

Board Minutes
01April2016
Aurora Chamber of Commerce
14305 W. Alameda Avenue, Suite 300
Aurora, CO 80012

Dana Niemela, Chair, called the meeting to order at 0933 hours. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for our POW, MIA, troops in battle or in harm's way, and all service members.

Roll Call of Members and Introduction of Staff and Guests

Board Members Present:

Dana Niemela, Chair
Duane Dailey, Vice-Chair
Rene Simard, Secretary
William "Robby" Robinson, Member
Jack Rudder, Member

Board Members Absent:

Hollie Caldwell, Member
Christopher Holden, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

Mickey Hunt, DMVA Deputy Director
Ben Mestas, CDVA Director
Gail Hoagland, DMVA Grant Administrator
Carissa Snyder, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present:

Sharon Lindell, CDLE Veterans Employment Representative, CSU Adult Learner and Veterans Services
Bill Holen, Arapahoe County Commissioner
Miguel, representing Senator Bennett's office
Theresa Rudder, Jack's wife

Approval of Minutes from November

The minutes from the meeting of 04 March 2016 were approved as presented.

Visitor Comments

Ms. Niemela announced that the Board would dispense with the usual community presentation at this meeting because the Board would be deciding its recommendations in regard to the Veterans Trust Fund Grant. She then opened the floor for public comments.

Mrs. Rudder stated that she brought information on the San Luis Valley for board members to help them find interesting and entertaining things in the area when then Board hold the June meeting there. She encouraged those planning to attend to make the valley a destination, mentioning both the Great Sand Dunes National Park and the Fort Garland Museum. Mr. Robinson asked if the Monte Villa Inn was still

open and Mrs. Rudder confirmed that it is, having undergone a recent renovation. Mr. Rudder added that the inn offers discounts to guests visiting the SVCLC at Homelake.

Mr. Holen commented that he was member of the Board in 1970s and said the Board's accomplishments to date have been laudable. He said that the Board has been good voice for veterans across the state. He said that Vietnam veterans in particular want to thank the State for its partnership with the 50th anniversary event held on 29 March. Ms. Niemela stated that post-Vietnam era veterans are grateful for the services and recognition that they have received due in large part to the advocacy of Vietnam veterans. Mr. Simard stated that the Veterans Day 2016 salute to veterans will honor Vietnam veterans. Mr. Robinson added that one of the legacies of those who served in Vietnam has been not only the treatment of veterans but also of soldiers; many who served in Vietnam trained today's generation of soldiers. Ms. Lindell also offered her thanks as an OEF veteran.

Ms. Niemela invited a visitor not yet known to the group to introduce himself. He did so as Miguel from Senator Bennett's office.

Board Comments

Mr. Simard stated that the Armed Forces Recognition Luncheon held by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce will be on 13 May 2016 at the Crown Plaza Convention Center. 600-700 attendees are anticipated.

Mr. Rudder reiterated Mrs. Rudder's invitation to Board attendees to come to the June meeting in San Luis Valley and spend some time in the area. He added that western colonization of the southwest began as early as the 16th century and there is a lot of interesting history in the region.

Mr. Dailey stated the Grand County Veterans Appreciation dinner will be held on 28 April in Kremmling. Both Chuck Bruen and Daniel Warvi from the VA are expected to attend. There will be a veterans' march on Memorial Day at Grand Lake as well as parade honoring both military members and veterans on Independence Day in Granby.

Ms. Niemela stated there have been recent conversations with the Clear Creek County Sherriff's Department regarding ongoing efforts to clear out the homeless population. Ms. Niemela has been working in conjunction with County Veterans Service Officer Troy Erickson make sure neighboring counties are aware of this effort, and it may result in homeless veterans relocating to nearby locations. She pointed out that a lot of the campers in the area are off the grid by choice and serving them is often not a matter as straightforward as finding housing. Mr. Holen recommended also speaking to the Clear Creek County Commissioner and Mr. Dailey offered to speak to a county board member.

Board Reports

Mr. Hunt said his conversations with the VA regarding the 75/25 rule applied to the Community Living Centers indicated the VA would not oppose a rule change, but would need the rule to be changed before any accommodation could be made. Colorado seems to be unique in its availability of beds. He recently met with Sallie Houser-Hanfelder, director of the VA ECHCS, and well as with the Colorado departments of Local Affairs and Human Services.

Mr. Robinson provided clarification regarding the 75/25 rule, stating that is a matter of rule and not law, thus perhaps easier to change and there seems to be widespread support in the VA and across Colorado state agencies. He agreed that the census issue in Colorado is usual, in particular that waiting lists are currently comprised of spouses rather than veterans. He said that conversations are ongoing on how to best utilize the remaining land at Fitzsimons. There is some interest in using it for transitional housing for the homeless, but there is opposition to placing that housing in close proximity to the CLC. He also shared that the new VA hospital will not have an inpatient PTSD wing due to budget shortfall.

Mr. Mestas reminded the Board of the Division's annual training conference and that attendance is expected to include 14 new County Veteran Service Officers. Mr. Robinson asked Mr. Mestas about projections regarding the state cemetery; current projections indicate that there will be no space available for remains in approximately four years. Mr. Mestas agreed that expansion is needed but the state legislature will have to be willing to fund it.

