

**Board Minutes**  
**February 20, 2014, 0930 Hrs.**  
**Exelis Headquarters**  
**655 Space Center Drive**  
**Colorado Springs, Colorado 80915**

Robby Robison, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1010 hours. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for our POW, MIA, troops in battle and all service members.

**Introduction of Members and Visitors**

Board Members Present:

William "Robby" Robinson, Chairman  
Jay Bobick, Vice Chairman  
Dana Niemela, Secretary  
Kathleen Dunemmn, Member – Not Present  
Rene Simard, Member-Not Present  
Jason Crow, Member  
Chris Holden, Member  
Marvin Meyers, Emeritus – Not Present

DMVA Staff Present:

Ray Z. Dissinger, VTF Administrator  
William "Bill" Conroy, CDVA Director  
Tamara Edmond, CDVA Admin. Asst.

Guests Present:

Richard Sandrock, Governor's Office  
LtCol (Ret.) Hal Bidlack, Representative, Senator Bennet's Office, Colorado Springs  
Bill Gray, Exelis, Deputy Director  
Aaron Hunt, Photographer, Exelis  
Rick Lynch, Communication Director, Exelis  
LTC Russell Morton, Fort Carson  
MAJ Brock Peters, Fort Carson Representative  
Mike Webb, Transitions University, Director of Human Relations, Ft. Carson  
Shelly Anderson, Transition University  
Leeann Wheeler, Veterans Advocate, Wheeler Advisory Group

Robby Robinson: We appreciate the opportunity to come to Colorado Springs and have the meeting here at Exelis. Thank you for hosting us and I am turning it over to Chris Holden for the first part of the meeting.

Chris Holden: Thank you. First, I have some positive news, last month Captain Brock Peters attended this session and now Major Brock Peters is here today. Congratulations on your promotion, Major Peters.

## **Guest Presentations**

Exelis Action Corps – Mr. Bill Gray, Deputy Director, Exelis Corp.

Bill Gray: Good Morning and thank you for the compliments. I am very proud to host the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs here. We take great pride that many of our activities are collaborated with DOD, shoulder to shoulder with our fighting men and women. Exelis is a proud contributor to the environment.

Out of approximately 6,800 employees Exelis employs there are over 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of these veterans. That is very dear to our hearts. Many of these veterans are part of the Action Corp that contributes back to helping the community.

A quick overview of what we do:

Mission Systems Operations

1. Facilities Management: We maintain buildings like this and make sure they are up and running.
2. Logistics: We supply and manage transportation and do installation set-up with the Army around the world.
3. Information Technology and Network Communication: We have some great bragging rights here and manage state of the art information technology and communication networks for some high profile facilities.

Action Corp is Exelis's charity/philanthropic organization giving back to the community. This is something we take very seriously because we realize giving back to the community is critically important. Action Corp is an employee volunteerism program committed to making a difference for our nation's returning military service members, veterans, their families, and their communities. We do it in a variety of ways:

- As either individuals or group projects
- Partner with local organization
- Collaborating with the community and service members

As of yesterday, Exelis has contributed approximately \$5M toward Action Corp efforts.

A couple of snapshots of Action Corp projects are:

1. **Wounded Warrior Divers**: SUDS Soldiers Undertaking Underwater Scuba, Veterans who were Scuba certified helping take disabled veterans SCUBA diving. Some of

- these disabled veterans had never been SCUBA diving before and they loved it. It is a very successful activity.
2. **Battle of the Bulbs, Colorado Springs, CO:** This Christmas we contributed to a community effort to help hang Christmas lights for community members who needed help. Your own, Chris Holden got so engaged in this process that when he got home and his wife asked him to put up the Christmas lights, he had to call someone else to hang his lights.
  3. **Rebuild Veterans Home, Maxwell AFB, AL:** At Maxwell AFB, we do construction work as well as other things. We have a lot of tradesmen with the skill set in the trades such as plumbing and carpentry. They collaborated with “Homes for Heroes” to build this house for a veteran in need of a home. It was a really rewarding experience and they plan to continue this effort.
  4. **Veterans’ Day, Fort Benning, GA:** Sometimes an individual can make all the difference in the world. At Fort Benning, GA, there is a young lady named Valencia Pease, with her pink boxing gloves, she is so full of life and serves her community. She has coordinated significant events with Action Corps and other organizations with events planned almost every other month. She has done such a phenomenal job that President Obama recognized her with the “Point of Lights” award for her service to the community. A two-time cancer survivor, Pease started the Pink Peaches Cancer Foundation in 2011 to bring financial and educational aid and comfort to people suffering from cancer and Lou Gehrig’s disease. This is the caliber of people we have.
  5. **Warrior Games, Mission Systems HQ, Colorado Springs:** This is one I love and have a passion for, so you can understand if I get a little emotional. This is about a young man who lost his arm in the war; I had the honor of shooting with a young man who won the Gold Medal. He stepped up to the line, he pulled his bow. You may ask yourself how he learned to shoot, learn to walk after that disastrous event, but he did. He taught himself how to pull the bow with his good left arm and how to shoot steady with his prosthetic arm and a special attachment.

