



American Legion
MEL BAHER
COMMISSIONER



American Veterans
FRANK POCCHI
COMMISSIONER



Disabled American Veterans
DANIEL T. WEIST
COMMISSIONER



Veterans of Foreign Wars
CLAYTON E. UZELL
COMMISSIONER



Vietnam Veterans of America
BOB POTTS
COMMISSIONER

JON REISS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission

Ph: 216.698.2600 • Fax: 216.698.2650
Email: vscmail@cuyahogacounty.us
1849 Prospect Avenue • Suite 150 • Cleveland, OH 44115



MINUTES

DATE: September 3, 2014 9:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Clayton E. Uzell, President
Daniel T. Weist, Vice President
Mel Baher, Secretary
Bob Potts, Commissioner
Frank Pocci, Commissioner
Lorri Slivka, Executive Secretary
Brian Gutkoski, Asst. County Prosecutor

VISITORS: None.

PURPOSE: GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

The meeting was called to order by President Clay Uzell followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion was made by Dan Weist and seconded by Frank Pocci to dispense with the reading of the Consent Agenda and to accept the agenda with the necessary corrections and/or additions. (All Commissioners have a copy of the minutes.)

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Uzell, Weist. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS.

Mel Baher – American Legion

- Saturday, August 2nd – I attended the American Legion 13th District annual picnic at the West Side Irish American Club on Jennings Rd. As District Finance Officer, I was a volunteer working with gate, food and beverage, and tickets.
- Wednesday, August 6th – I attended the American Legion 13th District Council meeting at American Legion Post 572, Parma, Ohio. I presented the July 2014 financial reports as District Finance Officer.
- Saturday, August 9th – I attended Post 91's 16th Annual James C. Masie Memorial Golf outing at Emerald Woods golf course at 9:00 a.m. I worked as a volunteer for registering golfers and prize distribution. The event raised more than \$4,000.00 for the scholarship program.
- Tuesday, August 12th – I attended the 13th District budget committee meeting held at American Legion Post 91. The purpose of the meeting was to establish the District budget for the upcoming 2014-2015 membership year.

- Thursday, August 14th – I attended the American Legion Post 91 membership meeting at 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, August 17th – I attended Post 91's annual family picnic from noon until 6:00 p.m.
- Monday, August 18th – I attended the American Legion 13th District executive board meeting at 7:30 p.m. held at American Legion Post 572 in Parma, Ohio. I presented updated financial reports as District Finance Officer. Also, the budget committee chairman presented our 2014-2015 District budget for approval by the executive committee.
- Saturday, August 23rd through Thursday, August 28th – I was in Charlotte, NC for the American Legion National Convention. I was registered as a Delegate from Ohio representing Post 91 and the 13th District.

Upcoming Events:

- Sunday, September 7th – the American Legion 13th District Council Fall Conference is scheduled for the FOP hall, Payne Ave., Cleveland, Ohio at 10:00 a.m. I will be presenting financial reports for August 2014, as District Finance Officer.
- Thursday, September 11th – I will be master of ceremonies for the 13th annual commemoration of Patriot Day on the Berea Triangle at 9:00 a.m.
- Thursday, September 11th – American Legion Post 91 membership meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m.
- Monday, September 22nd – American Legion 13th District executive board meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. at the FOP hall, Payne Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.
- Thursday, September 25th – American Legion Post 91 executive committee meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m.

Bob Potts – VVA

- August 5th – I attended Chapter 249's board meeting and membership meeting.
- August 6th – I attended the CCVSC open public meeting.
- August 13th – I attended the CCVSC Level III appeal hearings.
- August 20th – I attended the CCVSC open public meeting.
- August 27th – I attended the CCVSC Level III appeal hearings.
- September 2nd – I attended Chapter 249's board meeting and membership meeting.

Frank Pocci – AMVETS

- I attended the AMVETS Post 80 general meeting on September 2nd. I gave my financial report.
- The honor guard served their monthly duty at the Ohio Western Reserve Cemetery.
- The effort to sell the Post is complete. I have furnished the realtor with the necessary tax exemptions so that the sale can be completed and payment made.
- The meetings for the Post will now be held at St. Mary's Convent in Bedford.
- August was the 70th anniversary of the AMVETS. The National Convention on August 14th was live streamed for the first time.
- The current problems regarding the VA were reviewed at the convention and a review with recommendations was compiled. Please see the attached two-page report for the review and the various recommendations.

