



American Legion
MEL BAHER
COMMISSIONER



American Veterans
FRANK POCCI
COMMISSIONER



Disabled American Veterans
CHRISTOPHER GRAU
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

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1849 Prospect Avenue • Suite 150 • Cleveland, OH 44115

MINUTES

DATE/TIME: May 5, 2021 9:36 a.m.

PRESENT: Christopher Grau, President
Frank Pocci, Vice President
Bob Potts, Secretary
Mel Baher, Commissioner
Clay Uzell, Commissioner
Jon Reiss, Executive Director
Feronne Williams, Deputy Director
Mary Kitko, Executive Secretary
Mark Musson, Assistant County Prosecutor

EXCUSED: None.

VISITORS: None.

PURPOSE: GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

The meeting was called to order by President Chris Grau followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion was made by Mel Baher 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. One item was set aside for Executive Session. (All Commissioners have a copy of the minutes.)

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

COMMISSIONERS REPORTS:

Frank Pocci – AMVETS

AMVETS Post 80 Events

- I completed the financial reports for Post 80 and presented at the meeting held on May 4, 2021.
- The honor guard is continuing to perform funeral honors at the national cemetery in Rittman, Ohio. Due to COVID, the honor guard no longer has shelter available and must stay outdoors in the elements in between funeral services. Also, there are new procedures which make things more difficult for the honor guard.
- The next meeting is scheduled for June 8th and all officers plan to attend.
- At the meeting, a decision was made on how to invest the remaining funds the Post has.
- The state department will be recertifying the Post.
- May 15th is Armed Forces Day. The members were reminded to fly their flags.

- During May 13-15, Mission Barbeque will be honoring the different military services and on the 15th at noon the National Anthem will be recited, and veterans will be offered free sandwiches.
- There will be an observation for Memorial Day in Walton Hills at the village hall.
- The fiscal year ends in May and I will be submitting the necessary tax forms.
- Post 80 is now the only state department recognized AMVETS Post in Cuyahoga County.

Other Activities

- During April I attended all scheduled CCVSC meetings.
- The Italian War Vets Post 34 officers met to discuss the new possible slate of officers and support staff. In late May, another meeting will take place to install officers and appoint supporting staff.
- The ITAM Post 34 has scheduled the first full meeting for June 25th.
- The Catholic War Veterans are not yet having any meetings due to the need to elect a new commander and other officers. However, I have not received any updates on this.
- A veteran who was referred by a friend, who I subsequently set up for increased compensation due to his bladder cancer connected to the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, has now been upgraded to 100 percent with back compensation to the time of filing. This is just one of many veterans being successfully helped by our commission.
- The Department of Ohio AMVETS 75th annual convention will be held June 10-13th in North Worthington, Ohio at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Clay Uzell – VFW

- April 7th – I attended the CCVSC open public meeting.
- April 14th – I attended the CCVSC Level III Appeals meeting.

Note: My nephew Alan will be buried at Arlington Cemetery on June 29th with full military honors.

Mel Baher – American Legion

- I attended all the scheduled meetings of the CCVSC during the month of April 2021. Following is a report of my activities outside of the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission for the month of April 2021.
- Wednesday, April 7th – I attended the American Legion 13th District Council meeting held at American Legion Post 196 in Brecksville, Ohio. The meeting began at 7:00 p.m. and I presented the executive board approved Finance report as District Finance Officer.
- Thursday, April 8th – I conducted the American Legion Post 91 membership meeting as Post Commander. The meeting began at 7:00 p.m. with minutes of previous meetings approved, a finance report was presented to the body, a membership report was given, and activities report was presented. Under Good of the Legion planned activities for May 2021 were discussed.
- Thursday, April 22nd – as Post Commander, I conducted the Post 91 Executive Board meeting. After all updated reports were given, a discussion was held concerning planned events for May, including Mother's Day breakfast and Memorial Day events.
- Monday, April 26th – I attended the American Legion 13th District Executive board meeting held at American Legion Post 196, in Brecksville, Ohio. The meeting began at 7:30 p.m. and I presented the March 2021 finance report for executive board approval, as District Finance Officer.

