



American Legion
MEL BAHER
COMMISSIONER



American Veterans
FRANK POCCHI
COMMISSIONER



Disabled American Veterans
DANIEL T. WEIST
COMMISSIONER



Veterans of Foreign Wars
THOMAS T. K. ZUNG
COMMISSIONER



Vietnam Veterans of America
BOB POTTS
COMMISSIONER

ROBERT SCHLOENDORN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JAMES L. STOLZ
SERVICE OFFICER MANAGER

Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission

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1849 Prospect Avenue • Room 200 • Cleveland, OH 44115



MINUTES

DATE: May 7, 2008 9:50 a.m.

PRESENT: Frank Pocci, President
Bob Potts, Vice President
Thomas T.K. Zung, Secretary
Mel Baher, Commissioner
Robert E. Schloendorn, Executive Director
Tom O'Donnell, Asst. County Prosecutor

ABSENT/EXCUSED: Daniel T. Weist, Commissioner

VISITORS: Tom Nevans and Dave Hrusch, VFW Post 3345; Richard Danielson, Korean War Veterans of America, Post 69; Rimantas Saikus, MDAOGC; John A. Evans, Sr., American Legion 13th District.

PURPOSE: GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

The meeting was called to order by President Frank Pocci followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to dispense with the reading of the minutes of April 16, 2008 and to accept the minutes with the necessary corrections and/or additions. (All Commissioners have a copy of the minutes.)

AYES: Potts, Zung, Baher, Pocci. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Level III Board Appeals meeting of April 16, 2008 and to accept the minutes with the necessary corrections and/or additions. (All Commissioners have a copy of the minutes.)

AYES: Potts, Zung, Baher, Pocci. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to dispense with the reading of the correspondence since we have a Consent Agenda, with the exception of those items set aside, to be addressed during the regular order of business, and with any corrections and/or additions. (No items were set aside.)

AYES: Potts, Zung, Baher, Pocci. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to accept cases approved on the Consent Agenda, with the exception of those set aside, picked at random as part of the quality assurance program, to be addressed in Executive Session. Due to the large number of Level III appeals, the Board decided to forgo the review of cases for quality assurance.

AYES: Potts, Zung, Baher, Pocci. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Thomas Zung to accept cases denied on the Consent Agenda, with the exception of those set aside, picked at random as part of the quality assurance program, to be addressed in Executive Session. Due to the large number of Level III appeals, the Board decided to forgo the review of cases for quality assurance.

AYES: Potts, Zung, Baher, Pocci. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to move to the Good of the Order to afford Ray Saikus an opportunity to present his views on the re-use of Memorial Day flags administered by the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission.

Mr. Saikus referred to his April 4, 2008 letter which suggests, in part, that the flags be retrieved from veterans' gravesites and re-used by issuing them to school children, to line driveways, and to distribute to new citizens as part of his "Legacy of Care" initiative. Following a lengthy discussion, President Pocci read aloud each of the following resolutions proposed by Mr. Saikus and answered on behalf of the Board:

“(A) If Veterans organizations from Cuyahoga County want to continue using the serviceable flags, they are not to be deprived of continuing to honor the veterans who no longer are with us by passing these flags onto their fellow citizens in an informed and honorable way. At the same time honoring our flag by informing those receiving them of the guidelines for their care with the Flag Etiquette Card being handed out with the special Flag. Also the veterans are not to be deprived to use these significant Flags to decorate special places to veterans and their families. The Memorial Day Association of Greater Cleveland (MDAOGC) is to manage and work with its member Veterans organizations and of the JVCOC in coordinating access to these used Flags.”

Frank Pocci responded no to the proposed resolution.

“(B) Have the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission (CCVSC) immediately notify and in writing for the Western Reserve National Cemetery to return all flags (used and new) from Cuyahoga County in their possession to Cuyahoga County and the ownership of those used flags to be transferred to the Memorial Day Association of Greater Cleveland.”

Frank Pocci responded no to the proposed resolution.