As he went up to the line to shoot his final round, the entire auditorium was dead silent. He shot a perfect round. This was an amazing example of fortitude and drive. Quite honestly, this is reflected in our company and in everything we do.

#### Transition Seminar

We held the first Transition Seminar in 2013 and had 60 participants. It was held at Mission Systems HQ. This was offered to those service members in transition in the process of retiring or already retired. They wanted the opportunity to sit down face-to-face with corporate leadership to find out how they had managed the transition from active duty military to the civilian world. They wanted to know what the differences and what do they have to do to prepare? It was a wonderful opportunity for us to have some candid conversations. We had a really solid mix of veterans in the crowd from our organization that had been there and done that. There are always lessons learned and things you shouldn’t do or should have done. The input we received from Mike was the seminar was very well received.

Robby Robinson: Where do the ideas come from for the service projects for Action Corps?

Bill Gray: We have an entire communications set up to filter these ideas in. George Rhinedance facilitates Action Corps and most of the ideas generate directly from the employees. They have a process where they come up with an idea and we will capitalize on it.

Chris Holden: More like Shelly who gives ideas for programs to Mike.

Robby Robinson: To put up Christmas lights, where did that idea come from?

Chris Holden: Team Red, White, and Blue

Robby Robinson: So, are you tied in with other veteran organizations and groups in the community?

Jay Bobick: Do all of your locations have similar programs?

Bill Gray: Yes

Jay Bobick: How many employees are involved in Action Corps?

Chris Holden: There are around 230 employees who volunteer here.

Bill Gray: We have 6,800 employees for Exelis and around 7,000 contractors.

Robby Robinson: Where are your headquarters?

Chris Holden: The headquarters is located in McLean, VA. What you probably did not know is we are going to spin off this summer and create a new company here in Colorado Springs, Newco. We will be a separate service entity. Newco will be the largest headquarters corporation publically traded here in Colorado Springs.

Jay Bobick: What specifically does Exelis do?

Bill Gray: Exelis has facilities management which maintains installation grounds, air conditioning, heating, electric, and runway support. We provide a full spectrum of services to keep facilities up and running from standby generators, air conditioning, housing, to taking out the trash, where there is grass we cut it. We are committed to ensuring the welfare of the troops. We manage logistics, Fort Benning and Fort Bragg for example with transportation to providing office supplies. Also, we have the information technology/network communication section.

Chris Holden: We take care of the entire communications network at Central Command at MacDill AFB. We provide service, infrastructure, to the whole communications network for

both classified and declassified networks. We do everything the Army doesn't want to do on that base.

-General discussion about Exelis and how much they do to support the military.

Ray Z: You don't own all this, you provide the infrastructure and draw together the contractors, in-country contractors, sub-contractors, is that what you do?

Bill Gray: Right, our product is our people.

Shelly Anderson: Were you able to hire any of the troops from the Transition Seminar?

Bill Gray: I don't know the statistics on how that all worked out. We did hire Katie, an Air Force Staff Sergeant that got out and got her English degree. She has exquisite experience. She had been in Afghanistan for two tours. Many of the challenges we have with veterans is they are not just aware of how much they bring to the table. They don't want to talk about it, they don't want to brag about it. She was a veteran with extensive experience particularly with combat, security experience, facilities maintenance, and human services. She had a one-on-one understanding of what the customers want and was the ideal candidate.

Dana Niemela: My day job is helping veterans find employment. What I have found is that there are plenty of jobs. The issue is preparing the veterans to nail the interview. What would you say from your experience is the biggest challenge you see when hiring veterans?

