



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](mailto:vscmail@cuyahogacounty.us)  
1849 Prospect Avenue • Suite 150 • Cleveland, OH 44115



### MINUTES

DATE: December 16, 2015 9:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Daniel T. Weist, President  
Mel Baher, Vice President  
Frank Pocci, Secretary  
Bob Potts, Commissioner  
Clayton E. Uzell, Commissioner  
Jon Reiss, Executive Director  
Lorri Slivka, Executive Secretary

EXCUSED: Brian Gutkoski, Asst. County Prosecutor

VISITORS: Bernice and George Johnson

PURPOSE: GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

The meeting was called to order by President Dan Weist followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Clay Uzell 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.

#### **STATE OF THE COMMISSION AND FINANCE REPORT (Attached):**

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to accept the report of the Executive Director as given.

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

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

None.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Prompted by the most recent incident in San Bernardino, California earlier this month, a review of CCVSC security procedures was conducted. Several recommendations were made to include; requiring staff to enter the office through the waiting room metal detector, upgrading the camera system, ensure camera range will cover all areas, and revise and distribute security SOP to employees.

Discussion on the CCVSC Separation Policy was deferred to the next open public meeting on January 20, 2016.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Frank Pocci to approve Resolution 2016-01 annually adjusting CCVSC employee mileage and per diem travel reimbursement rates in accordance with standard federal rates for Year 2016.

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

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2016-02 authorizing five CCVSC Commissioners and Executive Director to attend various conferences and training to maintain accreditation with the Ohio State Association of Veterans Service Commissioners (OSAVSC) in 2016, expenses not to exceed \$8,316.00.

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

**GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

Dan Weist opened the floor to visitors for questions and/or comments.

Bernice Johnson, a Vietnam Veteran, addressed the Board with a complaint regarding the City of Cleveland's home weatherization program and an inability to get a response from the City concerning damages. Mrs. Johnson requested that the CCVSC contact the City on her behalf to hopefully resolve the matter. Mrs. Johnson was advised that, as a county agency, the CCVSC would be unable to assist her. However, we would be willing to take pertinent information from her to hopefully put her in touch with the proper individuals who may be able to help.

Jon Reiss provided the Board with a summary of several changes made at the Commission in 2014 and 2015 and goals for 2016, including enhanced services, access to services, outreach and awareness, and programs. (A detailed copy is attached to the Executive Director's report.)

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

No items for Executive Session.

With no further business, a motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Clay Uzell to adjourn the meeting at 11:58 a.m.

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



Daniel T. Weist, President



Frank Pocci, Secretary

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Requests for Financial Assistance:	Steve Fernandez, Finance Operations Manager (216-698-2391)
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)

# **CUYAHOGA COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION**

## **Progress Report on the State of the Commission**

**November, 2015**

Issued by:

**The CCVSC Commissioners**

**Daniel Weist – President, DAV  
Mel Baher – Vice President, American Legion  
Frank Pocci – Secretary, AMVETS  
Bob Potts – VVA  
Clayton E. Uzell - VFW**

**December 16, 2015**

**Submitted By: Jon Reiss – Executive Director**

The following report summarizes the progress and state of the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission as of November 30, 2015:

### **Executive:**

The Executive Director

- Attended the Veterans Day Commemoration at the Federal Reserve
- Met with Scott Bartley, Cleveland Recruiting Battalion
- Attended Veterans Treatment Court weekly sessions
- Attended the Veterans Career Expo at Quicken Loans Arena
- Conducted interview with Bill Wills
- Was a contestant on the WTAM Feud Show
- Attended the Faces of Hope breakfast
- Attended the HUD/VASH Rehousing Rodeo
- Met with Jan Silverman, Time Warner Cable
- Met with Michael Laverncheck from CCC Veterans Upward Bound
- Met with Barbara Karam from the CRRC
- Met with Dennis Kresak from VOAGO
- Attended OSACVSC in Columbus
- Met with Mark Cappone, Assistant Director of ODVS
- 

### **Customer Satisfaction Surveys**

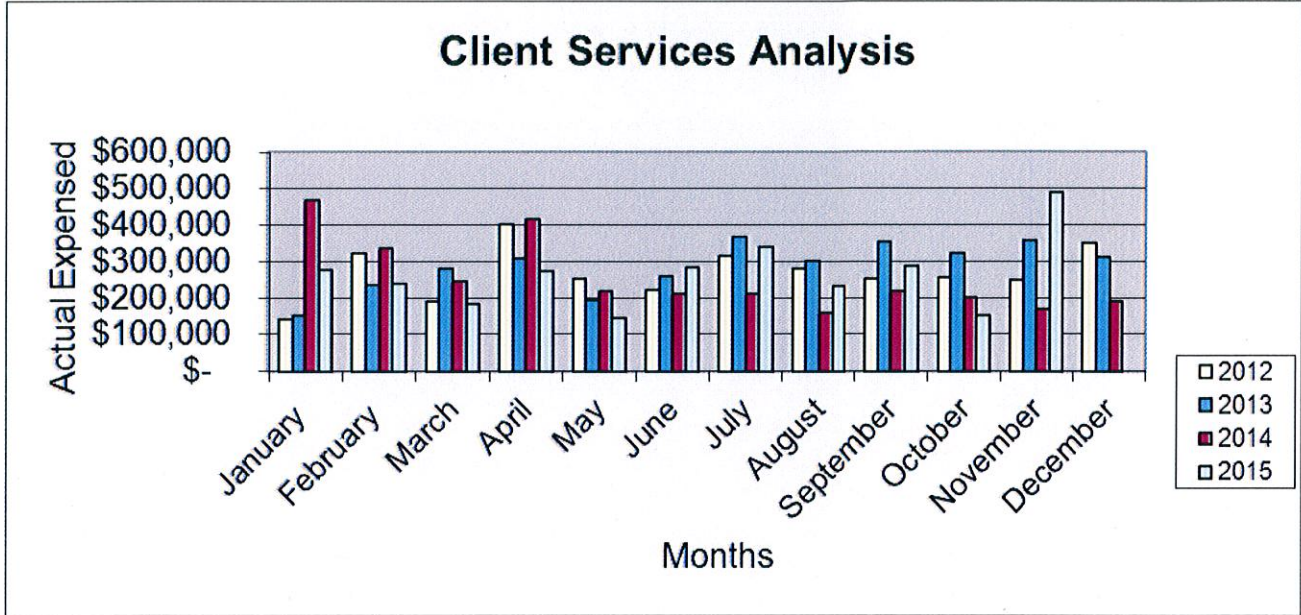
- Submitted: 35
- Positive: 35
- Negative: 0
- Neutral: 0

### **Finance Department**

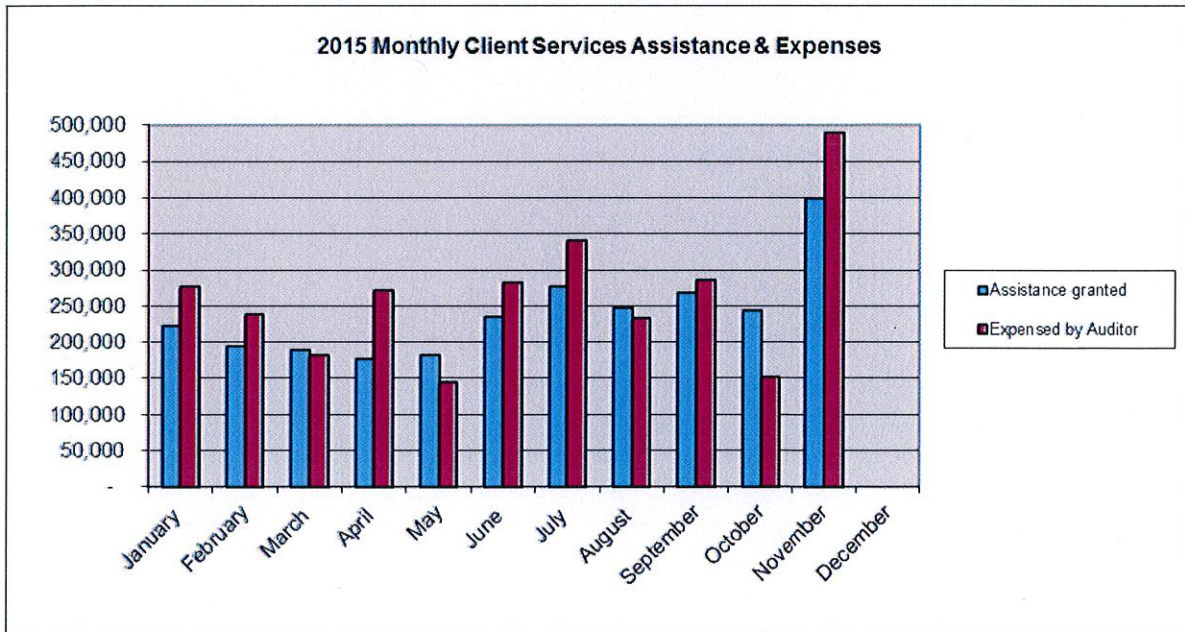
Below are selected November reports from the CCVSC Finance Department. The following charts/graphs depict the overall expenditures by area and type.

