

**Veterans Service Commission
Of Hamilton County
September 9, 2024**

Meeting called to order at 10:00 am September 9, 2024 Commission President Jean Wilson

Pledge of Allegiance led by President Jean Wilson.

Attendance Roll Call taken:

Commissioners: Mr. Headen - present, Mr. Rowland - present, Mr. Staniford - present, Mr. Watson - present, and Mrs. Wilson present

Executive Director, Orlando Sonza, Executive Assistant, Pam Minser

Guests: Venita Thomas – Veteran, Chris Macklin – Veteran, Jim Gronefeld – Veteran, and Sabrina Blake - Veteran

Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Mr. Rowland, duly seconded by Mr. Staniford.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen– yes, Mr. Roland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Executive Session

Commissioner Wilson requests a motion to enter Executive Session to:

Review emergency financial assistance applications for the period of August 1, 2024, through August 31, 2024, pursuant to O.R.C. 121.22 (J) and 5901.09.

And to

Consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion or compensation of a public employee or official, or the investigation of charges or complaints against a public employee, official, licensee, or regulated individual (G)(1) of section [121.22](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.

The motion to go into Executive Session was made by Mr. Staniford, duly seconded by Mr. Headen.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen, yes – Mr. Rowland, yes, - Mr. Staniford, yes – Mr. Watson yes, - Mrs. Wilson yes.

Unanimous vote: Motion carried

Financial Assistance Applications Review:

Motion to approve financial assistance applications for the period of August 1, 2024 through August 31, 2024 was made by Mr. Headen, and duly seconded by Mr. Rowland.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Consideration of employment and promotions

Service Manager position:

The Executive Director Orlando Sonza has recommended to the board the consideration of promotion of Kevin Ott as the New Service Manager.

A motion to promote Service Officer Kevin Ott was made by Mr. Staniford, duly seconded by Mr. Headen.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen, yes – Mr. Rowland, yes, - Mr. Staniford, yes – Mr. Watson yes, - Mrs. Wilson yes.

Unanimous vote: Motion carried

Outreach Manager position:

The Executive Director Orlando Sonza has recommended to the board the consideration of promotion of Amber Ndubuisi as the New Outreach Manager.

A motion to promote Service Officer Amber Ndubuisi was made by Mr. Headen, duly seconded by Mr. Staniford.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen, yes – Mr. Rowland, yes, - Mr. Staniford, yes – Mr. Watson yes, - Mrs. Wilson yes.

Unanimous vote: Motion carried

New Service Officer:

A motion was made to hire candidate “B” for the open Service Officer position by Mr. Headen, duly seconded by Mr. Rowland.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen, yes – Mr. Rowland, yes, - Mr. Staniford, yes – Mr. Watson yes, - Mrs. Wilson yes.

Unanimous vote: Motion carried

Shred/Scanner employee

The Executive Director expressed the need for the immediate hire of someone to scan and shred documents now that the retention records schedule has been established. Following the approval of the schedule the VSC needs to begin scanning and shredding immediately.

Mr. Staniford feels that the Executive Director should have the authority to handle the hiring and promoting of employees. He is the overseeing the day-to-day operations and knows what is needed to expand services for the Veterans in Hamilton County.

A motion was made to give The Executive Director the authority to hire or promote employees as needed to be able to staff the office with the personnel needed was made by Mr. Staniford, duly seconded by Mr. Headen.

Discussion: Hearing none

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen, yes – Mr. Rowland, yes, - Mr. Staniford, yes – Mr. Watson-abstain, - Mrs. Wilson yes.

Majority vote: Motion carried

A motion was made to give the Executive Director the authority to establish fair and responsible compensation and make any salary adjustments when justified was made by Mr. Headen, duly seconded by Mr. Rowland.

Discussion: Hearing none

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Minutes from August 21, 2024

Motion made to approve the minutes as published was made by Mr. Staniford, duly seconded by Mr. Headen.

Discussion: Hearing none

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Presentations/Announcements

The Executive Director shared the new brochures printed for both Transportation and Services provided by Veterans Services.

Open Forum

Mr. Staniford stated that he had a discussion with the Patient/Family advisory board that he is a part of about what could be done to promote a better sanctuary for patients and their families. The Original blueprints that Mr. Rowland assisted with and raised funds for the building of this are being requested to assisted with building this sanctuary that Mr. Rowland envisioned when the project began. Mr. Staniford wanted to reassure Mr. Rowland that the dream he envisioned has not been forgotten and will provide updates to this project as they become available.