Bill Gray: Some veterans do oversell themselves. Mike and I had a discussion about this subject this morning. The veteran comes in with their rank on their shoulder and thinks that is going to get them the job. It is important for them to focus on their skill set and not on what rank they were. Helping them prepare the resume, most of them come in with three pages of military experience and it does not translate into actual skills required to do the job. I would ask them, "What skill set did you use in your command job?" The degree that veterans can put their "skill set" into practical terms for what the client's needs are the better they will be able to compete in the job market.

Mike Webb: When we put on Transition University, we consulted corporate leaders like Bill and asked what they were looking for to hire veterans. Many corporation leaders responded that they were finding soldiers, who could not write résumés, and they did not interview very well and they did not know how to sell themselves. It is very hard for them to make the transition to be able to sell self from the team mentality of the military to the "I" can attitude needed. Transition University not only teaches them the basics. We develop relationships with corporations to identify the needs of the corporation, i.e. Bill and others.

Bill Gray: To give a real world example: At Exelis, it is a policy companywide not to forward résumés to Human Resources. HR specialist screens the résumés, and those that meet all the criteria, specific flag words, and skill set are filtered through to the hiring department.

Chris Holden: I get the post-screened résumés. If they don't put "flag words" then the résumés does not get seen by the specialist. It is a tough transition learning how to write a résumé.

Dana Niemela: I appreciate your feedback. As a former hiring manager, I wanted to make sure my perception was not out of date. You need to distinguish "you" from "we", and it is a tough burden for soldiers to make for self-recognition. You need an in-house specialist to be able to do military résumés.

Jay Bobick: You mentioned you do runway maintenance. Do you have an operation plan in the event we went to all-out war?

Bill Gray: Operation plans are specific to each site. We have the in-house capability to assess the need for upcoming contracts where we can have a turn-around in one month.

Chris Holden: We received an award fee to train Afghanistan national to do public works, i.e. security, trash, water, electricity, sewer, etc. We are helping to train them to replace us. Almost every one of these contractors is a veteran- then they normally sign up to work for these kinds of programs.

LTC Morton:

Present and Future of 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division

Present

4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division: trains, deploys, sustains units and teams for combat

What we learned in Afghanistan, offensive and defensive operations specific to the terrain. We are training young soldiers to plan and execute basic functions

We will be spending more time out in the field and down at Pinion Canyon.

We are training young soldiers to be leaders and taking care of their families.

Current focus: Sexual Harassment

It is about taking care of the individual, taking care of what we have, preparing the soldier to go in harm's way.

Chris Holden: Why is sexual harassment so important?

LTC Morton: It is important to take care of the soldier that is our number one priority.

When sexual harassment occurs it is not taking care of the individual and this works its way up through the organization. Sexual harassment undermines trust. We are beginning to understand where and how it happens, how to identify it and prevent it from happening.

Regional Command South

We are providing support to Regional Command South (RC-S) Headquarters

- Transition to take care of South
- Focus on Soldiers and their families strengths

- Operation Spartan Shield- providing support for Kuwait and Qatar.
- Global Response Force (GFR) - pre 9/11 type of force that maintains specific readiness forces to respond with capability quickly.

Robby Robinson: Please explain some of the acronyms from the PowerPoint slide such as C2CRE.

LTC Morton: The 82<sup>nd</sup> provides capabilities such as “command and control responsibilities” (C2CRE).

Next, the Fort Carson Unit Laydown:

- There are a few units in the states
- Balkans- 71 OG
- Winter Olympics- Fort Carson is the home of the World Class Athletes Program.
- Global Response Force – 3 BCT, 43 SB
- Afghanistan – There are a number of organizations: 4<sup>th</sup> ID, 41 BCT, 43d
- We also have teams paired up with National Guard Brigades for joint training. These teams are incorporated in planning and execution of training exercises.

Hal Bidlack: Are these National Guard units deploying with the 4<sup>th</sup> ID?

Dana Niemela: Didn't some of your guys' medal in the Bobsled event?

