



American Legion  
**MEL BAHER**  
COMMISSIONER



American Veterans  
**FRANK POCCHI**  
COMMISSIONER



Disabled American Veterans  
**AJ THOMPSON**  
COMMISSIONER



Veterans of Foreign Wars  
**JAMES RILEY**  
COMMISSIONER



Vietnam Veterans of America  
**BOB POTTS**  
COMMISSIONER

**JON REISS**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**FERONNE WILLIAMS**  
DEPUTY 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/TIME: September 6, 2023 9:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Bob Potts, President  
Mel Baher, Vice President  
James Riley, Secretary  
Frank Pocci, Commissioner  
AJ Thompson, Commissioner  
Jon Reiss, Executive Director  
Feronne Williams, Deputy Director  
Mary Kitko, Executive Secretary  
Craig Morice, Assistant County Prosecutor

EXCUSED: None.

VISITORS: None.

PURPOSE: GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Bob Potts, President.

A motion was made by Mel Baher 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). Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: Items moved to Executive Session.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Thompson, Riley. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

### COMMISSIONERS REPORTS

#### Mel Baher – American Legion

- August 2, 2023 - attended 13<sup>th</sup> District council meeting held at Post 572  
- provided financial reports as District Finance Officer
- August 10, 2023 - attended Post 91 membership meeting held at 7 p.m.  
- provided financial reports as Post Finance Officer
- August 20, 2023 – volunteered at Post 91 Annual Family picnic
- August 25, 2023 – Departed for Charlotte NC to attend the American Legion National Convention – returned August 31<sup>st</sup>

Volunteered at Post 91 with planned activities and work parties, as needed.

### AJ Thompson – DAV

- Continued preparations for the DAV picnic on September 25<sup>th</sup> at Euclid Beach Pavilion and Park. The picnic will be held at Euclid Beach and there will be food, fishing, etc. Huntington National Bank will attend with information on veteran home and business loans and refinance options.
- PTSD/MST support group meetings are held at the post on the first through third Monday, excluding holidays. The group is a safe, secure, and confidential setting that continues to grow and help veterans understand and help other veterans. Beginning in September, the groups will be split to provide a more secure environment for each group.
- Post volunteer Service Officers host VA inpatient bingo nights twice a month and spend time gathering and delivering much needed clothing, hygiene and household goods to veterans in need.
- Chapter 147 Service Officers assist in filing VA claims as needed. Chapter 147 has the highest number of DAV claims submitted in the state.
- Post chaplains provide support for members and family members who are sick and/or deceased by visiting members and families, sending flowers, sending get well cards or cards of encouragement.
- Attended the Ronnie Robinson Health Walk to promote health, movement, and encouragement. The next walk will take place on September 25<sup>th</sup> at the DAV Day Event at Euclid Beach Park.
- Attended the monthly Chapter meeting on August 29<sup>th</sup>. Two new committees were instituted; DAV-W (Women Veterans) and DAVA-Youth. Teressa Delaney was nominated and voted in as the first Women Division Commander.

Upcoming events include Chapter meeting (10/24), Navy Birthday Event (10/13), Marine Corps Birthday Event (11/10), and Veterans Day celebrations on November 11<sup>th</sup>.

### Frank Pocci – AMVETS

- attended the AMVETS Post 80 meeting. Gave financial report and filed the yearly tax reports.
- various AMVETS members attended the D-Day reenactment in Conneaut
- attended the Catholic War Veterans meeting
- attended the AMVETS Honor Guard meeting
- presided over the Italian American War Veterans meeting
- referred three (3) veterans to the CVCVSC to file claims
- attended the ITAM State Department Convention in Lorain, Ohio

### James Riley – VFW

- August 3<sup>rd</sup> - Guitars for Vets lesson at nursing home in Westlake
- August 7<sup>th</sup> – Honor Guard for seven (7) veteran's funerals
- August 10<sup>th</sup> – attended Catholic War Veterans meeting
- August 14<sup>th</sup> – escorted Navy Veteran Murphy to OVH in Sandusky for interview
- August 14<sup>th</sup> – monthly Guitar for Vets group guitar lesson
- August 15<sup>th</sup> - attended the monthly VFW meeting at Post 2533
- August 19<sup>th</sup> - attended Irreverent Warriors event in Downtown Cleveland for veteran suicide prevention
- August 23<sup>rd</sup> – obtained DD-214 for mother of deceased Navy Veteran in Fairview Park from the VSC – delivered the DD-214 to her home
- August 28<sup>th</sup> – escorted veteran Murphy to the Ohio Veterans Home
- August 31<sup>st</sup> – Guitar for Vets played for the 8<sup>th</sup> year at the annual Veterans Outreach Event at Coe Lake in Berea

### Bob Potts – VVA

- no monthly meetings due to vacations and the start of the school year

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Executive Director Reiss presented an updated 2024 budget. Mr. Reiss will present the modified budget to Council at the November budget meeting. Modifications include the VSC annual lease, deleted maintenance costs for the new building (currently covered by the county) and changes due to the tentative bargaining agreement.

Jon Reiss presented the weekly building updates. Groundbreaking for the Chester building is expected by April of 2024 and move in is expected by March of 2025.

Holiday meals for clients were discussed. Research regarding the cost of a holiday meal was presented. After discussing the current costs of food, it was decided that this year's holiday food program will be an additional \$200 in food cards for families of 1-4 and \$300 for families of 5 or more.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

A motion was made by Mel Baher to approve Resolution 2023-07 providing for the purchase of secure WIFI for the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission's mobile office as part of enhancing the mobile office to ensure safety for the VSC and its clients. Agreement with Farber Specialty Vehicles from (state contract), not to exceed \$10,000. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Riley, Thompson. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

The new lease for the Prospect building will not include cleaning. Options for hiring a cleaning staff and hiring an agency were presented. Further discussion was moved to Executive Session.

Changes in the outreach program will be discussed at the September 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

Commissioner Thompson reiterated that the DAV picnic will be on September 25<sup>th</sup> at Euclid Beach. The picnic is for Cleveland and surrounding cities. Mr. Thompson also explained that the DAV post has a spousal outreach support group for members who have lost a spouse.

Frank Pocci mentioned that he will be receiving and award for his service to veterans. Mayor Bibb and Judge Russo will present the award at City Hall on Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Baher spoke about a speech at the American Legion National Convention delivered by a former Blue Angel. The speech was about perspective. He stated that, although the planes look very close together to the spectators on the ground, they are actually quite far apart. The speaker showed a video from the cockpit to give the audience a visual on perspective.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

A motion was made by Mel Baher to go into Executive Session to consider employment and compensation of a public employee. Motion seconded by AJ Thompson.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Riley, Thompson. NAYS: None. Motion carried. (10:35 a.m.)

The Board came out of Executive Session and returned to the regular order of business at 11:15 a.m. In Executive Session the Board discussed and employment and compensation of a public employee. The Executive and Deputy Directors were advised on how to proceed.

With no further business, a motion was made by Jim Riley to adjourn the meeting at 12:26 p.m. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Riley, Thompson. NAYS: None. Motion carried.



Bob Potts, President



James Riley, Secretary

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Filing claims with the Dept. of  
Veterans' Affairs/Memorial Affairs:  
Financial Assistance Manager:  
Executive Director:  
Deputy Director:  
Commissioners:

Melinda Halliburton, Service Office Mgr. (216-698-2639)  
Jeanne Bell (216)-698-2635  
Jon Reiss (216-698-2611)  
Feronne Williams (216-698-3845)  
Mary Kitko, Secretary to the Board (216-698-2651)