Mr. Headen shared that he will be visiting the Brown County Veterans Service Commission in two weeks, was supposed to go on September 2nd but, had my dates mixed up.

Old business:

Board meeting locations:

Mr. Staniford would like to hold the meetings at the office unless a request is made to host our meeting outside of the office.

Discussion: The webpage will need to be updated with the information regarding the meeting location change.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Budget 2025

The Executive Director shared the 2025 budget presentation with the VSC board of commissioners.

On September 2, 2024 we meet with BoCC Vice-President Driehaus this gave her the opportunity to address any questions ahead of the budget meeting.

At 12:00pm we will be meeting BoCC's President Reece on September 10, 2024 since time is limited at the meeting this will allow President Reece to ask any questions she has about the budget.

Budget presentation will be at 1:00pm on September 10, 2024.

A meeting has been requested with BoCC's Commissioner Summerow Dumas.

New Business:

WMKV Radio Advertisement:

Maple Knoll Village Communications radio targets Independent and Assisted Living Centers. This would be a great opportunity to reach out to those who may be eligible for VA benefits. A four (4) month schedule running 4 weeks a month would be a total of \$4,160.00.

A motion was made to approve the amount of \$4,160.00 for WMKV Radio was made by Mr. Staniford, duly seconded by Mr. Rowland.

Discussion: Hearing none

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Channel 12 Advertising

Suicide awareness September and October Channel 12 will be doing a spotlight series on suicide awareness for veterans. The advertising will include the VSC logo, social media, and an interview with Amber Ndubuisi. The cost of this advertisement is \$2,500.00.

A motion to advertise with Channel 12 for \$2,500.00 was made by Mr. Headen, duly seconded by Mr. Rowland.

Discussion: Hearing none

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Xavier Veterans Sponsorship

The Executive Director presented the Xavier Sponsorship request for \$15,000.00. Sponsorship will assist veterans and servicemembers with free college and graduate school application counseling. The goal is to help Veterans gain admission to the best college for them while empowering each Veteran to make informed decisions about their education.

A motion to approve the Xavier University Sponsorship in the amount of \$15,000.00 was made by Mr. Rowland, duly seconded by Mr. Headen.

Discussion: Hearing none

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Mohawk Honor Memorial

Mohawk Memorial is the 1st Permanent WWII Memorial in Cincinnati. Dedicated 11/18/1945 honoring 608 Men and Women from the Mohawk Neighborhood. Requesting a donation of \$2,000.00 to help with the cost of the annual Veterans Day Service being held on 11/11/2024.

A motion was made to approve the donation of \$2,000.00 to the Mohawk Memorial Veterans Dedication was made by Mr. Staniford, duly seconded by Mr. Rowland.

Discussion: Hearing None

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Save A Warrior

Mr. Staniford gave a brief overview of the Save-A-Warrior (SAW) Project. How beneficial this program is and would like the board to consider possibly sponsoring 10 veterans in 2025.

Nursing Home/Assisted Living Center Visits:

Executive Director Sonza has visited 12 centers as of this date. Two centers have a wall of courage and have asked the VSC to assist in the dedication. Dye cut wall décor for each branch of the Service will be donated along with a plaque from the VSC. These dedications will take place on October 8, 2024.

VA Mobile Unit:

GE Aerospace in Evandale VSC will be working with the VA Mobile Unit in different locations in Hamilton County to assist in filing claims for veterans at the same time.

Vet tracking software

With the recent proposal received VSC must obtain bids for this before moving forward with changing vendors.

Meeting date:

Next VSC Board Meeting requesting change of date because of Outreach events on September 25, 2025. The Director requested the board meeting be moved to Monday September 23, 2024 at 10:00am.

Next meeting will be September 23, 2024 at 10:00am here at the Veterans Service Commission office.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn Mr. Headen, duly seconded by Mr. Staniford

Discussion: Hearing None

Roll call vote:

Mr. Headen – yes, Mr. Rowland – yes, Mr. Staniford – yes, Mr. Watson – yes, Mrs. Wilson – yes.

Unanimous vote – Motion carries

Minutes approved by:

President Jean Wilson

Vice-President, Richard Headen

Secretary, Steven Staniford

Member, Lee Watson

Member, Jerry Rowland