LTC Morton: \$2.5B is funneled into the Colorado area by Ft. Carson. \$260M is expended annually toward construction and contracts. Fort Carson has a significant financial impact to the community. There are a number of elementary schools located directly on Fort Carson. We operate on a net zero plans to be energy efficient through recycling, solar energy, and water. We have actively provided community response. We were proud to respond with support to the Waldo Canyon Fire 2012 and the Black Forest Fire 2013 as well as support during the recent flooding in Boulder and Lyons areas. We have learned to respond with greater capability.

The Brigade breakdown is 4 Combat Brigades to include: 3 Mechanized (Armored) Brigades and 1 Light Infantry Brigade. Even though we are going through a period of downsizing, there will not be a huge reduction in overall numbers just a restructuring of the forces. We are transitioning the Brigade from Armored to Strykers (4,200 to increase to 4,400). The 2nd Column of Mechanized Brigade will go away. Overall, some of these troops will transfer to other Brigades. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Column, there will be no changes and it will grow a couple of Battalions. The 4<sup>th</sup> Column will stay the same with the Light Infantry. The Aviation Brigade will be activated with 75%-80% strength. The Artillery Brigade currently at Fort Sill, OK is scheduled to transition from Oklahoma to Colorado by FY2016.

Richard Sandrock: How are the new Strykers different from the armored tanks?

LTC Morton: Joint Lewis/McCord, WA will receive the old Strykers and we will transition to the newer model. The Stryker family description (main battle system) the hull can be altered, but it

has the same engine, same tires, and can do anything like a tank, i.e. shoot mortars, and it can also carry troops in the back.

Jay Bobick: So what is the combat weight of the Strykers?

LTC Morton: 3,000 lbs more than the C-130 will carry.

Hal Biblack: Why is the Stryker better than the tank?

LTC Morton: They have excellent mobility, operate on different types of terrain, are quieter, and use less fuel. In general, other than having a main tank, it can also carry troops on the back.

Chris Holden: They are better for fighting, good to have.

LTC Morton: The Warrior Transition Brigade (WTB) will transition. They are not operating at capacity but will see an increase as the other programs transition or downsize. Fort Carson will not downsize the WTB.

Jason Crow: Most of the Army has seen nothing but war and as we transition away from Afghanistan, what kind of challenges are you expecting for soldiers as they reacclimatize to a garrison environment?

LTC Morton: We will be getting back to the standard and focus on training. Many of the junior leaders and soldiers do not know how to think about planning and executing for a training event. Because we are transitioning so fast from soldiers operating in a structured environment where we tell them what to do, where to be, and what equipment to bring, and the contractors were executing the details of planning and executing training events. The changing culture will be where everyone does the training events from planning to execution.

Dana Niemela: A couple of organizations such as Team Red, White, and Blue and Team Rubicon are a great ways to get soldiers involved. There is a chapter here in Colorado Springs looking for service members and veterans to contribute to the community. Also, Team Rubicon does disaster relief, such as Longmont, Lyons, and even helped with the flood recovery efforts in Manitou Springs, CO. They are a national organization.

Shelly Anderson: How do we find out information about Team Red, White, and Blue?

Dana Niemela: There will be a Meet and Greet next Friday, so if you email me, I will send you the information.

Transition University, Mike Webb, Director of Human Resources, Ft. Carson

Mike Webb: For transition services, we are the best! I solicited feedback from other organizations: Veterans Offer to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act 2011, Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and Department of Labor (DOL). From talking to these other programs, we found that TAP was only giving the soldiers the basic skills. I want my soldiers to transition to a career not just a job. When we first started Transition University, we started with 100 soldiers a month and now we are up to 500 soldiers a month. Soldiers who are transitioning to retirement or to chapters spend 5 days in Transition University. Soldiers who are not receiving Honorable Discharge spend one day because they really do not qualify for any other benefits.

We collaborate with Department of Labor (DOL) to build employer connections and transition groups. From Transition University alumni, over 50% of known soldiers are getting jobs. 80% who go off to college remain in college. And 20% are staying in Colorado. We are mandated that every soldier has a résumé or must have an application for college. At Transition University, we go one step further. We are linked in with Veterans Offices at every college.

The success factor involves community leaders giving back to the veterans, for example: Men's Warehouse on North Academy, offers a "Dress for Success" class as well as Joseph A. Banks. We had a soldier that had a call on a Thursday night that he had an interview on Monday. He went to Men's Warehouse on Friday and she stayed to make sure had had a fantastic suit and the soldier ended up getting the job.

