

Meeting Minutes  
IDAHO MEDAL OF HONOR COMMISSION

Thursday, June 26, 2008  
2:00 p.m. (MDT)

Emerald Room  
Doubletree Hotel Boise - Riverside  
2900 Chinden Blvd.  
Boise, ID

**I. Call to Order**

A. Mitch Toryanski, chairing the meeting on behalf of Commission Chairman Bill von Tagen, called the meeting to order just after 2:00 p.m. (MDT). In attendance were:

Mitch Toryanski, Deputy Attorney General (“DAG”), Office of the Attorney General  
Ron Anderson, Meridian Fire Chief, Idaho Fire Chiefs Association  
Mike Becar, POST Council  
Doug Borah, Idaho Peace Officers Association  
Blair Olsen, Jefferson County Sheriff, Idaho Sheriffs Association  
Joe Rice, Soda Springs Police Chief, Idaho Chiefs of Police Association

Commissioners Bill Douglas, Kootenai County Prosecuting Attorney (Idaho Prosecuting Attorneys Association), Dia Gainor (Bureau Chief, Idaho EMT Bureau), and Bob Wells (Governor’s Office) were absent.

DAG Toryanski noted that a quorum had been established, and the meeting proceeded.

B. The Agenda was reviewed. No amendments were made. Chief Anderson moved that the Agenda be approved. Chief Rice seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, and the Agenda was approved.

**II. Prior Meetings’ Minutes**

A. The May 6, 2008, and May 16, 2008, meeting minutes were reviewed. No corrections were noted.

B. Chief Anderson moved that the May 6, 2008, meeting minutes be approved. Mr. Becar seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, and the minutes were approved.

C. Sheriff Olsen moved that the May 16, 2008, meeting minutes be approved. Chief Rice seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, and the minutes were approved.

**Idaho Medal of Honor Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**June 26, 2008**

**Page 2 of 5**

**III. 2008 Ceremony “Debrief”**

Mr. Becar commented that there had been complaints in the past that there is not enough room on the stage. He believes that improvements in this area were made this year. He reported that he ordered the medals to hang on ribbons, but the medal vendor put them on pins. It was too late to correct the error, and, so, they were presented as received, on pins. He heard some complaints about the fact that the each citation for all five of the medal recipients involved in the shooting in Moscow was read at length, even though each was identical. He reported that he and Chairman von Tagen discussed the fact that each citation was the same, except for the name, and suggested to the presenter, Representative Rich Wills, that he read only one citation and then recognize each officer individually when presenting the medals. Representative Wills chose to read each citation in its entirety.

Sheriff Olsen commented that it is important that each individual is recognized, but, in this case, they could have stood together while the citation was read once, and then each would come forward with his family and be presented with the medal. At that point, each officer would have been recognized individually. He didn't see that there was necessarily anything wrong with the way it was done, but, in the interest of time, when there is one incident and several medal recipients, the same incident probably doesn't need to be recounted over and over. Time is a factor.

Mr. Becar commented that the Peace Officers Memorial Board tries to keep the ceremony to an hour, maximum. Generally, it usually lasts about 50 minutes. This year was almost an hour and a half. Officers are in full uniform and are standing the entire time. He knows of three officers who had to fall out of formation, as they were going to pass out due to standing so long. It was also unusually warm that day.

Chief Rice commented that he really liked the flyover; it was very impressive.

Chief Anderson commented that he missed the ceremony but would agree that reading the same incident over and over would be redundant. Each individual does need to be recognized, but, in this case, there were others nominated for the same incident who didn't receive a medal. The citation explained what each individual's actions were and what qualified them to receive the medal.

Sheriff Olsen observed that each individual was named in the citation, and it explained what each officer did, so that was part of the reason for the criticism, because, when the citation was read, it did name each one of the officers every time it was read.

Chief Rice commented that, because it was one incident, and each was involved at certain points, some in the first part, and others in the second part when they went back in, it was all lined out in the citation, so everyone in attendance got a pretty good feeling of what each of them specifically did.

Idaho Medal of Honor Commission

Meeting Minutes

June 26, 2008

Page 3 of 5

DAG Toryanski commented that he has attended thousands of award presentations over the past 32 years, and the tendency is to repeat the citation over and over even though the words are exactly the same, and it really does detract. He suggests maybe an understanding that every medal recipient is going to receive a medal and a citation with the complete facts, but, for the purpose of the ceremony, maybe a generic description, leaving out the identities, a common set of facts given to everyone and then, when the medal is being presented to each individual, a separate statement, explaining the role that each individual played in the whole story.

Mr. Becar said that, because the presenter relies on the citation as what is read during the presenting of the medal, each would have to be written up differently, which might be difficult to do.

Chief Anderson asked if the Commission leaves it up to the presenter as to how the citations are read. It seems that this Commission would decide the format and communicate to the presenter that this is the format the Commission would like him to use.

Mr. Becar commented that, although that seems reasonable, according to the statute, the presenter is supposed to be the Governor. If the Governor was actually the presenter, it may not be appropriate to dictate to the Governor, or other officials, how they should make their presentations.

DAG Toryanski commented that the way he has seen it done is the ceremonial officer will sit down with the presenter and he'll say, "Sir, this is what we have planned, and we anticipate that you'll walk here and go here, say this, do this...", and, usually, they'll say "Right, got it." This Commission has the experience in doing this over and over, which probably the person awarding won't. However, sometimes, the presenter, like the Governor, as Representative Wills did, will say, "No, I'm not comfortable doing that. I'd like to do it this way." And, of course, it's always agreed to. There might be years that this is not a problem, as there might be only one recipient.

Chief Rice asked whether it would be fair to just take each ceremony on a case by case basis. If this particular circumstance does come up again, the Commission and the presenter could sit down and talk it over at that time.

#### **IV. Reappointments**

Most of Commissioners' appointments are up on June 30, 2008. This is not true for Dia Gainor, whose commission expires in 2009, and Bob Wells, whose commission expires in 2010. The terms of everyone present at the meeting, including the Chairman, are up at the end of this month. Chairman von Tagen would like for each organization to prepare a nomination letter for re-nomination of the current representative or nomination of a successor, understanding that the term ends at the end of this month, so it needs to be done as soon as possible. Please address it to the Governor, but send it to Chairman von Tagen at the Attorney General's Office, and he will forward all of the letters to the Governor at one time.

**Idaho Medal of Honor Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**June 26, 2008**

**Page 4 of 5**

Mr. Becar stated that he will no longer be on the Commission. His position is supposed to be a representative from the POST Council, upon which he no longer sits. Jeff Black, the new Executive Director of POST, has expressed a desire to serve, but it will be up to the Council. Mr. Becar is the Executive Director of the Peace Officers Memorial, so he will be directly in charge of the ceremony and will continue to work with the Commission each year.

DAG Toryanski queried each of the Commissioners present as to the status of their desire for reappointment and the status of each of their organization's letter to the Governor.

Chief Anderson: Yes, he would like to be reappointed. The letter from the Fire Chiefs Association has probably already gone out, probably directly to the Governor. He will check on it.

Mr. Borah: He will check with the Peace Officers Association.

Sheriff Olsen: Yes, he is interested in being reappointed. The Sheriffs Association should have mailed a letter already. It probably went to Governor. He will check on it.

Chief Rice: Yes, he would like to be reappointed and will check on the letter from the Chiefs of Police Association.

DAG Toryanski asked that copies be sent to Chairman von Tagen and provided his mailing address.

**V. Timeline**

Suggested meeting dates have been included; pencil those in or let the Chairman know if they won't work. When originally setting up ordering of the medals from the vendor several years ago, they said they needed an 8-week window. The first year, there wasn't that much time and the Commission had to use a substitute medal for the ceremony and presented the real one later. This year, the Commission did have an 8-week window, but unbeknownst to Mr. Becar, who has ordered the medals in the past, the vendor had changed their time requirement to 10 weeks. They said "no way" could they be ready in 8 weeks. Mr. Becar made several phone calls and "went up the chain". (One of the Vice Presidents of the company is now handling the Commission's account and assures this won't happen again.) The medals arrived the day before the ceremony, and the order was wrong – the medals were on pins instead of on the ribbons Mr. Becar had ordered. An option: If there is funding, purchase maybe 10 law enforcement medals and maybe 5 firefighter medals, and just have them on hand. The medal doesn't have the recipient's name on it; they're just different color ribbons, and each says either "law enforcement" or "firefighter", etc. They would get used; just replace them as they're used. Want to put this on record as an option for the Commission to pursue and give IPOA / Fire Chiefs Assoc. a heads-up; maybe talk to them. Maybe they would be willing to purchase the generic medals, and the headaches caused by the deadlines when placing an order each year could be avoided. Mr. Becar will forward the information on ordering the medals to Chairman von Tagen.

DAG Toryanski asked the group whether the rest of the timeline looked O.K.

Sheriff Olsen commented that the Idaho Association of Counties and the Sheriffs Association will be meeting in Idaho Falls in September. He doesn't have exact dates yet, but perhaps the Commission could meet there at that time.

DAG Toryanski asked the Commission to tentatively plan on that, and information would be forthcoming as to the date and time.

Mr. Becar noted that the May 15<sup>th</sup> ceremony date reflected on the timeline is correct and that that is actually National Peace Officers Memorial Day. The National POM Day doesn't always fall on a Friday, but it happens to in 2009.

DAG Toryanski commented that the Commission should contact the Governor's Office ASAP to get this on his calendar and try to ensure that he will be able to make the medal presentations in 2009.

## **VI. Budget**

Sheriff Olsen and others questioned whether the amount allotted for medals would be enough, and it was suggested that the number of medals purchased, as well as framing costs, be increased from 10 to 15. This will add an additional approximately \$1,000 to the budget but will still keep it at around \$10,000. It was noted that this is the budget amount that has been discussed in the past.

DAG Toryanski asked if there was any new business.

Mr. Becar provided IPOA's new address and announced that Bob Gholson had retired. Tim Miller is the new Executive Director.

The Commission having concluded its business, Chief Rice moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Becar seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at just after 2:30 p.m.