



American Legion  
**MEL BAHER**  
COMMISSIONER

American Veterans  
**FRANK POCCHI**  
COMMISSIONER

Disabled American Veterans  
**VACANT**  
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

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

### MINUTES

DATE/TIME: February 7, 2024 9:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Mel Baher, President  
James Riley, Vice President  
Frank Pocci, Secretary  
Bob Potts, Commissioner  
Jon Reiss, Executive Director  
Feronne Williams, Deputy Director  
Mary Kitko, Executive Secretary

XCUSED: Craig Morice, Assistant County Prosecutor

VISITORS: None.

PURPOSE: GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

The meeting was called to order by President Mel Baher with the Pledge of Allegiance. Secretary Frank Pocci called roll.

A motion was made by Jim Riley 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: None.

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

### COMMISSIONERS REPORTS

Mel Baher – American Legion

- January 3, 2024 - attended 13<sup>th</sup> District meeting held at Post 196 in Brecksville, Ohio at 7:30 p.m.  
- provided financial reports as District Finance Officer
- January 11, 2024 - attended Post 91 membership meeting held at 7:00 p.m.  
- presented financial reports as Post Finance Officer
- January 25, 2024 - attended the Post 91 Executive Board meeting held at 7:00 p.m.  
- presented updated financial reports as Post Finance Officer
- January 26, 2024 - left for Dublin, Ohio to attend the American Legion Department of Ohio Mid-winter conference held at the Marriott Inn on Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, January 28<sup>th</sup>.

During the month of January, I contacted Mary with several DD214 requests.  
Volunteered at Post 91 with planned activities and work parties, as needed.

"Veterans Helping Veterans Since 1886°

Internet • <http://www.cuyahogacounty.us/vsc>

### Frank Pocci – AMVETS

- Attended the AMVETS Post 80 meeting and reviewed the PACT Act with members.
- Attended the Italian American War Veterans meeting and reviewed the PACT Act with members.
- Referred 3 veterans to the Veterans Service Commission for claims filing.
- Referred several veterans to the VSC for DD-214 searches.
- Donated 2 flags to veterans whose flags were frayed. Delivered frayed flags to Post 91 for disposal.

### James Riley – VFW

- January 8 – Guitars for Vets monthly group lesson.
- January 9" – Rifle salute with Joint Veterans Honor Guard at Rittman National Cemetery.
- January 9" Presided over the JVOCC meeting (with Jon Reiss).
- January 11" – Rifle salute at Holy Cross for military funeral. Presented family with battlefield cross.
- January 12-14" Attended mid-Winter VFW Conference in Columbus. Presented the Uzell Award to First Responders.
- January 16 - attended VFW Post 2533 meeting.
- January 18" Helped widow of recently deceased Army Veteran with disposal of his property. Connected her with VSC and DFAS for benefits.
- January 18" - Helped family of Navy veteran in meeting with real estate agent as his house was sold.
- January 30" Rifle salute at Holy Cross for military funeral. Presented family with battlefield cross.

### Bob Potts --VVA

- Attended all CCVSC meetings.
- VVS Chapter meeting was postponed, pending a Post President election.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Executive Director Reiss briefed the Board on the headquarter building updates. The completion of the final design was delayed two times. The first delay was to add IT wiring to the design and the second was to update all building codes to reflect changes in codes, effective March 1, 2024. The design plans had to be redrawn to meet new code requirements. The permit process with the city began on February 2, 2024. There is no update on funding for the project or the RTA bus stop.

The VSC's current building's boiler has been installed and is up and running. The lease, extended through June 30, 2025, has been signed and is awaiting County Council approval. The garage door is scheduled to be replaced on February 8, 2024. The new cleaning company is doing a good job. The decision was made to postpone interviews for custodians until further notice.

The mobile vehicle, stationed at the Parma CBOC, has had some maintenance issues. Solutions were discussed and J. Reiss was instructed to research the option of an external generator. Mr. Reiss will check with the CBOC to request permission for the generator and ask permission to plug the generator in. He will also research the liability of transporting a generator and the cost of the purchase.

The Executive Director met with directors of several Veterans Service Commissions to discuss their transportation programs. Each VSC had different programs. One county relies solely on public transportation for veteran medical appointments, one utilizes public transportation and contracted drivers, and one county has almost two dozen county owned vehicles that are used to transport veterans for medical and other needs. Mr. Reiss will follow up with a report for the Board and his recommendations on the CCVSC options.

Active shooter training was discussed. The Board authorized the executive team to move forward with plans. Research for team building/diversity training will also be completed and scheduled.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2024-15 granting authority for the Executive Director to pay referral bonuses of \$50 per referral, not to exceed \$500 per employee per month, to eligible employees of the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission.

Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Staffing levels were discussed in order to move forward with program expansion. Job postings for an IT Assistant, Operations Specialist, and two Veterans Service Officers and Financial Service Officers will be hired to meet immediate needs. The need has increased to cover expanded space at the Parma CBOC, rotation of Service Officers to prevent burnout and complete offline work, and extended hours on one Saturday per month.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Military Leave Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Affirmative Action Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Duties of Officers and Board of Commissioners with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Calling Off Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Off Duty Conduct Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Employee Financial Assistance Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Social Media Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Purchasing Manual Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Safe Asset Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Administration of Personal Days Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Progressive Discipline Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to adopt the updated Time and Attendance Policy with the necessary corrections and/or additions. Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

The COVID Guidance memo has been updated and will be distributed to the staff.

A motion was made by Frank Pocci to go out of the regular order of business to consider employment of a public employee and a client case and appeal. Motion seconded by Bob Potts. Discussion: None.

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

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

A motion was made by Frank Pocci to go into Executive Session to consider employment of a public employee and a client case and appeal. Motion seconded by Bob Potts.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Riley. NAYS: None. Motion carried. (10:28 a.m.)

The Board came out of Executive Session and returned to the regular order of business at 11:37 a.m. In Executive Session the Board discussed employment of a public employee and a client case and appeal. The Executive and Deputy Directors were advised on how to proceed.

Consultant Melisa Fisco presented her findings of the investigation into the complaints of former employee S. Stanford. Timesheets of the Executive Director will be reviewed and approved by Executive Secretary M. itko.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to remove Anna Santiago from probation effective February 4, 2024. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: None.

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

### **GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

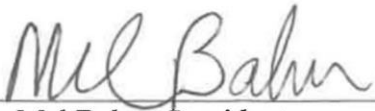
Jim Riley mentioned he has received great compliments about Teresa and outreach events. He also mentioned he did receive calls stating that the letters for the DAV Commissioner opening have gone out. At a district meeting there was a group called Healing Waters, run by a fishing outfit, meant as recreational therapy for service-connected veterans. Mr. Riley's chapter of Guitar for Vets has raised over \$22,000. The group is able to give high quality guitars to the veterans with these funds.

Commissioner Baher announced that Post 91 has donated \$5,000 to Berea animal rescue \$25,000 to Berea Community Outreach which helps citizens of Berea if needed.

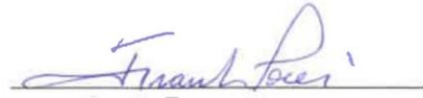
Deputy Director Feronne Williams explained to the Board that there are veterans who are unable to get to the VSC for services during normal business hours. The suggestion was made that we open one Saturday per month for these veterans. The Board was in agreement and the details will be worked out.

With no further business, a motion was made by Bob Potts to adjourn the meeting at 12:25 p.m. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci.

YES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Riley. NAYS: None. Motion carried.



Mel Baher, President



Frank Pocci, 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)