“(C) Have the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission notify in writing all cemeteries in Cuyahoga County to identify the quantities of used flags and new flags in their possession and inform them that the Memorial Day Association of Greater Cleveland is authorized to retrieve the used flags and the CCVSC is to retrieve any new flags. Also inform the cemeteries that in the future, the Memorial Day Association of Greater Cleveland (MDAOGC) and the Joint Veterans Commission of Cuyahoga County (JVCOC) are authorized to retrieve flags from the cemeteries. Either pick up the flags retrieved and held for a reasonable time by the cemetery staff or by the volunteers sent by the MDAOGC or the JVCOC and arranged with the cemetery.”

Frank Pocci responded no to the proposed resolution.

“(D) Authorize the MDAOGC in partnership with the JVCOCC to dispose of the non-serviceable flags and to reuse serviceable used flags in an honorable way as well as in their “Legacy of Care” program.”

Frank Pocci responded no to the proposed resolution.

“(E) If the CCVSC refuses to honor these mandates, and threatens not to continue to distribute the flags for Memorial Day, then the Cuyahoga County Commissioners are to remove the funds attributable to that function from the CCVSC budget and create a grant that the MDAOGC can use to hire Veterans to execute those functions. The MDAOGC and JVCOCC to partake in establishing the value of such budget allocation.”

Frank Pocci responded no to the proposed resolution and noted that the flags are purchased by the county and only administered by the CCVSC.

“(F) Also all personnel working in any capacity for the CCVSC who are not veterans are to be replaced with Veterans per Ohio Revised Code.”

Frank Pocci informed Mr. Saikus that CCVSC makes every effort to hire a veteran first. However, in the event there are no qualified veteran candidates, an individual with veteran’s status, per the ORC, will be considered.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to support the Board’s previous decision that the distribution of flags is to be used for the sole purpose of decorating veterans’ graves, as defined in the Ohio Revised Code. Commissioner Zung added that, in his opinion, the flag is placed on a veteran’s grave to honor that veteran and afterward becomes the property of the veteran’s family.

AYES: Potts, Zung, Baher, Pocci. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to return to the regular order of business.

AYES: Potts, Zung, Baher, Pocci. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Agenda Item E1. Commissioners’ Reports:

Bob Potts

- April 4th & 5th I attended the OSAVSC Spring Conference at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Dublin, Ohio. The conference was well-attended with standing room only. Discussion mostly centered on SB 289 and whether to defeat the whole bill or just portions of it. The final result was not to defeat the entire bill but to make a change to the wording concerning the control over the veterans’ service commissions and commissioners.
- We had an opportunity to tour Licking County’s mobile unit during our stay in Dublin, Ohio. While the mobile unit was quite impressive, the Board has agreed that our presence at three locations in Cuyahoga County provides good service to our veterans, but will keep this option open for future consideration.
- April 15th, I attended VVA Chapter 149’s membership meeting. At this annual meeting, new officers and board members are elected. I was nominated and elected 1st Vice President. We also presented and voted on two changes to our By-Laws.

- April 25th, Chapter 249's Speakers Bureau was invited to speak at Westlake High School. This year we talked with over 250 students regarding the Vietnam Experience. Each year, I explain to the students and teachers that no question is out of order. The students did a great job this year asking very poignant questions and the veterans did a great job responding to them. We had some new faces from the Chapter this year and it was quite surprising to me that I've known these men for over 15 years and never heard them tell their stories. It was an interesting experience for me and the students.
- May 3rd, I attended a fundraiser for the Three-Deuce-Five Marine Foundation. This was established in August 2005 as a non-profit organization to meet the continuing need of the Marines, Sailors and families of 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines. It was held at Flyers Bar & Grill on Pearl Rd. in Parma, Ohio. This goes along with the code of all Marines: Taking Care of Our Own.
- May 6th, Chapter 249 had their first Board meeting with the new officers and board members. Most of the meeting involved determining their duties and re-establishing the committees for the New Year.

Thomas Zung

- April 10th, VFW Euclid Post 1056 held their Annual Meeting and elected Ed Morrow as their Post Commander.
- The CCVSC presentation at Strongsville VFW Post #3345 that was scheduled for March 8th and canceled due to inclement weather has been rescheduled for Saturday, May 10th at 1:00 p.m. All veterans are welcome to attend.
- April 4-6, I attended the OSAVSC Spring Conference in Dublin, Ohio with fellow Commissioners. Much of the education and information meeting was discussing S.B. 289. The final vote by the membership was to support the bill with some serious language revisions.