**Client services include: Financial Assistance for Medical, Food, Mortgage, Rent, Utilities, Infant Layette, Personal Hygiene, Shoes & Clothing**

**Comparative Chart Analysis**



**Actual 2015 Expenses**



## Total 2015 Expense Analysis

	Total	YTD	YTD	Remaining	2015	Budget
	Budget	Expenditure	Encumbr	Expenditures	Projection	Variance
<b>Salaries</b>	1,859,336	1,582,676	-	214,915	1,797,591	61,745
<b>Fringe Benefits</b>	725,141	605,003	-	96,058	701,061	24,080
<b>Commodities</b>	33,250	30,221	-	1,229	31,450	1,800
<b>Contract Services</b>	441,580	286,364	153,761	153,761	440,125	1,455
<b>Controlled Expenditures</b>	218,309	218,308	-	-	218,308	1
<b>Client Services</b>	3,769,892	2,897,955	-	304,916	3,202,871	567,021
<b>Other Expenditures</b>	377,800	346,817	7,383	11,004	357,821	19,979
<b>Capital Outlay</b>	101,467	5,949	87,006	85,518	91,467	10,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	7,526,775	5,973,293	248,150	867,401	6,840,694	686,081

## Assistance Department:

- November, 2015: \$488,458 (Up from \$169,943 in 2014)
- YTD 2015: \$2,898,317 (Up from \$2,853,585 in 2014)

The November Financial Assistance Department activity report follows below.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Nov. 2015</b>	<b>Nov. 2014</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Clients seeking assistance	1485	825	80.0%
Applications taken	1285	664	93.5%
Applications withdrawn	(83)	(9)	822.2%
Applications denied	(83)	(44)	88.6%
Applications approved	1119	611	83.1%
Transportation only approvals	(523)	(473)	10.6%
F/A applications approved	596	138	331.9%

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>YTD 2015</b>	<b>YTD 2014</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Clients seeking assistance	8718	9021	-3.4%
Applications taken	8414	7813	7.7%
Applications withdrawn	(575)	(188)	205.9%
Applications denied	(634)	(593)	6.9%
Applications approved	7205	7032	2.5%
Transportation only approvals	(5147)	(5100)	.9%
F/A applications approved	2058	1932	6.5%

- First Time Assistance
  - November 2015: 75 (Up from 26 in 2014)
    - 62 approved, 0 at Level III, 0 partial, 4 denied, 9 withdrawn
  - YTD 2015: 448 (Up from 387 in 2014)

Listed below is a breakdown of appeals for the month of November, 2015.

Appeal Officer workdays	17
Cases on hand at beginning of month	1
Cases received	63
Cases worked	<u>64</u>
Cases on hand at end of month	0

	<b>Nov.</b>	
<b><u>Appeal Officer Appeals</u></b>	<b><u>2015</u></b>	<b><u>YTD</u></b>
Cases Approved	38	333
Cases Denied	25	266
Cases Denied/withdrawn, no show	0	0
Cases Withdrawn	<u>3</u>	<u>46</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>645</b>

	<b>Nov.</b>	
<b><u>Board Appeals</u></b>	<b><u>2015</u></b>	<b><u>YTD</u></b>
Cases Approved	7	69
Cases Denied	6	56
Cases Partially Approved	0	2
Cases Withdrawn	0	0
Cases Verifying Fraud	0	3
Client is Eligible (Review DD-214)	0	0
Fraud Not Verified	0	0
Attempted Fraud	0	0
Fraud expunged	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>130</b>



**Medical and Other Transportation:**

- November 2015: \$13,355.00 (YTD: \$143,223.00)
- Medical Bus Tickets: \$13,260.00 (YTD: \$141,828.00)
- Other: \$95 (YTD: \$1,395)

**Medical and Dental Programs:**

- November 2015: \$9,454 (YTD: \$91,438)
  - Dental: \$8,104 (YTD: \$43,961)
  - Vision: \$1,350 (YTD: \$5,115)
  - Hearing Aid: \$0 (YTD: \$40,781)

**Memorial Affairs Department:**

- November 2015: \$7,687.00 (Down \$6,963.00 from October, 2014)
- YTD 2015: \$96,553.00
- 8 Indigent burials
  - Air Force: 1
  - Marine: 0
  - Navy: 0
  - Army: 7

**Following are the 2015 Year to Date statistics for Memorial Affairs:**

	<b>Nov.</b>	<b>2015 YTD</b>	<b>Nov.</b>	<b>2014 YTD</b>
DD-214 Search	81	1018	76	1123
Benefits Counseling	402	6241	529	8739
Undelivered-Incorrect Headstone/Research	2	94	14	138
Presidential Memorial Certificates	38	515	55	819
National Cemetery Referrals	32	421	37	592
Blue Star Service Banners	0	0	0	0
Indigent Burials	8	103	16	129

**Veterans Service Officers:**

Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1,853 (YTD: 15,659)</li></ul> FA Referrals:
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<b>Parma</b>	<b><u>Nov.</u></b>	<b><u>YTD</u></b>
Compensation Claims	32	294
----- Follow Up	114	780
DIC Claims	2	9
----- Follow Up	1	6
Pension Claims	3	29
-----Follow Up	9	121
Medical	3	14
Power of Atty. to Service Organizations	30	356
Misc. Applications/Correspondence	242	2104
All Other	<u>69</u>	<u>639</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>4352</b>

<b>Wade Park</b>	<b><u>Nov.</u></b>	<b><u>YTD</u></b>
Compensation Claims	40	615
----- Follow Up	198	2026
DIC Claims	5	23
----- Follow Up	5	55
Pension Claims	15	183
-----Follow Up	79	816
Medical	9	37
Power of Atty. to Service Organizations	56	543
Misc. Applications/Correspondence	407	4311
All Other	<u>175</u>	<u>1797</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>989</b>	<b>10,406</b>

<b>Main Office</b>	<b><u>Nov.</u></b>	<b><u>YTD</u></b>
Compensation Claims	107	1142
----- Follow Up	375	3738
DIC Claims	6	45
----- Follow Up	14	124
Pension Claims	37	364
-----Follow Up	134	1530
Medical	17	93
Power of Atty. to Service Organizations	130	1190
Misc. Applications/Correspondence	981	9678
All Other	<u>363</u>	<u>3591</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,164</b>	<b>21,495</b>

### **Social Work**

- November Total Signed In: 59 (YTD: 1330)
  - Seen: 49 (YTD: 1162)
  - Not Seen: 1 (YTD: 50)
  - Offline: 9 (YTD: 134)
  - New Veterans: 2 (YTD: 176)
  
- Veterans Receiving Consultation: 28 (YTD: 812)
- Veterans receiving follow-up: 21 (YTD: 342)

### **Referrals**

- Internal Referrals
  - FA: 15
  - VSO: 3
  
- Outside Agencies
  - VA Medical: 6
  - Employment
    - EC/ODJFS: 1
    - CEOGC: 0
    - Towards Employment (N4S): 3

### **Ohio Veterans Home Network:**

In November, no veterans were taken to the Ohio Veterans Home.

### **Federal Building Computer**

Waiting on ATT to install DSL line.

**Submitted by:**

**Jon Reiss  
Executive Director**



## Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission

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The Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission (CCVSC) is dedicated to providing world class service to Veterans. Together, the dedicated team at the CCVSC has committed much time and energy into building proficiencies and maximizing the benefit we provide to veterans.

### **CURRENT STATE**

In 2014 and 2015 we made several changes to the way we provide services. In 2015, we have approved over 2000 applications for emergency financial assistance, issued over 28,000 bus tickets, assisted in over 1500 compensation and pension claims, assisted over 400 families with burials, and helped over 1100 veterans with social work services. Some of our other highlights are:

First, we hired five Benefits Coordinators. This new position is a hybrid of an Eligibility Specialist (ES-Financial Assistance) and County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO- VA Benefits). These professionals, once completely trained, will create additional flexibility in the way the CCVSC provides services.

Second, we have expanded operations at facilities outside our main office (1849 Prospect Ave). We have increased the number of CVSOs at the Parma VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) from 1 to 2; we have increased our CVSOs at the Wade Park VA Hospital from 2 to 3; we have added Eligibility Specialists at Wade Park and the VA Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC – 7000 Euclid Ave). The additions of these staff have increased access to service options for our veterans.

Third, we created a Winter Clothing Program to address a critical need for low-income veterans. From November 1<sup>st</sup> to December 15<sup>th</sup> we have issued winter clothing vouchers to veterans and their dependents totaling over \$200,000.

Fourth, we have restructured staff. In response to several factors including staff turnover and input from current staff, outgoing staff, clients (veterans), and community partners we identified opportunities to restructure staff and enhance services. The result is employees in positions where they are most capable of providing positive impact to the CCVSC and the veterans we serve.

Finally, we have continued to improve upon and develop new community based partnerships. Organizations like Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio, The Department of Veterans Affairs, The Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas, Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, and many others have come together with the CCVSC to improve the way we work together. The result has been more efficient and effective services delivered to the veterans of Cuyahoga County.

These actions could not have been accomplished without the commitment, hard work, and sacrifice of the CCVSC employees. These individuals come to work each day focused on providing the best service possible. They have embraced and encouraged a model of continuous improvement and passion for excellence.

## **FUTURE STATE**

As we begin 2016, we will continue to identify and address opportunities to enhance the services we provide. As we analyze these opportunities, we classify them into one of the following categories; excellence, access to services, outreach/awareness, and programs. The following outlines the CCVSC goals for 2016 by category.

### **Excellence**

The CCVSC is committed to providing the best trained and prepared workforce for our veterans. In an effort to do so, we have identified several opportunities for the coming year.

1. Certified Veterans Advocate (CVA) Training – This training is offered through the National Association for County Veterans Service Officers and is a more detailed and intensive than typical CVSO training. When complete, the CCVSC will have 3 CVAs on staff.
2. Life Skills Training – Our Social Work Coordinator continues to establish and develop relationships with community partners to provide training for veterans. This training includes budgeting, resume workshops, and other skills necessary for veterans to maintain long term financial independence.
3. Decrease Withdrawals – A significant portion of our veterans are not prepared to complete a financial assistance application on their 1<sup>st</sup> visit. We will continue to look for opportunities to minimize withdrawals and streamline financial assistance applications.
4. Development of Metrics for Evaluation of Advertising – The CCVSC will begin tracking how our clients are made aware of the CCVSC. This is an essential part of planning future advertising budgets.

### **Access to Services**

1. Mobile Benefits Coordinators – The CCVSC will establish an East Side and West Side Mobile Benefits Coordinator. These individuals will work from libraries and service organization, and they will visit nursing homes and community centers. This is an effort to provide additional access to service choices for our veterans.
2. Re-Staffing Out Sites – The CCVSC will staff Benefits Coordinators at out sites (Parma and Wade Park). This will be done to increase the flexibility at those sites.

### **Outreach/Awareness**

1. Diversified Advertising – The CCVSC will change its advertising from traditional radio and TV footprint to add specialized advertising to ensure reach to all veteran demographics.
2. Community Ambassador Program – Each staff member of the CCVSC will be assigned a community within Cuyahoga County. They will be responsible for providing literature to libraries, Chambers of Commerce, and other community organizations to spread awareness of the CCVSC.
3. Social Media Development / Website Development – The CCVSC will update and maximize the use of social media and website to increase awareness of programs and benefits.
4. “Request a Service Officer” Capability – Through social media and an updated website, Service Organizations and other community partners will be able to request a service officer as needed. We will fulfill all request as staffing permits.

### **Programs**

1. Increased Headstone Resets – This program was new in 2015 and we still assisted with resetting over \$120,000 in veterans headstones. We will continue to reach out to cemeteries in an effort to grow this program in 2016.
2. Continue Winter Clothing Program – This program was highly successful in 2015 and we will continue in 2016, as funding permits.