We have soldiers come back at intervals in the university concept. Transition University at Fort Carson is the only installation doing a second week of training. Also it is the only installation with joint services: Military/Veterans, Employment Exposition had 5,000 participants and now 1,500 veterans now have jobs.

From 13-15 May 2014 we will have preliminary training at Pikes Peak Workforce Center, a refresher to help veterans redo their résumés. There are 190 businesses participating and when they participate they have to have 25 jobs available to hire for veterans and be ready to interview and hire on the spot. We have 2 of these events a year and one specific to Fort Carson soldiers.

The Union Association- Veterans to Piping (VIP) with the Local 58 Welders Union have reached out to support veterans by sponsoring training and apprenticeships. There are slots for 9 soldiers in the program and participation in this opportunity serves as their place of duty, where they are trained and certified how to be welders. It takes \$25, 000 to train a soldier but the Union is picking up the bill and these soldiers will be certified on 10 certification levels. The first class will graduate on 7 March 2014. These welders start out at \$35,000 per year and they are guaranteed a job for 6 years. The soldiers are screened and go through a rigorous selection process. They have to be recommended by their Sergeant Major.

Shelly Anderson came over from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). There are 3 initiatives in the Joint Services Transitional Training (to combine resources, seeking a centralized facility with Colorado Springs Area.) Other programs that have been highly successful are Career Skills Development Program with internships, Wounded Warriors, and "Operation Warfight." The Department of Defense has a focus on transition planning for service

members to civilian life. An example of engagement in this transition was Mercedes who works for Senator Bennet's Office. She was interested in politics and served in a civilian internship. This was an excellent opportunity for her to experience working in politics and determine if this was the direction she wanted to pursue. There are also Virtual Hiring Events targeting deployed transitioning service members. There is a need for providing transition for soldiers/members deployed overseas.

Jay Bobick: Have any other services queried you about collaborating through joint services ventures?

Mike Webb: Peterson AFB, USAFA, and some outreach.

Dana Niemela: My assumption is that on some level you are tracking outcomes.

Mike Webb: Absolutely. Also, we are working with the Chamber of Commerce, other Army installations we do a digital conference once a month. We asked ourselves, how are we going to measure success? Are we being a burden to the community because a soldier cannot find a job? DOD has started to see unemployment for veterans decline. We want to help the state of Colorado, help with the transition, even if they are coming from Korea. When a soldier reaches out whom are they going to? If they are transitioning from Colorado to Florida, who are they going to?

We try to keep tabs on every soldier that transition, to call us with updates. We are only as good as the information that we put out. We ask ourselves, how to stay relevant to employers. What are the buzz words, negotiating words? This is a win-win; we are giving you a better product.

Jay Bobick: Can Transition University be adapted to share with other services?

Robby Robinson: The old attitude of the soldier getting out was they needed to collect unemployment and go to college.

Mike Webb: We emphasize the fact that you cannot live on the 9/11 G.I. Bill. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of Transition University, we go through choices to emphasize the specific route the soldier is choosing, such as education. Military Child Coalition recognizes that the need is not just for the soldier, but for the wife, and the kids.

We've changed from 14 months ago until now. We get feedback from businesses and soldiers in order to reinvent the classes, to get a better product. We have added coursework focused on extra life skills such as budgeting and finance.

Shelly Anderson: Employer Connection: what we hear from employers is that we cannot find vets to hire and when we do find veterans, we can't understand them. In December 2013, the Denver Mint was hiring 16 positions and through collaboration between the DOL, VA, and sister services, the Mint was authorized to hire these 16 veterans. DOL has a mandated portion of the program that has to be taught at Transition University.

Mike Webb: We maintain a high level of instruction, DOL covers the basics. There are those that are not motivated and we are targeting these soldiers because it helps teach them more specific skills.

Jason Crow: One of the struggles I have noticed with mentoring young Afghanistan/Iraqi veterans is that there is a lot of back slapping when they return telling them great job and thank you for your service. Then, some of them think that they are going to be handed a job.

Mike Webb: Shelly and I identify those who are struggling. We have those conversations with these service members about how tough the job market is and what they can do to be better prepared. We offer alumni outreach or reach back to help when they are struggling. We want them to keep us informed and let us know how we can help them. I tell them to call me and my people and we will do what we can to help you.

