Motupalli said that she also serves on the Minority Business Advisory Council and that the council might be interested in a collaboration. They agreed to follow up via email.

Speakers

Pat Hammon said the VCLC Board of Commissioners met on 13 October. They were not able to meet at the Spanish Peaks facility as planned due to a COVID outbreak. There was a report from a senior specialist on aging. The state is assembling a new commission on aging. The commission has been tasked with creating a master plan for aging in Colorado. Colorado has the second largest aging population in the country. The VCLC Board of Commissioners is working on right-sizing the VCLCs. The number of admissions is down, partially due to more individuals aging at home and partially due to lack of staff at the facilities. Some facilities are supporting training for new staff and some use agencies to fill staffing gaps. Some are reducing the number of wards to better utilize the current staffing levels. They are considering legislation that would allow them to admit a larger percentage of veterans' spouses. Ms. Scanlon asked what the Board could do to assist. Ms. Hammon said she would keep the Board up to date on legislative progress and in the meantime a mention in the Board's annual report could be helpful.

Ms. Scanlon invited the Board members who attended the VCLC visits in October to report. Mr. Maday said that he visited the facility in Rifle, where he spoke to residents interested in creating a greenhouse. He encouraged the facility to seek VTF funding for the project. Mr. Taylor said that he visited the facility at Homelake. He said that some of the guardsmen who attended with TAG were unaware of the facilities and the level of care available. The facility tour included the domiciliary and he was able to visit two of his clients who

are now residents at the facility. Ms. Motupalli also visited Homelake and said she liked the level of independence afforded the residents there. She also visited the facility at Walsenburg and had the opportunity to converse with an indigenous resident who was at the facility while recovering from surgery. The cohousing of veterans and spouses was a particularly holistic aspect. Ms. Scanlon said it was a great opportunity to observe the outcomes of prior VTF funding and to visit with the residents.

Veterans Services Report

Mr. Winterrowd said VSO October events and outreach included the VCLC visits, an event at the University of Denver, the Fort Collins Stand Down, and a presentation on benefits at the Fitzsimons VCLC. Upcoming opportunities are a variety of Veterans Day events, including parades in Grand Junction and in Denver, and training three new county veterans service officers in Logan and Weld counties. Accomplishments included hiring for several positions. Drew Stem has been appointed VSO Liaison, Walter Frazier as the Northwest VSO, Maximillien Goligosky as the Central West VSO, and Elizabeth Mondo as the Central East VSO. Issues included long wait times for veterans to see VSOs, turnover in county veterans service offices, and the need for an FTE to maintain the veterans information clearinghouse once it is established.

He said that Training Officer Kristy Cunningham is continuing to serve the Southwest region as the state VSO until that position is filled and that the fall training learning assessment is complete. He said that Amy Demenge completed NACSVSO training and assisted veterans at a local pet food event. Drew Stem began his new role as Liaison on 16 October. He has begun scheduling meetings with other veterans services organizations and held a Claims Information Clinic at Buckley SFB. Appeals Specialist James Poteet supported the VA claims clinic held in recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month.

There were 29 BVA hearings in October. The Appeals Assistant position has been re-posted and closes on 11 November.

Old Business

Albuquerque VAMC: Mr. Taylor said that delays in travel reimbursements are an increasing concern. Veterans are having claims incorrectly denied or delayed for months. The limited number of available pharmacies has not changed. There are also significant delays in community care referrals needed from Albuquerque. Ms. Hammon said the concerns could be relayed to the patient advocacy and veteran experience offices. She said the travel reimbursement difficulty should possibly be referred to the VISN. Ms. Scanlon asked if Mr. Callahan's office could assist. He said that the division could help Mr. Taylor connect with the VISN. Mr. Charlip said that the Aurora Veterans Commission has heard similar complaints on the same topics from veterans being served by the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC, and he has heard of these issues from women veterans across the state. It appears to be a systemic issue.

Strategic Plan: Ms. Scanlon asked if the Board members had reviewed the current version as Mr. Bruno shared it online. He asked that Board members provide a 2-3 sentence bio to accompany their photos and said that he still needs one more photo. The Board reviewed the draft plan. The Board will vote on the final product in December.

Payments to Counties: Ms. Scanlon said there is concern that smaller counties will not receive funding under the current payment plan. She asked Mr. Callahan to address the concern. Mr. Callahan said all counties will receive payment for VSO hours worked this fiscal year. Beginning July 1, only accredited veterans service officers will qualify. Counties have been notified of the upcoming change and the Division will have the opportunity to address it again at the CCI conference in November. Mr. Gonzalez said if Mr. Callahan

can send him information, CCI can make sure it is also distributed through their channels.