Mel Baher

- April 2nd, I attended the American Legion 13th District Council meeting at Post 196 at 7:30 p.m. where I serve as District Assistant Judge Advocate. I gave a report on S.B. 289 and its affect on the CCVSC.
- April 10th, I attended an American Legion Post 91 membership meeting at 8:00 p.m. where I serve as 1st Vice Commander. I presented membership and building committee reports.
- April 24th, I attended an American Legion Post 91 Executive Board Meeting at 8:00 p.m. I presented an updated membership report stating that the post membership goal for 2008 has been met. I also presented the building committee report.
- Tonight I will be attending the American Legion 13th District Council meeting at Post 451 in Rocky River at 7:30 p.m.

Frank Pocci

- April 4th & 5th I attended the OSAVSC Spring Conference in Dublin, Ohio. Aside from the various training and presentations, a large portion of the meeting revolved around S.B. 289. A vote was taken to recommend deleting and modifying some of the language that would have allowed the director of the new cabinet level Department of Veterans' Affairs to take over the operations of a veterans service commission. The language has been changed and/or deleted.
- April 25th, I attended the general meeting of the Italian American War Veterans Post 34. Aside from the normal business, a firm date was established for the State mini-convention to be hosted by Post 34 on June 8th in Willowick, Ohio.
- May 6th, I attended the AMVETS Post 80 general meeting. I was nominated (and I accepted) the position of Finance Officer for the post.

OLD BUSINESS:

Agenda Item F1. Executive Director - Submitting Personnel Requests.

No personnel items were submitted to the Board.

Bob Schloendorn provided Board members with a list of Improvements and Accomplishments during the past year and his Goals and Objectives for 2008. Bob also gave a brief update on the feasibility study for a veteran's home in Northeast Ohio. He has been working closely with the County Planning Commission on a four-page survey to be mailed to veterans in the surrounding 22 counties targeting the need for a home in Northeast Ohio.

The Board recessed at 10:50 a.m. and reconvened at 11:00 a.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

Agenda Item G1. 2009 Budget

Bob Schloendorn provided the Board with a copy of the 2009 Tax Budget and addressed each line item. A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to accept the 2009 Tax Budget as proposed by the Executive Director to be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners by the end of May 2009.

AYES: Potts, Zung, Baher, Pocci. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

Frank Pocci opened the floor to visitors for any comments or questions. The following bullet points were topics of discussion.

John Evans, Sr.

- Definition of a veteran per the Ohio Revised Code
- May 13th – Job Fair targeting veterans with legal issues and felonies
- Re-use of Memorial Day Flags – contact cemeteries to ensure they dispose of the flags properly

Richard Danielson

- Northeast Ohio Veterans Home
- PTSD – Health benefits for veterans

Dave Hrusch

- Six veterans will be sharing their experiences in Vietnam to the senior classes of Valley Forge High School on May 13th & 14th
- Plans are in place for the Strongsville VFW Post 3345 meeting for Saturday, May 10th at 1:00 p.m. Representatives from the CCVSC will be present to explain services and benefits available to qualified veterans and to answer any questions and/or concerns.

Tom Nevans

- Strongsville Veterans Memorial – pavers will be available for sale

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

There were no items to discuss in Executive Session.

With no further business, a motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 p.m.

AYES: Potts, Zung, Baher, Pocci. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Frank Pocci
President

Thomas Zung
Secretary

CONTACT INFORMATION

Requests for Financial Assistance: Jennifer Mazzeo, Manager/Senior Investigator (216-698-2621)

Filing claims with the Dept. of Veterans' Affairs: Jim Stolz, Service Officer Manager (216-698-2639)

Memorial Affairs: Laurene Rutkowski, Manager (216-698-2655)

Mobile Meals Program: Jeff Sedlak, Social Worker/Case Management Officer (216-698-2615)

Executive Director: Bob Schloendorn (216-698-2611)

Commissioners: Lorri Slivka, Secretary to the Board (216-698-2646)