Ms. Niemela stated that Greg Dorman, DMVA's legislative liaison, is following up with Wes Carter in regard to his proposals regarding property tax.

Veterans Trust Fund Grant

Ms. Hoagland opened discussion by reminding Board members of the Board's policy regarding conflicts of interest. She reminded the Board to ensure that all recommendations are consistent and fully justified. The members all received copies of the subcommittee recommendations and she had copies of the application scores submitted by board members. She recommended starting discussion with those applications for which the Board's average score differed markedly from the subcommittee's and with those for which the subcommittee's recommendation was to offer partial funding of the application.

With the Board's agreement this left the first six applications for discussion as 1617-06, 1617-11, 1617-14, 1617-17, 1617-19, and 1617-21. Applications 1617-16 and 1617-18 did not average a score of 60 with either the subcommittee or the full Board and did not need to be considered.

1617-06 VFW Post 4171, Golden: Ms. Hoagland stated while the subcommittee's average scores and the Board's average scores were close on most applications, there was a distinct variance with 1617-06. The subcommittee scored the application 50 and the Board score was 62.3. The subcommittee has not entertained the application due to its low score. Mr. Robinson said the cost per veteran seems inappropriate and so he scored the application low on budget and number served, and Mr. Rudder agreed. Ms. Niemela said her concern was a distinct lack of local partnerships despite the post being located adjacent to a major metro area with a saturation of available services. Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to not fund this application; Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Do not fund

1617-11 VFW Post 899, Alamosa: Ms. Niemela explained that the subcommittee adjusted the fundable amount because the per diem amounts in the applicant's budget exceed the State's maximum allowable amount. Mr. Simard moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation; Mr. Robinson seconded. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund with stipulated adjustment

1617-13 DAV of Colorado, Denver: Ms. Hoagland explained that the subcommittee recommended partial funding after removing non-allowable expenses from the budget. Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation; Mr. Dailey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in part at \$19,300

1617-17 DAV Chapter 44, Cortez Ms. Hoagland stated that the subcommittee had trouble understanding the health and wellness line item of the budget. This item was not addressed in the application narrative. The organization is a current grantee with good performance although spending has been a little slow. Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation; Mr. Dailey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in part at \$64,200

1617-19 American Legion Post 32, Longmont: Ms. Hoagland stated that the subcommittee was uncertain over the budget line item for education. Ms. Niemela said that the budgeted \$1,000 per veteran for education and training might be excessive. Ms. Hoagland said that this post did have funding for this line item this past year; it will be new area of service for them. Ms. Lindell told the Board that her agency used to have a similar program and based on her experience the expense would be very reasonable. Ms. Hoagland stated that justification does not appear in the applicant's narrative. Mr. Robinson moved to fund the application in full and Mr. Rudder seconded. Discussion followed. Mr. Robinson supported his motion based on need. Mr. Dailey stated that the need for that line item might exist but it was not established in the application. Mr. Rudder then withdrew his second and Mr. Robinson withdrew his motion. Mr. Robinson then moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation and Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in part at \$60,000

At this point Ms. Lindell reminded the Board that while the grant applications were being considered, she wanted to make a case for her application, 1617-26. Ms. Niemela said that would be done once the applications evaluated by the subcommittee had been reviewed. Discussion continued with application 1617-21.

1617-21 American Legion Post 2, Pueblo: Mr. Simard stated the continuing noncompliance of this grantee is a concern. Ms. Hoagland confirmed that this organization has been noncompliant for at least the past two cycles, despite both she and Ben having met with them in person to advise them on the process. Ms. Hoagland stated that she expects the noncompliance to continue. Mr. Robinson stated that continuing to fund a noncompliant organization put the grant in jeopardy. Ms. Niemela questioned the Board as to whether the Board's charge to be stewards of the funds allows them to fund a noncompliant organization, or if it is a sufficient reason not to fund the application. She asked Ms. Hoagland to detail the extent of this Post's noncompliance. Ms. Hoagland stated that the Post operates its grant program on an advance, which must be accounted for within 90 days. However, is always 100-120 days before funds are accounted for, and then the documentation provided is usually inadequate and the request has to be resubmitted. It requires multiple communications to elicit any response from the Post's commander, who is supposed to be the point of contact. Quarterly reports do not include the required information regarding the satisfaction surveys. The Post appears to have miscommunicated the role of volunteers to its drivers, who regard the engagement as one for which they should receive a regular paycheck, and the drivers become frustrated when the advance replenishments are delayed and they have to wait for their promised stipends. Drivers from this Post have even come to Denver to speak to Gail at her office. Last year Ray Z made the post change the grant administrator but it has not resulted in improvements. Mr. Dailey said this performance record is unacceptable. Mr. Robinson moved to not fund this application; Mr. Dailey seconded. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Do not fund

The Board moved to recess at 1109 hours and reconvened at 1119 hours.