Other Activities:

- During August, I attended all of the scheduled meetings at the CCVSC. I referred one veteran for claim filing to our service officer at the Parma CBOC.
- I attended the monthly meeting of the Italian War Veterans Post 34 on August 29th. The slate of new officers was presented and approved for the biannual appointments from September through August 2016. Also, at this meeting a list of charitable contributions suggested by the executive committee was reviewed and approved by the membership.
- The VA has released the final report on systemic problems and has implemented action plans and improvements to the system.

- The VA plans to issue a request for proposal for a new cutting edge medical appointment scheduling system; a decision should come during October.
- As of January 2014, there was a 33% drop in veterans' homelessness compared to 2010 according to HUD, the VA and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Dan Weist – DAV

- The DAV did not conduct meetings during the summer months, but will resume meeting on September 18th and the third Thursday of each month thereafter.
- I attended the VFW monthly meeting on Wednesday, August 20th and gave my report as Quartermaster.
- I referred six or seven veterans to the CCVSC for benefits and/or services.
- I attended both open public board meetings and both Level III appeal hearings during August.
- I transported three veterans to the Wade Park VA for their medical appointments.
- I will be attending a 9/11 ceremony at the North Olmsted City Hall Fire Station on September 11th.

Clayton Uzell – VFW

- August 3rd – I attended the District 7 VFW C of A meeting at Post 387, on West 140th St. I attended the staff and general business sessions and gave my Safety Chairman report.
- August 6th – I attended the CCVSC open public meeting.
- August 8th – I departed for Eaton Rapids, MI for the National Home Ohio Day Visitation. I had an overnight stay and visited the Ohio House. An estimated 300 were at the Home on Saturday and contributed \$32,786 to the VFW National Home. They had activities with the National Home Children. I returned late Saturday afternoon.
- August 13th – I attended the CCVSC Level III appeal hearings.
- August 17th – The annual VFW Post pig roast was held at the Lyndhurst Community Center. A good time was had by all who attended.
- August 20th – I attended the CCVSC open public meeting.
- August 24th – I attended a District 12 conference at a Post in Albany, Ohio and gave safety tips on home & guns.
- August 25th – I attended a Past President's dinner and the Parma VFW Post 1974 and called bingo for the ladies.
- August 27th – I attended the CCVSC Level III appeal hearings.

OLD BUSINESS:

The Executive Director presented his monthly budget review. August's projections show a four-month average of \$214,648.50 with a remaining budget of \$858,594.00.

NEW BUSINESS:

There were no entries for the Service Department's quarterly medals/awards presentation. The next presentation is scheduled for December 3, 2014.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Frank Pocci to approve Resolution 2014-23 providing for the purchase of 34 Microsoft Office 2013 standard licenses and 2 Microsoft Visio 2013 professional licenses with MNJ Technologies Public Sector, expenses not to exceed \$9,494.00.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Uzell, Weist. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Wednesday, September 10th, representatives will be available in the CCVSC lobby to provide veterans with information on Suicide Prevention, My Healthy Vet, Homeless Services and VA Enrollment.

The Executive Director attended a Town Hall meeting at the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center on Tuesday, September 2nd. Sue Fuehrer, Medical Center Director, spoke on VA healthcare and responded to questions and/or concerns. The meeting was well attended.

On September 11th, the Executive Director will make an appearance at a 9/11 ceremony at the Berea Triangle on East Bridge and Front Street in downtown Berea.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

Clay Uzell will be participating in the Lyndhurst Home Days on Sunday, September 7th.

~~Mel Baher~~ attended the American Legion National Convention which took place from August 23-28, 2014 in Charlotte, North Carolina.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Dan Weist to go into Executive Session to discuss a personnel issue.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Uzell, Weist. NAYS: None. Motion carried. (10:25 a.m.)

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Dan Weist to come out of Executive Session and return to the regular order of business.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Uzell, Weist. NAYS: None. Motion carried. (11:28 a.m.)

The Executive Director advised the Board of a personnel issue during Executive Session. The matter was thoroughly discussed and the Executive Director was given instructions on how to proceed.

With no further business, a motion was made by Bob Potts and seconded by Frank Pocci to adjourn the meeting at 11:29 a.m.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Uzell, Weist. NAYS: None. Motion carried.


Clayton E. Uzell, President


Mel Baher, Secretary

CONTACT INFORMATION

Requests for Financial Assistance:	Jennifer Mazzeo, Manager/Senior Investigator (216-698-2621)
Filing claims with the Dept. of Veterans' Affairs:	Melinda Halliburton, Service Office Manager (216-698-2639)
Memorial Affairs:	Laurene Rutkowski, Manager (216-698-2655)
Social Work Dept.:	Terry Walker, Manager, Social Worker/Case Management (216-698-2379)
Executive Director:	Jon Reiss (216-698-2611)
Commissioners:	Lorri Slivka, Secretary to the Board (216-698-2646)

Recognition of any problems within the VA healthcare system should not be taken as a need or desire to completely dismantle or replace our existing veterans' healthcare system, but only to improve it. The cultural and healthcare needs of our veterans are unique and the VA alone is uniquely qualified to meet those important needs. The basic framework for success is already in place and immediate results are achievable with prompt, effective and culture-changing best practices; let's not throw out one of the premier healthcare systems in the world in our haste to fix these current problems or achieve political goals.