Bob Potts – VVA

- April 7th – I attended the CCVSC open public meeting.
- April 14th – I attended the CCVSC Level III Appeals meeting.
- April 15th – I attended the VVA Chapter 249 meeting.
- April 21st – I attended the CCVSC open public meeting.
- April 28th – I attended the CCVSC Level III Appeals meeting.

Note: I counseled a veteran on how to get into the VA system and what to do regarding a loss of hearing claim from his service.

I continued to help a fellow Marine with a complaint and helped with a problem he is having with several people returning calls and getting answers. He is finally getting help from the CCVSC.

The VVA meetings are now held on Thursday afternoon and attendance is much better. At the meeting, the Memorial Day parade was discussed. Speakers will attend the high school's annual event.

Christopher Grau – DAV

- April 7th – I attended the CCVSC open public meeting.
- April 14th – I attended the CCVSC Level III Appeals meeting.
- April 15th – I attended DAV Chapter 108 meeting, the first meeting since February 2020. The Memorial Day Ceremony will proceed with a parade at 10 a.m. on the 31st. Currently we have over 42 volunteers to help place approximately 3900 flags.
- April 21st – I attended the CCVSC open public meeting.
- April 28th – I attended the CCVSC Level III Appeals meeting.

Note: DAV Chapter 108 – the next scheduled meeting is 05/21/2021.

JVC of Lakewood/Rocky River – the next scheduled meeting is 05/18/2021.

OLD BUSINESS:

The shields for the satellite office desks are in and will be installed soon. There is no definitive date for face-to-face clients yet. The Board will continue to discuss.

The Board continues to discuss the software VetPro for filing VA claims. The cost is \$450/user, it is more user friendly, and claims can be submitted directly to the VA, cutting time for adjudication significantly. The option of migrating data from the current software program was discussed.

Memorial Day flags have been distributed to all posts/cemeteries, but a few. The VSC is running short due to a shipping delay. More flags are being ordered to cover the shortage.

The subject of another mobile vehicle was discussed. The current vehicle has not been utilized due to COVID. Once data can be collected regarding the use of the current vehicle, the subject will be readdressed.

NEW BUSINESS:

After much discussion, the board agreed that team building and diversity training would be beneficial to the staff. F. Williams will do more research to compare the benefits of a nationally recognized trainer versus a county/local trainer. Mr. Williams will present recommendations at the next board meeting.

The Deputy Director presented the outreach team's plan for the first post-COVID outreach event. The event could coincide with the grand opening (face-to-face clients). The marketing company can do a blitz campaign to notify the public. The outreach team has coordinated with the VA to have claims rated on site or virtually. The focus will be claims that have already been submitted, but not rated. More details to follow.

F. Williams asked the board suggestions for outreach events. The board will present ideas in the future.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

Frank Pocci mentioned that the VA is now offering COVID vaccines to family members.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion was made by Frank Pocci and seconded by Clay Uzell to go into Executive Session to discuss certain personnel matters, employment, and matters to be kept confidential.

AYES: Baher, Grau, Pocci, Potts, Uzell. NAYS: None. Motion carried. (11:30 a.m.)


The Board came out of Executive Session and returned to the regular order of business at 12:55 p.m. In Executive Session the Board interviewed a candidate for Service Officer, discussed personnel matters regarding employment, and matters to be kept confidential.

A motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Bob Potts to offer Darren Williams the position of Veterans Service Officer, a classified position, effective May 24, 2021, with a probationary period of up to one year.


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

With no further business, a motion was made by Mel Baher and seconded by Frank Pocci to adjourn the meeting at 12:56 p.m.

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



Chris Grau, President



Bob Potts, Secretary

CONTACT INFORMATION

Requests for Financial Assistance/
Filing claims with the Dept. of
Veterans' Affairs/Memorial Affairs:

Charlene Amos, Service Officer Mgr. (216-698-3831)
Melinda Halliburton, Service Office Mgr. (216-698-2639)
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Jon Reiss (216-698-2611)
Feronne Williams (216-698-3845)
Mary Kitko, Secretary to the Board (216-698-2651)

Finance Dept.:
Executive Director:
Deputy Director:
Commissioners: