

Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs

31 August 2023

American Legion Post 21

500 9<sup>th</sup> Street

Golden, CO 80401

**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

Lacey Golonka, Secretary

Longinos Gonzales, Member

Fred Korb, Member

Jasmine Motupalli, Member

**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

Lisa Stamm, CDVA Grants Administrator

Amy Demenge, State Women's Veterans Service Officer

Ralph Charlip, CDVA Research Assistant

Carissa Snyder, CDVA Program Assistant

Beth Maxwell, CDVA Administrative Assistant

## **Guests Present**

Marshall Bosworth, El Paso County Veterans Service Officer  
CCVSOA President

Brian Campbell, Commander, American Legion Post 21

Mary Cornum, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Travis Gale, Kit Carson County Veterans Service Officer

Pat Hammon, Eagle County Veterans Service Officer

VCLC Board of Commissioners

Adam Lazaro, Pitkin County Veterans Service Officer

Chris Maes, Douglas County Veterans Service Officer

Richard Nagley, Veterans Coalition of the San Luis Valley

Luke Orander, Chair, Adams County Veterans Advisory Committee

Dan Pretty, Member, American Legion Post 21

Sheldon Smith, Montrose/Ouray County Veterans Service Officer

Tim Thornton, Mineral County Veterans Service Officer

Terry Young, Vice Chair, Adams County Veterans Advisory Committee

## **Approval of Minutes**

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

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

**Public Comments** - None

## **Speakers**

Luke Orander spoke on behalf of the Adams County Veterans Advisory Commission. This commission advises the Board of County Commissioners about veteran issues within Adams County as well as policies, programs, and concerns relating to veterans' interest. Mr. Orander introduced Terry Young, the vice chair. He said the most recent achievement of the commission is the establishment of the Adams County Veterans Memorial at Riverdale Park.

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They are currently rewriting their charter to improve the alignment between the commission, the Board of Commissioners, and the county veterans service office. Ms. Scanlon asked if he was aware of the Veterans Assistance Grant and advised him the application cycle opens December 1. She asked if there is a specific veterans issue that it at the forefront of Adams County's efforts. Mr. Orander said they are working with a consultant to help determine the most prominent needs. Early information indicates that both homelessness and suicide are significant. Mr. Winterrowd said he would be at the next meeting of the commission to discuss state resources.

Pat Hammon reported on behalf of the Board of Commissioners for the Veterans Community Living Centers. She said she recently attended her first meeting of the board. It is an advisory board comprised of 11 members, some of whom are veterans and others who are subject matter experts in long term care. The meeting was held at the Fitzsimons VCLC. Reports were provided by staff members with an emphasis on finance. The VCLCs are an enterprise business that operate largely on the funds from admissions. Staffing is also a concern as health care and long-term care is a competitive industry. COVID has not been a recent factor but an increase in cases is expected in the fall. The next meeting will be held in Walsenburg. Ms. Scanlon thanked Ms. Hammon for representing the Board of Veterans Affairs on the VCLC Board of Commissioners.

Brian Campbell spoke on behalf of American Legion Post 21. He welcomed the Board and provided some history of the post building, built in 1926 and recently designated as an historic building. The post has occupied it since 1971 and it is currently undertaking repairs. The post has a membership of 500, including Legion members, the auxiliary, Sons of the Legion, and motorcycle riders. The most frequent veteran issue they encounter is homelessness. The national department of the Legion provides a stipend to help with emergency aid and the rest is supplemented by the post. He said that Post 22 also has a good emergency aid program and can sometimes

assist veterans. Ms. Scanlon thanked him for his participation and for hosting the meeting. Mr. Callahan presented a Division coin to Mr. Campbell. Mr. Campbell then introduced veteran Dan Pretty of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne. Mr. Pretty had questions about burial and benefits, which were answered by Ms. Ingalls and Mr. Winterrowd.

### **Veterans Services Report**

Mr. Winterrowd said that August held the deadline for retroactive PACT Act benefits and there were several events around the state to file presumptive claims. The largest was a three-day event in El Paso County, which saw more than 1,000 veterans. PACT Act events were collaborative, with support from both the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration. The Division has hired Kristy Cunningham as its first Training Specialist. She will assume that role on 11 September. He is currently interviewing for a Claims and Benefits Manager and the VSO Liaison and Northwest VSO positions have been announced. Issues have included questions about the Division's Policies and Procedure manual and the upcoming claims reference guide. The fall training conference for VSOs will be held in September with instruction assistance from the National Veterans Legal Services Program. Ms. Scanlon asked what the current needs are. Mr. Winterrowd said they are financial need, health care access, and wait time to access a VSO. Ms. Scanlon asked if there is any assistance the Board can provide. Mr. Winterrowd said the main issue in all areas is funding.

### **Old Business**

Albuquerque VAMC: Mr. Callahan said there has been no significant change. The Division is working with a new Outreach Director in New Mexico and has shared the Community Care Liaison concept used in VISN 19. Ms. Scanlon asked if he has met the New Mexico director. Mr. Callahan said they met in person a few weeks prior and will continue to develop a relationship. Ms. Scanlon said that a new veterans' commission was established in New Mexico

in June, and the Board may consider a meeting near the southern border to liaise with that group and to visit the tribal organizations.

Strategic Planning: Ms. Scanlon said the Mr. Bruno will provide a draft to date of the strategic plan at an upcoming meeting. She anticipates quarterly updates at Board meetings to follow. Photos and branch of service will be added to the new strategic plan.

Veterans ID Program: Mr. Callahan said he met with representatives from the State Internet Portal Authority and representative from Tyler Technology regarding data security. They are compliant with SP 800-53, meaning data is encrypted both at rest and in transit. They are also StateRAMP certified, which verifies the security of cloud technology providers for governmental agencies. Ms. Scanlon asked if there would be additional costs associated with the project, either for the data storage or veteran contact efforts. Mr. Callahan said they will be covered by his operational budget. Mr. Maday moved that the Board allow \$187,000 from the Veterans Trust Fund to support the Veterans ID program. Ms. Motupalli seconded. The motion carried,

Annual Report: Ms. Scanlon referred the Board to the copy of the solicitation letter that went to other state agencies regarding the annual report. She said some additional information would be helpful, such as how many veterans participate in each program. Ms. Motupalli suggested providing an example or a bulleted request to help elicit the desired information. Ms. Scanlon said that DOLA provided the number served and is a good example, although it does not discuss any issues veterans face. Ms. Scanlon asked Mr. Callahan if his office is involved in the veterans' property tax program. Mr. Callahan said the Division will have a less active role moving forward and veterans can self-certify through the VA. Ms. Snyder said that DOLA does not have much contact with the veteran applicants since they are not the primary point of contact. The Division can provide information on application received,

accepted, and denied. Mr. Korb agreed with the idea of making the request in a Q&A or bulleted format to make the response easier. Mr. Maday said the DNR report also contains the number served. The CDLE report has not been received. The Division office will reach out to them. Mr. Maday said that the Department of Revenue annual report contains additional information about license plate usage that can be utilized.

### **New Business**

Audit Status Report: Ms. Scanlon said that the Board owes the Office of the State Auditor a status report on Recommendations 8A, 8B, and 8C. She said that the Division's Policies and Procedures have been published, but the Board has not written policies and procedures for the content and design of the annual report. The Board has initiated new procedures and adjustments will be reflected in the 2023 report. Mr. Korb said those are the adherences but the procedures need to be written. Ms. Golonka said this has been partially implemented and should be fully implemented in 2024. Ms. Scanlon will write the responses for the Board to review. She said that the final strategic plan and procedures for the report may be finalized at a special meeting in November.