An excellent program that we support is Prep Connect 360° Transition. It is a workshop collaborated with Pikes Peak Workforce Center and it will begin next week, Thursday, 21 February. This is a 5-day event, sponsored by the Colorado MVS Employment Coalition, is a community-based effort with service contributions from multiple sources. The Prep Connect 360° staff takes an all-inclusive method to military-to-civilian transition by focusing on life transition with specific emphasis on career transition. Through a combination of expert briefings and hands-on experiences, participants learn from facilitators and from each how to navigate their own transition experience. The Prep Connect 360° facilitators are Veterans who have "been there, done that" themselves, enthusiastic to share their own experiences and lessons learned.

Chris Holden: Thank you for the great information and for your passion for helping veterans.

Robby Robinson: Let's take a 5 minute break.

### **Approval of Minutes from January 16, 2014**

Unanimously accepted with amendments.

### **Board Member Comments**

Dana Niemela: She attended the national conference for the "National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans." There were a number of reports where people could not stop raving about the customer care at Veterans Affairs Medical Centers. She asked them, If there was one thing you wanted your community to know, the comments went along the lines that the Doctors and Nurses were amazing. She gave an example of an OIF veteran's wife response: The information the VA provides was limited and confusing. She said the Wounded Warrior Project helped them be aware of resources. She said outside of being designated a "caretaker" it was difficult to navigate the VA Medical system. Once she was the caretaker, then she was given more

information and she said she was really pleased with the level of care. I think it is really important for the Board to hear the positive feedback out there. I was very proud. Even though there were 3 guys recovering in a room designated for 1 person but they said they were well cared for. So, go to the VA Hospital.

Jay Bobick: The trouble with the VA if you have a cold or a cut finger, it will take you forever. For minor care the VA Medical Centers are overwhelmed and you have to sit there for hours and hours but if you have a heart attack, the VA is excellent.

Bill Conroy: There is just a huge volume of people needing care. Dealing with the VA as a Service Officer he has seen many changes but it is definitely getting better. What Dana just said, you never used to hear. Back in the day, people were screaming on the phone to me about the quality of care at the VA, but now it is great to hear that they have improved and are getting compliments.

Jay Bobick: A lot of people don't realize that they also have an agreement with the University Hospital so they swap resources depending on the need. You could go to the VA and have an intern from the University working on you and vice versa, you could go to the University Hospital and see a VA doctor you have seen for years at the VA.

Jason Crow: No comments.

Chris Holden: No comments.

### **Public Comments**

Leeann Wheeler: She was heading over to Fort Lyon. She wanted to extend an invitation on behalf of Clayton Chidester, Commander from Las Animas VFW, Post #2411 at Fort Lyon in Bent County offered to host the CBVA for a monthly meeting. She said they were planning to submit a grant for the Tobacco Trust Fund for some work they were doing down there for homeless veterans. She would make sure they made contact with Ray Z Dissinger, phone number, 720-732-4957, and the deadline was March 1, 2014.

Richard Sandrock: Friday, the Colorado Army National Guard had a detachment deploying to Afghanistan. They are a special operations detachment. The Lt. Governor, Joseph Garcia will be speaking at the event since he has a son-in-law who has deployed to Afghanistan several times in the past 2/12 year, he is very honored to have the opportunity to speak to these troops. It will be at Wings Over the Rockies at 1:45 pm. Lacy Bianca will be deploying with this unit.

Additionally, he attended the Fort Lyon planning meeting for local affairs, where they said they wanted 12% of the number of residents at Fort Lyons to be homeless veterans. There are currently 18% of the number of residents' they are serving are homeless veterans. Roxanne White, Governor Hickenlooper's Chief of Staff, sent an email to say they wanted to make the percentage of homeless veterans they were serving at Fort Lyons even higher. He already

spoke with UVC, but would be contacting Bill about better educating VSO to reach out to the homeless.