Veteran Status of CVSO and Deputies: Mr. Callahan has not yet received a legal opinion interpreting this statutory reference. Ms. Scanlon said the question will remain on the agenda for December.

UVC Legislative Goals: Ms. Scanlon referred the Board to the legislative goals published by UVC and asked whether the Board was in concurrence regarding supporting those goals in the annual report. They are: to continue the Veterans Assistance Grant, to return the swept funds from the Veterans Trust Fund, to establish a Women Veterans Day, and five days of free camping to veterans rated 100% for service-connected disability. There were no objections from the Board.

Discussion of Upcoming Legislation: No legal opinion has been received on the topic. Mr. Bruno said that he will escalate the inquiry.

Annual Report: Ms. Scanlon said she is working on the Board's contribution to the report. A draft will be ready for consideration at the December meeting.

Women Veterans Assessment: Mr. Charlip shared his final report, a copy of which is appended to these minutes. The report will be available on the CDVA website once it is compliant with Web Content Access Guidelines. Ms. Hammon complimented Mr. Charlip on the product and his efforts. Ms. Cornum said the San Luis Valley coalition has observed many of the gaps illustrated by the report and would welcome collaborative approaches. Ms. Scanlon asked if the Division would update the Board on which of the recommendations they will action. Mr. Callahan said he would coordinate that effort with Mr. Winterrowd. Ms. Scanlon asked how the issues could be communicated to the VA. Mr. Callahan said that he would communicate directly with his VBA and VHA counterparts. Mr. Smith suggested working

with VA's national Women Veterans office. Mr. Callahan said that Womens VSO Amy Demenge is thus engaged.

New Business

Bylaws Committee: Ms. Scanlon said she would provide possible dates for a meeting. Mr. Korb said he might not be able to continue in his role on the committee due to a change in his employment and said he would provide details under the appropriate agenda item. Mr. Taylor was appointed to replace Mr. Korb if needed.

VTF/VAG Applications: Ms. Stamm said application training dates have been published. The application cycle starts December 1. She said she received an inquiry from the Office of State Planning and Budgeting about how equity is addressed in VTF funding. Having recently compiled statistics for the annual report she noted that women veterans currently comprise only nine percent of VTF recipients. Consequently, this year's grant application will include a question asking how the applicant plans to reach these underserved veterans. The program details documents will also specify that child care costs are allowable under both grants. Ms. Scanlon said the Board should add details on their grant processes to the CDVA Policies and Procedures. She asked Mr. Gonzalez to write a summary of the Board's participation in the VAG process for consideration and Ms. Stamm to draft a similar statement for the VTF. She suggested that Conflict of Interest forms be renewed in March just prior to funding decisions. Mr. Maday offered to create a flyer to market the grant programs and will provide a draft at the December meeting.

Logo and Branding: Mr. Maday presented a draft logo for the Board to consider. The logo and its symbolism are represented below:

Symbolism	
7 stars	One star representing each CBVA member
Colorado "C"	Colorado Veterans are at the center of everything that CBVA does
Eagle	Pay homage to the pride we have in the service of Colorado Veterans
Outstretched wings	Represents ambition and vision
64 feathers	One feather representing each county in Colorado
Color: blue	Trust and reflection
Color: yellow	Optimism and creativity



The logo is designed to establish a visual identity for the Board, increase awareness and recognition, build trust and credibility, and unify marketing and meeting materials. The Board will consider adoption on a future agenda.

Veterans Assistance Grant Sunset Review: Ms. Scanlon asked if the Division has any information to add to the recommendation in the sunset review. Ms. Stamm said the Division will begin seeking an online application system and will establish a complaint system. One recommendation is for additional staff. Ms. Scanlon asked for an update on the new staff position in Grants. Mr. Callahan said it has been classified and should be announced soon.

The Board recessed from 11:00 a.m. to 11:12 a.m.

General Discussion

Ms. Snyder said that due to web site updates in progress, the October minutes would not be published online until after Veterans Day. She asked that anyone needing an approved copy prior to the post to let her know.

Mr. Taylor said that Mr. Bruno asked in the chat if the proposed Board logo should be included in the strategic plan. Ms. Scanlon said that would be possible if the timelines aligned for publishing the plan and approving the logo.

Standing Reports

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DVA/DMVA/Legislative: Mr. Callahan said the only legislative update is an allocation of \$250,000 for costs incurred by the Division from the fund owed to the Veterans Trust Fund. The Division continues to progress on its audit response actions.