Discussion resumed with Ms. Niemela recapping the Board's recommendations on the six applications so far considered. The Board decided that since all the applications needed to put to a vote individually, those remaining would be considered in numerical order.

1617-01 DAV Chapter 44, Durango: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-02 VFW Post 12063, Westcliffe: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-03, VFW Post 8661, Conifer: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-04, American Legion Post 9, La Junta: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Dailey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-05, American Legion Post 25, Florence: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Dailey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-07, American Legion Post 44, Steamboat Springs: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Dailey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-08, American Legion Post 103, Littleton: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Dailey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-09, VFW Post 41, Loveland: Mr. Simard moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Robinson seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-10, American Legion Post 88, Hot Sulphur Springs: Mr. Dailey recused himself from this vote and left the room. Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Rudder seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Mr. Dailey was invited to return.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-12, American Legion Post 108, Pagosa Springs: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-14, VFW Department of Colorado, Denver: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-15, VFW Post 7829, Monument: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Dailey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-20 VFW Post 5231, Mancos: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-22, American Legion Post 62, Craig: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Dailey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-23, SVCLC, Homelake: Mr. Robinson recused himself from the vote and left the room. Mr. Rudder asked the Board if he should do so also, as he serves on the Homelake Preservation Historic Board. The Board's consensus was that was not a conflict and Mr. Rudder remained. Mr. Simard moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Dailey seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-24 SVCLC, Florence: Mr. Robinson continued his recuse. Mr. Dailey moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Mr. Robinson was invited to return.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-25 DAV Chapter 25, Grand Junction: Mr. Robinson moved to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to fund this application in full. Mr. Simard seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Recommendation: Fund in full

1617-26 American Legion Post 109, Windsor: This application was considered because the signed original was not received by the application deadline. Ms. Lindell was in attendance to speak on behalf of this application. Ms. Niemela opened discussion. Mr. Robinson stated that not all of the VTF funds have been allocated and expressed concern that the VTF could get tapped for other projects. Ms. Niemela said that remaining VTF monies could be allocated to support the division, CLCs, or the state cemetery before reverting to the principle. Mr. Mestas said the Board could designate funds for these purposes. In regard to 1617-26, Ms. Lindell assumed responsibility for the complete, original application missing the deadline. She said that she had worked through draft stages of the application with Ms. Hoagland and Ms. Hoagland agreed. She asked that the Board consider the application since a draft was available for review, She also asked that if the Board could not consider the full application perhaps it would consider the portion designated for area Stand Down, since a large portion of the Stand Down funding in the past has come from the VTF Grant. Dana stated for the record that as chairman of the Board she could not in good faith consider an application that did not meet the published deadline. It would set a bad precedent and compromise the program's transparency. Mr. Dailey expressed his sympathy but concurred with Ms. Niemela. Ms. Niemela offered her personal commitment to Ms. Lindell to help leverage community partnerships to help with the Stand Down. Ms. Lindell said she respected the Board's decision. The Board is not able to consider this application.

Discussion continued in regard to unallocated funds. Mr. Robinson sought assurance that the Division could allocate for funds not allotted to grants. Mr. Mestas expressed confidence that this could be done, but said final recommendations could not be made until the Board and Division know exactly how much will be available from the Veterans Trust Fund. Ms. Hoagland state that she has charts available that provide graphic depictions of VTF contracts and spending going back to 2008, and that allocations to cemetery have often occurred. She also said if funds were available grantees needing additional funds could apply for contract modifications midcycle. Ms. Niemela solicited a motion for the Board's recommendation regarding currently unallocated VTF funds.

Mr. Robinson moved that the balance available in the Veterans Trust Fund after allocation to grants be dedicated to the CLCs, the Division, and the cemetery, with \$10,000 held in reserve for contract modifications. Mr. Dailey seconded. He then asked if the Board could move to executive session. Mr. Robinson reviewed the Sunshine laws and determined it was permissible. The Board then voted unanimously to do so.

The Board moved to executive session at 11:51 a.m. The record of that session is on file and sealed. Open session resumed at 12:03 p.m.

Ms. Niemela called for a vote on Mr. Robinson's motion regarding unallocated VTF funds. It passed unanimously.

Future Meetings

May 06, 2016 – Grand Junction, location TBD

June 03, 2016 – Homelake, elections will be held

Old Business

Mr. Hunt said that Colorado Department of Human Services is working on a one-page sheet to send to the Governor regarding the 75/25 rule. Mr. Hunt will have a chance to review it before they send it on. He also asked about the Board members absent from the meeting. Ms. Niemela said that Ms. Caldwell notified her last month that she had a work conflict. Mr. Holden contacted her once the agendas had been distributed to let her know he had one also.

Mr. Robinson moved to support and partner with Colorado Department of Human Services in their efforts regarding the 75/25 rule. Mr. Rudder seconded and it passed unanimously.

New Business

Mr. Dailey stated that he had a conversation with the American Legion State Department and the state commander about the grant application process. He asked the Board if legal advice would be needed when writing denial letters on unfunded applications. Ms. Niemela said it would not be necessary as long as the justification was clear.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Robinson moved to adjourn. Mr. Simard seconded and it passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1216 hours.