



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

JON REISS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FERONNE WILLIAMS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission

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1849 Prospect Avenue • Suite 150 • Cleveland, OH 44115

MINUTES

DATE/TIME: October 16, 2024 9:30 a.m.

PRESENT: Mel Baher, President
Frank Pocci, Secretary – arrived at 9:40 a.m.
Lenon Wright, Commissioner
Bob Potts, Commissioner
Jon Reiss, Executive Director
Feronne Williams, Deputy Director
Mary Kitko, Executive Secretary

EXCUSED: James Riley, Vice President
Craig Morice, Assistant County Prosecutor

VISITORS: National Office Designers Lisa Musarra and Meghan Murray

PURPOSE: GENERAL MONTHLY MEETING

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts 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 Lenon Wright. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to go out of the regular order of business and go directly to new business to meet with the designers to review furniture and design for the new headquarters building. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: None.

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

The design team from National Office was present to review the design and furniture options for the new headquarters space. The Board authorized some changes and then accepted the updated design.

A motion was made by Frank Pocci to return to the regular order of business at 10:45 a.m. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright.

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

OLD BUSINESS

The Executive Director gave his weekly building update. Demolition of the headquarter building has begun. Asbestos has been identified in several small areas and will require remediation but will not interrupt construction. Framing is expected to begin on November 1st. The roof will be patched to get through the winter and replaced once the interior is complete.

Staff training and team building is scheduled for November 7th and 8th. All staff is expected to attend. The commissioners are invited as well.

Final expense amount for VetConnect 2024 is \$218,000. This included all advertising for the event, all table and chair rentals, etc., meals, giveaways, etc.

The fee schedule for wills and POA's for veterans is before the county. Once the fiscal department signs off on the fee schedule, the Veterans Service Commission will be able to move forward with offering this service to veterans.

Executive Director, Jon Reiss, has discussed an MOU with members of the Greater Cleveland Veterans Memorial regarding their website. The CCVSC will enter a partnership with the memorial. The CCVSC will pay up to \$25,000 to update and maintain the website until further notice. When the remaining board members have retired, the VSC will take full responsibility for the website as a tab on the current VSC website.

The CCVSC engaged with the procurement department regarding trading in old vehicles when purchasing a new vehicle rather than turning the old vehicle over to the county. The VSC was told they would have to engage with the law department. The decision was made to continue as usual.

Rather than searching for a new updated software solution, the Veterans Service Commission has agreed to continue to work with ER Partners to upgrade eVetAssist, the VSC's current software program.

There is no update regarding Veterans' Village.

NEW BUSINESS:

Winter clothing and food limits were discussed. Winter clothing approval limits will be increased to \$300 per veteran and each dependent and food will remain at the increased level of \$500 until further notice.

Director Reiss also presented the idea of coordinating and transporting Honor Guard members to cemeteries for veteran's funerals along with a plan to transport veterans to medical appointments, community partners, etc. The board decided to go the route of transportation for veterans and hold off on the Honor Guard.

Executive Director Jon Reiss briefed the Board on an initiative to increase veterans' involvement in area posts and with community partners. Mr. Reiss presented a plan to bring post leadership and community partners together discuss strategies and share ideas. Plans will begin to secure a space and create an invitation that will be mailed out.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2024-32 providing for the purchase of a Chevrolet Traverse for the increased demand of usage for outreaches, administration and travel needs that arise. Expenses not to exceed \$58,000. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2024-33 for the purchase of furniture for the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission for the new headquarters building. Furniture will be purchased from National Office. Expenses not to exceed \$600,000. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright. Discussion: None.

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

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2024-34 for the purchase of 2,000 cinch bags for the clients of the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission and outreach materials at events. Expenses not to exceed \$8,500. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: None.
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2024-35 providing payment for veteran's headstone re-setting fees in City of Cleveland Cemeteries. The re-setting fee is a county-wide program to maintain veterans' graves. Expenses not to exceed \$222,690. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: None.
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2024-36 providing for the purchase of one mobile transport vehicle for the Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commission as a mobile office to service suburbs and communities outside of city limits. The vehicles will be purchased from Farber Specialty Vehicles. Expenses not to exceed \$250,000. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: None.
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2024-37 providing for the Executive Director to enter into an MOU with the Greater Cleveland Veterans Memorial to maintain their website. Expenses not to exceed \$25,000. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright. Discussion: None.
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2025-01 annually adjusting employee mileage and per diem reimbursement rates in accordance with standard federal rates. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: None.
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2025-02 requesting authority for five Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Commissioners, Deputy Director and Executive Director to attend various conferences and training to maintain accreditation with the Ohio State Association of Veterans Service Commissioners (OSAVSC) in 2025. Expenses not to exceed \$10,000. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright. Discussion: None.
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2025-03 requesting authority for twenty-two Cuyahoga County Veterans Service Officers and Commissioners to attend training and maintain membership and accreditation with the Ohio State Association of County Veterans Service Officers (OSACVSO) and National Association of County Veterans Services Officers (NACVSO) in 2025. Expenses not to exceed \$93,000. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright. Discussion: None.
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2025-04 to authorize the Executive/Deputy Director to utilize funds as necessary for staff training and development and to reimburse the staff for the purchase of meals for training, meetings and items used for team building and staff incentive. Expenses not to exceed \$50,000. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: None.
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Bob Potts to approve Resolution 2025-05 authorizing the Executive and/or Deputy Director to attend conferences and training seminars as necessary to enhance veterans' services throughout Cuyahoga County for the year 2025. Expenses not to exceed \$16,000. Motion seconded by Frank Pocci. Discussion: None.
AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

GOOD OF THE ORDER:

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

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

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, Wright. NAYS: None. Motion carried. (12:27 p.m.)

The Board came out of Executive Session and returned to the regular order of business at 12:58 p.m. In Executive Session the Board discussed employment of a public employee.

With no further business, a motion was made by Bob Potts to adjourn the meeting at 12:59 p.m. Motion seconded by Lenon Wright.

AYES: Baher, Pocci, Potts, 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)