WROS: Mr. Collazo said there have been no changes in tenancy, but new events have been added to calendar, including a support group for Gold Star families and three outreach events that resulted in more than 100 contacts. Service academy interviews were held at the WROS on 14 October. The DEERS office opened on 10 October and has completed 65 appointments to date.

VMC: Ms. Ingalls said the cemetery continues to manage the honor guard stipend and has paid \$10,125 in reimbursements to date. Winterization is underway. Ralph Sandoval has been promoted to manage the grounds crew. The cemetery is working with local nonprofits that want to build monuments at that location, including a local VFW post and Daughters of the American Revolution. Headstone lithographs are still a concern. The VMC would like to add an FTE to address this concern on an ongoing basis. Ms. Scanlon asked Mr. Callahan if the Division could obtain funding for a new employee. Mr. Callahan said the Division could file a supplementary budget request in January or request the addition of a new FTE during the next budget cycle. Ms. Scanlon said that the Board could include this issue in their annual report.

Grants: Ms. Stamm said the application training dates are on the web site and there is no need to register. She addressed grant questions from county VSOs at a recent Wednesday training. Four check-ins were conducted in October to complete the check-ins this year. For the rest of the year, she will hold weekly office hours that grantees can join as needed; each is required to attend at least twice by the end of the fiscal year. She is now asking grantees for program highlights to include in the reports to the Board. Mr. Gonzalez

asked if the Board would retain the Veterans Trust Committee for the upcoming year. Ms. Scanlon said it has been helpful and will continue. The members will be selected at the December meeting.

Board Member Remarks

Mr. Gonzalez said that on 12 October he attended the local chamber's Military Affairs Committee's Hail and Farewell event. On 25 October he attended a fundraising breakfast for the Pikes Peak or Bust Rodeo Foundation. On the evening of the meeting, he planned to attend Mount Carmel's Hoedown for Heroes fundraiser and Pikes Peak State College's veteran-submitted art show, to which he is a contributor. El Paso County is finalizing next year's budget and plans to include funds for three additional county VSOs.

Mr. Taylor said there are several upcoming events for Veterans Day. He thanked Ms. Stamm for the online grant training for county VSOs.

Ms. Motupalli said that she heard a briefing from the founders of Equity Quotient at a meeting held by the state Office of Economic Development and International Trade. Equity Quotient is a veteran-owned business that provides a socioeconomic platform with dashboards to allow users to see diversity landscapes down to the district level. She asked if a Board member might like to attend an OEDIT meeting to encourage collaboration and not duplicate efforts. Ms. Scanlon asked if Equity Quotient might be available to brief the Board at a future meeting and Ms. Motupalli said she will invite them for February.

Mr. Maday said that he is on the ballot to serve on the Home Rule Charter Commission for Superior.

Ms. Scanlon said that 10 November is the Marine Corps birthday. She is working with the Women Marines Association on their February conference and on the annual Christmas breakfast event at Buckley.

Mr. Korb said that due to changes in his civilian career, he may not be able to continue in his position on the board. He may need to relocate out of state. He will update the Board once he has final and conclusive information.

Upcoming Meetings

Ms. Snyder said that the December meeting in Grand Junction might be best held on the afternoon of Tuesday the 5th due to flight times. Ms. Scanlon said this would be followed by the Wednesday morning veterans' coffee the following day and possibly a visit to the cemetery. The meeting time was set for 1:00 p.m. Ms. Snyder said that Board members who want to charge a flight to the corporate card must submit a travel request form. She will send out the form after the meeting.

Ms. Scanlon reminded the Board that a meeting at VCLC is required by the bylaws and could be considered for February. Chaffee County holds veterans' events in Buena Vista and Salida on separate Saturdays and Vets for Vets of Archuleta County holds a weekly meeting on Tuesdays. It was decided to hold the February meeting in Buena Vista on the afternoon of February 2 and to attend the veterans' event the following day. Ms. Scanlon said the Board could ask Ms. Hammon for a recommendation of which VCLC might be equipped to host a meeting.

Currently scheduled:

December 5, Stated Meeting	Grand Junction (WROS)
December 6, Event	Veterans Coffee @ WROS VMC Visit
January – no meeting	
February 2, Stated Meeting	Buena Vista

Veterans Issues

Veterans' issues captured at the meeting were the gaps identified in Mr. Charlip's report and statewide problems with travel pay and community care referrals.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Maday moved to adjourn. Ms. Motupalli seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.