



American Legion  
**MEL BAHER**  
COMMISSIONER



American Veterans  
**FRANK POCCHI**  
COMMISSIONER



Disabled American Veterans  
**LENON WRIGHT**  
COMMISSIONER



Veterans of Foreign Wars  
**JAMES RILEY**  
COMMISSIONER



Vietnam Veterans of America  
**BOB POTTS**  
COMMISSIONER

## Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission

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1849 Prospect Avenue • Suite 150 • Cleveland, OH 44115

**JON REISS**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**FERONNE WILLIAMS**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

### MINUTES

**DATE/TIME:** October 2, 2024 9:30 a.m.

**PRESENT:** Mel Baher, President  
James Riley, Vice President  
Frank Pocci, Secretary  
Bob Potts, Commissioner  
Lenon Wright, 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 President Mel Baher with the Pledge of Allegiance. Secretary Frank Pocci called roll.

A motion was made 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). Motion seconded by Jim Riley. Discussion: None.

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

### **COMMISSIONERS REPORTS**

#### Mel Baher – American Legion

- September 8<sup>th</sup> – attended American Legion 13<sup>th</sup> District Fall Conference held at American Legion Post 703 at 10:00 a.m.
  - provided financial reports as District Finance Officer
- September 12<sup>th</sup> – attended American Legion Post 91 membership meeting held at 7:00 p.m.
  - presented financial reports as Post Finance Officer
- September 20<sup>th</sup> – participated in the annual POW/MIA ceremony at American Legion Post 91 at 7:00 p.m. – post pavilion. In attendance were American Legion Department of Ohio Officers, and American Legion Department of Kansas National Executive Committeeman, Dan Wiley. NEC Wiley is also the leading candidate for American Legion National Commander 2025-2026.

- September 25<sup>th</sup> – attended American Legion 13<sup>th</sup> District executive board meeting held at American Legion Post 703 at 7:30 p.m.
  - provided financial reports as District Finance Officer. Also provided e-board with proposed budget for 2024-2025.
- September 26<sup>th</sup> attended American Legion Post 91 Executive Board meeting held at 7:00 p.m.
  - presented updated financial reports as Post Finance Officer

Referred veteran to CCVSC for assistance signing up for VA care.  
 Volunteered at Post 91 with planned activities and work parties, as needed.

#### Frank Pocci – AMVETS

- Attended CCVSC Stand Down event
- Presided over ITAM meeting
- Phone conference with AMVETS meeting
- Gave 2 flags to veterans to replace old ones
- Attended a Guitars 4 Vets session

#### James Riley – VFW

- September 2<sup>nd</sup> – conducted rifle salutes at Western Reserve Cemetery with Joint Veterans Honor Guard
- September 9<sup>th</sup> – Guitars 4 Vets meeting
- September 10<sup>th</sup> – conducted Joint Veterans Council meeting – planning for Veterans Day ceremony
- September 12<sup>th</sup> – monthly Catholic War Veterans meeting
- September 17<sup>th</sup> – military funeral for Korean & Vietnam Marine veteran at Lakeview Cemetery with Joint Veterans Honor Guard and Marine Corps League and 3/25<sup>th</sup> Marines from Brookpark
- September 17<sup>th</sup> - monthly VFW meeting at VFW #2533
- September 23<sup>rd</sup> – wrote 2 articles for DD214 Chronicles
- September 24<sup>th</sup> – assisted a surviving spouse with VA withdrawal from her account which caused an overdraft (staff members assisted greatly)
- September 27-28<sup>th</sup> – assisted homeless veteran with breakfast and locating a bed at Stella Maris
- September 29<sup>th</sup> – conducted rifle salute with Joint Veterans Honor Guard at Harvard Grove Cemetery and placed a Sons of the American Revolution bronze medallion at 10 graves of soldiers

#### Lenon Wright - DAV

- September 1<sup>st</sup> – visited with the veterans at the Men's Homeless Shelter. Donated bus tickets on behalf of the DAV and will donate coats for the winter
- September 18<sup>th</sup> – attended the DAV monthly meeting. Conducted a cook-out for the families of the chapter members.
- September 21<sup>st</sup> – attended the Frontline Services Stand Down. It was a great opportunity for me to learn about the operations at Frontline
- Met with the VP of the YMCA. Discussed opportunities for the DAV to get more involved in assisting female veterans.

#### Bob Potts – VVA

- Spoke to a veteran about hearing aids and another veteran about a VA claim for PTSD and refiling a claim for hearing loss.

#### **JLD BUSINESS**

The Executive Director gave his weekly building update. Demo began on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Timelines will be updated throughout the construction project.

Team building/diversity training is scheduled for November 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. All staff members are expected to attend, and the commissioners are welcome, too.

VetConnect 2024 was a huge success. Final numbers are being determined and planning for VetConnect 2025 has already begun.

Will and POA legal fees were presented by C. Morice. The fee schedule was accepted by the Board and will now be presented to the law firm.

There is no update regarding the Greater Cleveland Veterans Memorial website.

There are no updates regarding trading in the VSC's old vehicles.

John Yan is in the process of determining the cost of requested software solutions. Quotes will be discussed with the Board at the next meeting.

There is no update on the proposed veteran's village.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Residency was discussed for active-duty military and full-time students. Both have residency for financial assistance purposes only if they entered from Cuyahoga County.

The Cleveland Recruiting Battalion requested donations for their annual training conference in Cleveland. Unfortunately, the Veterans Service Commission is unable to donate.

Don Reiss presented the opportunity to sponsor a campaign through Fox8 called "Veterans Voices." The campaign will include commercials, vignettes, and interviews for the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission.

A motion was made by Jim Riley to approve Resolution 2024-30 for the advertising agreement with Fox8 for the Veterans Voices Veterans Day campaign for the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission to support area veterans on Veterans Day. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright. Discussion: None.

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

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

Jim Riley announced that the USS Cleveland will be commissioned in September 2025. It is the fourth ship to be named for the City of Cleveland and the first to be commissioned in Cleveland.

Several positions at the USO Airport space are being eliminated. There is another group going into the space and it will be called the Veterans Canteen.

Mr. Riley gave a follow up on the homeless veteran that was helped through the VSC. VOA was not as responsive as expected. The veteran was assisted with a food card and a gas card and is now housed at Stella Maris.

Commissioner Baher asked that the Executive Director look into complaints that veterans at the Parma CBOC being told that they 'don't qualify and they don't need to come back.'

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

A motion was made by Frank Pocci to go into Executive Session to consider employment of a public employee and a pending court action. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Riley, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried. (10:27 a.m.)

The Board came out of Executive Session and returned to the regular order of business at 1:54 p.m. In Executive Session the Board considered employment of a public employee and a pending court action.

The Board advised attorney C. Morice on how to proceed with the pending court action.

A motion was made by Frank Pocci to proceed with the dismissal of probationary employee, Rachel Kenenske, effective immediately. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright. Discussion: None.

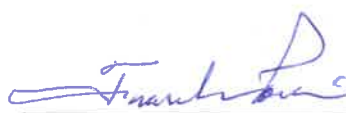
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Riley, Wright. Abstain: Baher. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

With no further business, a motion was made by Bob Potts to adjourn the meeting at 1:55 p.m. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Riley, Wright. 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)

Geniece Garner (216)-698-4955

Jon Reiss (216-698-2611)

Feronne Williams (216-698-3845)

Mary Kitko, Secretary to the Board (216-698-2651)