It is our responsibility to vigorously defend a system that has set itself above all other major health-care systems in this country. In spite of all of the criticism that the VA health-care system receives, it continues to outperform every other healthcare system in America, both in quality of care and patient satisfaction. The one main focus moving forward is the health and well-being of our veterans. AMVETS offers these recommendations to help save and improve our VA healthcare system, not eliminate it:

Specific Recommendations:

1. Ensure both advanced appropriations and discretionary funding for VA, as recommended in the IB, keeps pace with medical care inflation and healthcare demand so that all veterans healthcare needs can be adequately met;
2. Maximize the use of non-physician medical personnel to mitigate physician shortages and reduce patient wait times especially while utilization of the VA system continues to rise;
3. Ensure VA makes more realistic third-party medical care collection estimates so that Congress doesn't under-appropriate funds based on false expectations which in turn negatively impact veteran care
 - a. VA needs to redouble its efforts to increase its medical care collections efforts (the cumulative effects of overestimating and under-collecting only degrade the care available to our veterans)
 - b. Establish both first- and third-party copayment accuracy performance measures which would help minimize wasted collection efforts and veteran dissatisfaction;
4. Incorporate civilian healthcare management best practices to attract the best and the brightest healthcare managers in the industry
 - a. Include a pathway to VA hospital/clinic management for civilians as part of their succession plan requirements
 - b. Adopt proven recruitment, hiring and retention policies to ensure the timely delivery of high quality healthcare to our veterans. (VA's current cumbersome and overly-lengthy hiring process reduces its ability to deliver critical services. Adopting a more expedient hiring/approval process could include some form of provisional employment;
5. Immediately increase doctor/patient (d/p) ratio to realistic and productive levels; this one change would drastically improve access to needed healthcare by cutting wait times for veterans needing treatment and/or referrals
 - a. Current VA (d/p) ratio is only 1:1200, the (d/p) ratio for non-VA physicians is close to 1:4200;

6. Improve the patient management system to provide veterans more appointment setting options and reduce staffing errors and requirements
 - a. Utilize a private sector best practice hybrid system whereby a portion of the day consists of scheduled appointments and the other portion for walk in or same-day appointments
 - b. Eliminate the need for non-specialty appointments to allow veterans quicker access to their primary care providers;
 - c. Expand primary care appointment hours to include evening/after hours and Saturdays to help reduce wait times and improve access to needed healthcare
7. Bring in outside advisory/consulting expertise to reassess VA's organizational structure and improve its healthcare operations
 - a. Adopt private sector best practices for system efficiencies, maximizing human and financial resources, and minimizing waste and redundancies;
 - b. Incorporate private sector best practices to rebalance the administrative staff to patient-focused clinical staff ratios
 - c. Reduce administrative staff by implementing monitoring and patient advocacy positions at VA Medical Centers to be resourced by trained volunteers from Veteran and Military Service Organizations
8. Collaborate with HHS (Health & Human Services) to utilize/share the benefits of the Uniform Data System (UDS)
 - a. The UDS is a core set of information appropriate for reviewing and evaluating the operation and performance of individual health centers. The ability to track, through the UDS system, a wide variety of information, including patient demographics, services provided, staffing, clinical indicators, utilization rates, costs, and revenues would be invaluable in improving the overall VA healthcare system;
9. Collaborate with HHS (Health & Human Services) to allow veterans to utilize the existing system of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC):
 - a. FQHCs include all organizations receiving grants under section 330 of the Public Health Service Act, certain tribal organizations, and they qualify for enhanced reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid, as well as other benefits.
 - b. FQHCs are required to serve an underserved area or population; offer a sliding fee scale; provide comprehensive services; have an ongoing quality assurance program; and have a governing board of directors
 - c. Rather than going unseen or untreated due to limited appointment or physician availability, veterans could seek immediate care on a temporary basis until the VA appointment backlog is eliminated;
10. Exercise the option to terminate non-performing employees at all levels of the organization so that only dedicated, accurate, motivated employees will remain in service to our veterans; and
11. Reform incentive programs so that only high-performing employees receive appropriate bonuses for their excellence in serving our veterans