## **Veterans Trust Fund**

Ray Z Dissinger: First, 12/13 are a little behind. He said they have about \$400K, and he will get with VFW Post1 to follow-up. They are not all that far behind. Second, for FY 14-15 the goal is to have the website active for applicants. The company hired to do the state website had a glitch that has to do with the way the department has their website set up, some people can access it, but some grant applicants are not able to access it. I gave you my phone number. I sent out an email to all the grantees. There have been 15 grant applications so far and we are coming up on the deadline of 1 March 2014. I usually get at least 50 applications by now. Many of the individuals wait to the last minute to apply. If an application is lacking, he will contact them to help get the grant polished. I want to base the award on the need for a grant not on an individual's ability to write a grant. He also talked to Information Technology and basically, it is a problem. Third, each applicant has to have a W-9 and a "Certificate of Good Standing" from Colorado. I have about 30% doing that, but I get with them and let them know what they need. If any veterans service organization needs help with a grant, have them call at 720-732-4957.

The last and I feel a very important item. I have been working with Mr. Conroy and Mr. Gilotti. The Cemetery hires part-time personnel to help with the grounds keeping and this year they are coming up short. If we don't help them out with it, then the services will deteriorate. Next year they are getting an additional FTE which should help alleviate the pain, but this year they need help. There is \$1,894.83 left over in the VTF. However, we have a grantee that has still not gotten the statement of good standing therefore they never got a contract for \$5,000. This would free up approximately \$7,000. If the Board, and this is the motion if the Board will accept it, I looked it up and I believe it says, "care and maintenance" for the cemetery, if we provide a letter and not as a grant. If the Board takes and rescinds the grant approval then it will provide enough money to not have a degradation of services for the cemetery. The second part of that motion is to allow the \$7K to be used by the cemetery to fund the hire of part-time services for upkeep.

-There was discussion among Board Members about the statute wording whether this would be legal to do and the need for a letter on file from Bill Conroy requesting this action.

Jason Crow: He has to leave for a meeting. He gave Chris his proxy for the vote. He said if there is any ambiguity as to the appropriate use of grant funds he would feel more comfortable if legal would review the statute. Being under scrutiny, since we are under audit, he stated that we need to have legal review it and have a letter or opinion from the person who does the legal analysis.

-Discussion about whether getting legal to look at the proposition would be necessary or not.

Robby Robinson: To restate what you want to do, remove money from an underperforming grant then reallocate it to the cemetery. Can we take the money from under an existing contract and use it to fund the cemetery seasonal hires?

Ray Z: It is not an existing contract, there was never a contract, and we are just rescinding the approval so the money would just be utilized for the cemetery. We have done this before, it is not something new.

Jason Crow: Number one, just because we have done it in the past does not make it right. Number two, regardless of whether or not there is not a written contract, we have obligated funds to somebody. My opinion is that I am uncomfortable with making that decision with the limited information that we have.

Dana Niemela: I concur with Jason on that one considering we are following up on audit recommendations.

Robby Robinson: Where is the money, is it in the trust fund?

Ray Z Dissinger: The money is in the trust fund. We awarded a grant and no contract was done because the organization does not have a "Certificate of Good Standing" with the state. Therefore the money never has been contracted.

Robby Robinson: So it is sitting in the trust fund?

Ray Z: The money was not given to the organization because they did not meet the guidelines even though it was initially awarded.

Robby Robinson: You could ask the lawyers, but they are military lawyers and can read the law. If you ask the Attorney General, then it will take much longer, like Ray said and then there would be no money available.

Jay Bobick: We are charged with administration of the Trust Fund grant. The money we are talking about is still in the Trust Fund they have never been put into any grant. Yes, there was a grant but when we had all the grants lined up, that one lined up. The money was never issued the money is still in the Trust Fund. That takes care of that issue. That money is there to do with what we wish under the guidelines or policies. Now we have a situation where money is needed out at the cemetery. Dick Gilotti has asked for it. Then we look to see what our guidelines say and it is just a simple statement which then would cover maintenance. So, reading that, the money can be allocated for that purpose. My problem is I want something in writing. We have already solved that problem because Bill is going to write a letter requesting those funds and submit it to Ray Z. That fills that square. Therefore, I am going to make a motion that we approve that funding. I would feel a lot better if that letter was already in Ray's hands but that letter can be there this afternoon or tomorrow and I can live with that.

So with that in mind, I move that we approve what Ray has presented to us.

Are there any seconds?

Robby Robinson: I second that. Is there any further discussions?

Robby Robison: So what we are voting on is subject to a letter submitted by Bill to Ray. The motion is to rescind grant approval for the organization that did not meet the guidelines.

Jay Bobick: Move

Chris Holden: Second

Jay Bobick: Excuse me: does Chris understand what we are voting on? We will have to restate the motion so everybody understands.

