

**Board Minutes**  
**February 5, 2016**  
**Sterling Library**  
**420 N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Sterling, CO 80751**

Dana Niemela, Chair, called the meeting to order at 0935 hours. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for our POW, MIA, troops in battle or harm's way and all service members.

**Roll Call of Members and Introduction of Staff & Guests**

Board Members Present:

Dana Niemela, Chair  
Duane Dailey, Vice-Chair  
Rene Simard, Secretary  
Hollie Caldwell, Member  
Christopher Holden, Member-Not Present  
William "Robby" Robinson, Member  
Jack Rudder, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

Mickey Hunt, DMVA, Deputy Director  
Reuben Mestas, CDVA Director  
Gail Hoagland, DMVA, VAG Administrator  
Claire Dean, CDVA Administrative Assistant

Guests Present:

Dan Torres, Mayor of Sterling  
Jerry Vonpoks, Parkview Medical  
Jim McBride, Sterling VFW  
Theresa Rudder, Jack's wife  
Lynne Ciancio

**Approval of Minutes from January**

Unanimously accepted

Mayor Dan Torres: Mayor Torres enlisted in the service in 1966 and served in Korea for 13 months. He was a foreign language instructor for 28 years before getting into politics.

Ms. Niemela asked what types of service is offered for veterans in the area and which services work. Mayor Torres replied that many of the physically challenged veterans travel to Cheyenne, Wyoming for medical treatment rather than going to Denver. Most healthcare benefits are adequate for the area. He added that he is currently not utilizing VA Healthcare. Ms. Niemela asked if they have access to a telehealth clinic. Mr. McBride responded that there is one at the junior college. Mr. Dailey inquired about specialty doctors in the area. Mr. McBride stated that most are primary care doctors. There are many OEF/OIF veterans in the region, but they are reluctant to join the local VFW. They find support through social media. Veterans organizations in the area are struggling to raise money. Currently only two female veterans are members of the local VFW.

Ms. Niemela indicated that a lot of people who join the military come from rural areas and many who get out often return to their hometowns.

Mr. Mestas stated that 83% of Colorado's veterans live along the I-25 and I-70 corridor, leaving only 17% of veteran population in the rural areas. Ms. Niemela would like to make sure that those who don't have immediate access to the big services found in larger cities get the assistance they deserve. Ms. Hoagland then described both grants. A discussion about auto purchase versus auto repair ensued. Mr. Dailey reiterated that rural area posts should collaborate for grant money and help many veterans rather than solely helping out one individual.

Jim McBride: Mr. McBride was encouraged by the Board to refile his tinnitus claim that was previously denied. He then asked why the VA Hospital located in Aurora is over budget. As the Board is not in a position to answer, Mr. McBride was urged to contact his local legislators.

Jerry Vonpoks: Parkview Medical provides resources for those who served in the military and are chemical-dependent. Mr. Vonpoks wanted to share the news of a residential treatment facility called Veterans Village in San Diego, CA that is free to veterans with an honorable discharge.

Hollie Caldwell: Ms. Caldwell will attend the Community Living Center meeting in Florence as well as the Federal VA meeting on February 10 and tour the Catholic Charities in Fort Collins on February 12.

Duane Dailey: A local nonprofit that hosts fishing trips for veterans is being charged by the USDA Forest Service for use on Lake Granby. Duane was told to contact his local legislator on the matter.

Jack Rudder: The San Louis Valley Coalition was well attended by providers, but no new veterans were in attendance. Both Mickey Hunt and Richard Sandrock were present as well as seven area County Veteran Service Officers. Transportation to Denver has been an issue but the Choice Card is beginning to help.

Robby Robinson: No comment

Rene Simard: Legislation could be introduced to address the issue of a per diem gap for homeless family members, previously discussed by James Gillespie of Comitis. The Aurora Chamber of Commerce supports the initiative and has sent letters to both Senator Bennet and Congressman Coffman.

Dana Niemela: Ms. Niemela met with Rachel Sheparo of Veterans Economic Communities Initiative in Colorado Springs. Their focus will be on apprenticeships.

*Let the record show that here the Board recessed at 11:09am, and resumed to labor at 11:25am.*

Mickey Hunt: Peak Military Care, an in-patient substance abuse facility located in Pueblo has closed its doors. The State of Colorado Human Services and Federal VA will meet on February 10 at 3pm to discuss waiving the 75/25 rule which is the VA regulation requiring nursing homes to have 75% of their residents be veterans. Currently there are 28 spouses on the waiting list at Homelake. Colorado is not the only state having issues with the regulation.

Ben Mestas: The selection committee has chosen the newest State Service Officer, who is waiting to pass the background check. Both Program Assistant and Groundskeeper positions at the Grand Junction Cemetery remain unfilled.

Robby Robinson: The next State Veterans Community Living Centers meeting will be held at the Bruce McCandless Veterans Community Living Center in Florence on 12 Feb. They will hold their meetings at each Community Living Center in the state.

Gail Hoagland: Questions and feedback regarding grant scoring will be due by February 16. Mr. Robinson requested clarification on the Monument VFW Post grant. He will reach out to Homelake to discuss their grant. Many grant recipients are having issues retaining volunteer drivers. It was suggested that they reach out to student groups as well as provide volunteer training recognition. Only two Board members are required to sit on the Veterans Assistance Grant Committee. Mr. Dailey met the State Commander of the American Legion to discuss the Veterans Trust Fund. Many Posts have not kept up their 501(c)19 status and therefore have not applied for the VTF. Ms. Hoagland stated that they could still apply as long as they have proof of good standing. Washington County Veterans Service Officer Jim McCracken has expressed his dislike for the required grant evaluation.

Rene Simard: The Colorado Veteran's Memorial Preservation Trust Committee consists of four members and one is designated from the CBVA. Rene currently serves as the member representing the Board. Tim Drago, who has been the veteran representative, is stepping down and recommended that the CBVA be the point of contact for current and future trust committee members plus Department of Personnel/Administration disbursement approval. It was agreed by the Board that the CBVA's role should not change. The Board is not required by statute to oversee the committee and therefore the designated representative should continue to service as a committee member only.

**Future Meetings**

04 Mar – Conifer

01 Apr – Aurora Chamber of Commerce

06 May – Grand Junction

03 June – San Luis Valley, Homelake

05 Aug – Colorado Springs

**Old Business****New Business**

Mr. Dailey inquired about burial preparation assistance for indigents in rural areas. Mr. Mestas will follow up on the matter.

Mr. Hunt asked that the Chair contact one of the Board members on their absenteeism.

Meeting adjourned 12:04pm