*The Board recessed from 10:47 a.m. to 10:57 a.m.*

### **Standing Reports**

DVA/DMVA/Legislative: Mr. Callahan said there was no update on legislative items. Ms. Scanlon said she is waiting for information from Mr. Bruno on how the Board can obtain non-public legislative information in order to make recommendations. Mr. Callahan said progress has been made with personnel actions, including the program assistants for both Grants and Appeals. The mental health program at the VCLCs is in early stages, identifying ways to attract and promptly pay participating providers. The annual VCLC visits are scheduled for 3-4 October. Both Ms. Scanlon and Ms. Hammon are scheduled to attend and additional Board members are also invited. The Policies and

Procedures manual is in effect and feedback is encouraged. Revisions will be considered during the Division strategic planning session in spring 2024. There is a new pay plan for financial reimbursement to counties. Counties report how many VSO hours are worked monthly and the counties will be reimbursed by hours worked. Ms. Motupalli asked if a payroll system could be employed for payments to counties to make the process less manual. Mr. Callahan said it would be difficult to apply across 64 counties, but a statute change to make the payments annual rather than semiannual would help. Ms. Scanlon said she would review and provide feedback to the sections of the Policies and Procedures that pertain to the Board and to the grant programs. She asked Mr. Callahan if there are updates to the 30-60-90 training plan. Mr. Callahan said there are none at this time but it will be re-evaluated in the fall. Any changes will be submitted to the Board for approval. She asked the Board for opinions on the pay plan for counties. There were none. She asked Mr. Callahan about qualifications for VSOs. Mr. Callahan said the Division has recommendations for education and experience. He asked the Board to review the statute and provide an interpretation on whether both VSOs and assistant VSOs are required to be veterans. Ms. Scanlon said that there is no federal requirement for VSOs to be veterans, and if it is a state requirement the Board should consider how it affects counties who may have difficulty finding qualified candidates. Ms. Scanlon asked if there were updates available on the Veterans Clearinghouse. Mr. Winterrowd said he has had conversations with the State Internet Portal Authority as well as Combat Arms, and an RFP is still possible. Ms. Scanlon asked whether DMVA could again publicize the Restoration of Honor Program as there have been no applications to date. Mr. Callahan agreed. Mr. Bosworth asked if counties are supposed to report the hours worked for each accredited person working as a VSO. Mr. Callahan said yes.

WROS: Mr. Collazo said there are few tenant vacancies that should be filled within the next few months. Mental health entities are a priority. The WROS is also considering broadening community offerings to enhance divergent  
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demographics. In August they performed an outreach at a local concert that included the VA and VMC. There is a Veterans Night occurring at the local farmers' market and all three entities will attend that as well. Both DEERS officers are in the office. They are waiting for their equipment to be updated by DMDC. The northwest VSO job posting closed today and the WROS anticipates having a VSO available in the near future. Ms. Scanlon asked if there were any issues to report. Mr. Collazo said the DEERS equipment being offline has been a difficulty. They are also considering acquiring a mobile DEERS unit.

Women Veterans: Ms. Demenge said she visited Grand Junction to meet with the WROS and the VMC while meeting with the women veterans coffee group and also toured the WROS, the VMC, and the women's facilities at the VA medical center. She also attended an Honor Flight picnic and assisted with the PACT Act event in El Paso County. The interviews for the Women Veteran study should conclude this month. Next month she will attend the National Women Veterans Conference in Virginia and will present at the DVA VSO training. She is working on a new logo for Colorado Women Veterans and a quarterly newsletter. She is hosting three woman air force cadets this year.

CCVSOA/NACVSO: Mr. Bosworth said the county association has been updating their bylaws and will hold their annual membership meeting on 21 September. They will hold an election of officers. They will consider whether to expand their Board, which currently consists of four members. The 2024 NACVSO conference will be held in Denver in May and will have an associated claims clinic.

VMC: Ms. Ingalls said there were 36 interments in August. They have hired a permanent additional groundskeeper as well as a temporary employee. Weather caused power outages during the summer weeks and some repairs were needed. They have employed a new work study working 25 hours a week. She met with the social work team at the VAMC and is scheduling one



with the HUD-VASH team. General Clellan and her leadership team came for a facility visit and were able to observe services. Ms. Scanlon asked if there were any issues for the Board's awareness. Ms. Ingalls said there have been some IT difficulties but solutions are underway.