Robby Robinson: The motion is to approve \$6,894.93 from the Veterans Trust Fund to be transferred to the cemetery for the costs incurred for maintenance subject to a written request submitted by Bill Conroy.

Ray Z: We also need to rescind the grant approval. I don't know if we have ever had the Board vote on rescinding the approval of a grant that has never been contracted and it won't be. But the Board did approve.

Jay Bobick: That is a separate issue. Dick Gilotti doesn't have the money so you are sending it to him.

Robby Robinson: I think we will need to have a motion on that.

Dana Niemela: The third motion would be then to rescind the grant approval.

Robby Robinson: That would have to be. Do I have the motion? All in favor of rescinding the grant approval, say "Aye."

Robby Robinson: Aye

Jay Bobick: Aye

Chris Holden: Aye

Dana Niemela: Aye

Robby Robinson: So, that carries. Any further discussion on the second motion which was to take the money that was freed up and give it to Dick Gilotti? So we will have to have the second motion.

Chris Holden: The second motion has to do with what Jason was concerned about with the legality of giving the money to the Cemetery?

Robby Robinson: Yes, Jason wants a legal opinion on the legality of doing what we are proposing to do. So, all in favor of the second motion say, "Aye."

Robby Robinson: Aye

Jay Bobick: Aye

Chris Holden: Nay

Chris Holden: (Vote Proxy for Jason Crow) Nay

Dana Niemela: Nay

Robby Robinson: Okay, so that fails 3-2. So, let's move on to the next one.

Dana Niemela: Okay, so if we get the letter from Bill requesting the funds and it goes to the Board and then what we would do is take it to the designated legal counsel to say we have this that was not expended in the Trust Fund and we would be asking if it is okay to allocate this money that we have in the Trust Fund.

Jay Bobick: We can't take everything we do to some legal counsel. We are charged as the Board to administer these funds. That is our job. We need to do that. If we start taking everything we do to ask some legal, will never do anything.

Robby Robinson: We have discussed it, we voted on it and the decision 3-2 was to do it. We will get a legal opinion and we can vote again. I will put the motion in writing and send it by e-mail and we can vote by e-mail.

We are asking if this money that was allocated to an organization that is not eligible to move forward can be rescinded. We voted to rescind that. We want to take that money that we rescinded from the grant and can we send it to the Cemetery? We need to have relevant pieces of the statute applied. Are we acting within the law?

### **Veteran's Assistance Grant**

Bill Conroy: Mr. Kennedy did not give me any problems, everything is moving along. I think he is still negotiating with the Governor's Office.

I know most of you are aware that Chris Skzela passed away three weeks ago, and I have a card for you to sign for Beverly. It was pretty sudden, she retired in October and in the first part of February, we got the news that she passed away. She fell and broke her hip, infection

set in. It just went downhill from there. Also, there is a celebration of her life and we are passing around the invitation for anyone who wants to attend.

VA Appeals are backed up. They are kicking our butts with the number of requests for hearings. We are having appeal hearings every month and they have additional staff helping out. It is no problem. It is working out well. I might add Angie and Carissa, staff at the Regional Office (RO) have been very helpful.

We are seeing more business and getting busier every week.

### **State Veteran's Nursing Home**

Jay Bobick: The deputy position at Human Services has been filled. The person filling Vickie's position, C.J. is an asset, she knows the system. Brad Honnell quickly left as Administrator at Fitzsimmons due to another job offer. There were some significant issues. We are very happy with the new fellow. He knows how to deal with the geriatric population with sensitivity and respect.

### **Discussion/Action**

#### **Strategic Plan**

Robby Robinson: We will put the strategic plan in abeyance.

For Grant criteria, we are considering the point system to identify top priority with points on how we categorize grants, i.e. homeless prevention.

State Veterans Nursing Homes will be taken out of the applicants for Grants and will make their requests individually.

There was discussion among the Board Members about the merits of the point system when using grants.

### **Future Meetings**

13 March 2014, VA Regional Office, 155 Van Gordon, Lakewood, CO 80228, at 9:30am

### **Old Business**

Jay Bobick: Question. Where would you put the State Veteran Nursing Homes? Based on past performance...

Motion to adjourn at 12:15pm by Robby Robinson. Seconded by Jay Bobick and Chris Holden.