Grants: Ms. Stamm said the 2023 payments have been finalized. There is still one outstanding due to a technical difficulty currently being addressed. The VAG execution rate was 89% and VTF was 87%, consistent with last year. Kickoff trainings have been completed with technical assistance provided to four grantees. She has met with American Legion Post 2 and Pueblo County, who over both grants each have funds for the Pueblo Stand Down. The VAG sunset review is concluding. The draft report should be available within the next few weeks. Grantee check-ins begin the second week of October. Ms. Scanlon said there has been a question regarding VSOs utilizing VAG funds through a grantee and asked if the Division will seek a legal opinion. Ms. Stamm said the issue appeared to be an isolated complaint but if a similar inquiry arises additional opinions would be sought. Mr. Callahan said the grantee in question is in compliance with grant rules but the Division would welcome input from the Board regarding any prospective rule changes. Ms. Scanlon asked if the Board could receive a VAG report with the level of details provided for VTF and Ms. Stamm agreed. Ms. Scanlon asked if they could also see monies spent by category. Ms. Stamm said detail is in the annual report but on a monthly basis she can provide trends. Ms. Scanlon asked if the Board's role in the VAG process could be updated in the Division's Policies and Procedures and Mr. Callahan agreed.

Women Veterans Needs Assessment: Mr. Charlip said the final individual interview is scheduled for 1 September for a total of 19 interviewees. The next set of interviews is with representatives of organizations that serve woman veterans. Four have been held and they should be complete by mid-September. Ms. Scanlon asked if there are any early results from the interview results. Mr. Charlip said the high-level issues reflect those among

women veterans nationwide, including affordable housing, child care, and transition assistance. Ms. Motupalli said that job insecurity is also a nationwide issue and asked if women veterans experience that in greater numbers, perhaps due to the child care issue. Mr. Charlip said the main issues are intertwined, since insufficient income triggers cascading issues.

### **Board Member Remarks**

Mr. Gonzalez said he received a recent question whether VA clinics have implemented mask mandates. In events, on 07 August he attended the celebration of the announcements designating Colorado Springs as the permanent home of the U.S. Space Force. He also attended the PACT Act claims clinic on 07 August, a fundraiser concert at the Home Front Military Network on 11 August and a Farm to Table dinner held by Air Force Academy Superintendent, Lt. General Richard Clark on 22 August. Ms. Scanlon said the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC's mask update in June 1 announcement required masks in specific areas only.

Mr. Korb said he did not spend much time in Colorado in August, but in his travels he began to evaluate recent economic impacts that cause homelessness. Property tax increases are a factor. Ballot initiatives and deferment programs might offer some relief, but deferments in particular can be problematic. In October he will attend the Veterans Financial Services Advisory Council to learn about impact and opportunities nationwide. He will report to the Board about possibilities to assist veterans in Colorado.

Mr. Maday said he attended annual training with the Michigan National Guard in August.

Ms. Motupalli said her family's adoption is complete. She recorded an episode of The People Progressing podcast discussing servant leadership and will let the Board know the release date.

Ms. Golonka said she has been partnering with Folds of Honor, scholarships to survivors fundraiser golf tournament on Monday. She is also working on developing an event with the Commit Foundation, which assists service members with employment assistance during transition. It will include Workforce Centers and other organizations that support veterans.

Ms. Scanlon said she has registered for the new burn pit presumptives under the PACT Act. She has been working with Ms. Demenge on the Women Veterans conference schedule for February. She and Ms. Demenge also met the Women Veterans coordinator at the Rocky Mountain Regional VAMC. One of the topics was communication, as a recent Women Veterans town hall appeared to be sporadically marketed. They have been referred to the PAO at the hospital and will meet with her soon.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

Ms. Scanlon said the October meeting now conflicts with the VCLC visits scheduled for October 3-4. There are also various conflicts with October 6. The consensus was to hold the October meeting virtually on 29 September at 8:00 a.m. November's meeting will at Sobriety House in Denver and December in Grand Junction to allow Board members to attend the weekly Veteran Coffee at the WROS.

September 29, Stated Meeting for October	Virtual – 08:00 a.m.
November 3, Stated Meeting	Denver (Sobriety House)
December 1, Stated Meeting	Grand Junction (WROS)
January – no meeting	

### **.Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mr. Maday moved to adjourn. Ms. Motupalli seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.