

# Meeting Minutes

## Idaho Law Enforcement, Firefighting and EMS Medal of Honor Commission

Tuesday, September 19, 2006  
2:30 p.m. (MDT)

Idaho Office of the Attorney General  
Conference Room  
Statehouse, Room 210  
700 West Jefferson Street  
Boise, Idaho

### Present at the meeting location

Bill von Tagen, Deputy Attorney General, *Commission Chairman*  
Ron Anderson, Meridian Fire Chief  
Doug Borah, President, Idaho Peace Officers Association  
Melissa Ward, secretary to Chairman von Tagen (taking minutes)

### Present via conference call

Bill Douglas, Kootenai County Prosecuting Attorney, *Commission Secretary*  
Joe Rice, Soda Springs Police Chief

### Absent

Mike Becar, P.O.S.T. Council Representative  
Dia Gainor, Bureau Chief, Emergency Medical Services, Dept. of Health & Welfare  
Blair Olsen, Jefferson County Sheriff  
[Governor's Representative]

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### Agenda Item I

Chairman von Tagen called the meeting to order at approximately 2:30 p.m. (MDT).

The meeting agenda was reviewed; no amendments were made. The prior meeting's minutes were reviewed. The minutes were approved upon a motion by Mr. Douglas, a second by Chief Anderson, and aye votes from all present.

Agenda Item II was suspended.

### Agenda Item III

Mr. Douglas commented that he thought this year's ceremony was outstanding, that Governor Risch did a very nice job, and that the weather was perfect. He commented

that he would like to see more of a firefighter presence in the future – more “red” to go along with the “blue”.

Chief Rice commented that he was proud to have been there and to participate. He suggested that the Commissioners sit in the audience, as opposed to onstage, in the future, for a better overall view of the ceremony.

Chief Anderson commented that it may take some time to build momentum in the firefighting community, as the Medal of Honor ceremony is held in conjunction with the Peace Officers Memorial Ceremony, which is a law enforcement event that has been held, annually, for several years at the location of the Idaho Peace Officers Memorial.

Chairman von Tagen commented that he believes the Medal of Honor ceremony is strengthened by its venue. He commented that he also thought the ceremony went very well this year.

Mr. Borah suggested, for instance, for future years' ceremonies, ladder fire trucks, with ladders crossed, might be a nice touch, and that kind of physical presence might help to encourage firefighter participation and make them feel more a part of the event. He commented that he, as well, would prefer to sit in the audience in the future.

Chief Anderson stated that, with only four of those large ladder trucks in the valley, it might be a challenge for the Commission to get two of them for the ceremony.

#### Agenda Item IV

Chief Anderson commented that the nominations seemed better this year but could still stand improvement. Perhaps the Commission can find a way to provide even more education on what is needed; the Commission may need to provide more examples of how a nomination should be written.

Chairman von Tagen stated that he believes, in time, people will come to understand the process and the purpose of the medal. In providing further education as to how nominations should be written and submitted, the Commission needs to make sure people understand that the nomination must be limited to 200 words. The Commission has set a high standard for medal recipients. There may be years when no nominations are chosen, and no medal is awarded.

Chief Rice inquired as to whether, with nominees who were not chosen to receive the medal, would more information from the nominator have helped, perhaps, in swaying the Commission to agree that he/she met the criteria for the medal? Could nominations be improved and resubmitted in the future? For example, there were several nominations from the Boise Police Department, but the Commissioners didn't feel they

had enough information to convince them that the incidents involving the nominees were necessarily worthy of the Medal of Honor.

Chairman von Tagen stated that he had a conversation with Boise PD, and he felt that some of the nominations may have been eligible. Sheriff Olsen is tasked with following up with Jerome County regarding their nomination and suggesting the agency resubmit it with more information and details regarding the incident.

Mr. Borah suggested that, in this particular situation, perhaps he and Chairman von Tagen should meet with the nominating department to gather more information. Should the Commission take it upon itself to read the reports, talk to witnesses, and conduct its own investigation of these incidents?

Chairman von Tagen commented that, if the nominating agencies have reviewed the award criteria and believe that the incidents and their employees' actions are worthy of the medal, then they need to commit the time and effort required, in crafting their nominations, to convince the Commission that's the case. The Commission's budget wouldn't allow for an independent investigation. Secondly, although the nominating agencies' personnel are undoubtedly very busy, it's doubtful that the Medal of Honor Commissioners' schedules are any less hectic and would allow for an independent investigation of each nomination.

Chairman von Tagen stated that the Commission should undertake another review of the nomination form at the next meeting.

#### Agenda Item V

After review of the 2006-2007 timeline, all agreed it was fine.

#### Agenda Items II and VI

Mr. Douglas commented that the ceremony was impressive and the presentations were very good.

There was a discussion regarding the cost of framing the citations and photos of the medal recipients. There are two original citations and two 8x10 color photos for each recipient, and all are matted and framed. One set is presented to the medal recipient and the other to the nominating agency. Next year, and in ensuing years, if the associations (i.e. the Idaho Fire Chiefs Association or the Idaho Peace Officers Association) are being asked to fund the cost of framing, the Commission will need to provide them with a framing cost estimate in advance.

Chairman von Tagen queried the group as to whether it was time to seek some funds from the legislature to cover the costs associated with the Medal of Honor, as the

Commission currently functions with no allotted budget and obtains its funding from the generosity of related associations, the nominating agencies, and the Commissioners' employing agencies. Mr. von Tagen suggested, perhaps, holding off one more year and requesting funding in 2008.

Mr. Douglas commented that the Commission was entering its third year of existence and that it might be time, now, to request some modest funding for expenses such as medals, framing, Commissioners' necessary travel costs, and long distance phone charges incurred for conference call meeting participation.

Chairman von Tagen queried the group as to whether this year or next would be a better time to request funding.

Chief Anderson stated that there is never a "good" time to ask for money. This is a statewide award and should include state funding.

Mr. Borah commented that the medal and its purpose is certainly worthy of funding.

Mr. Douglas made a motion that the Commission give Chairman von Tagen authority to draft legislation for the 2007 legislative session seeking funding for the Commission's work. Mr. Borah seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

There was a discussion as to the amount that should be requested, and Chairman von Tagen indicated that he would research the costs that had been incurred to date and arrive at an annual estimate for the rest of the Commission's review and comment before proceeding.

#### Agenda Item VII

Mr. Douglas thanked the members of the Commission and staff for all of their hard work.

Chief Rice and Chief Anderson echoed Mr. Douglas' comments. Chief Anderson mentioned that the Idaho Fire Chiefs Association would be meeting in November in Lewiston and that that might be an idea for the date and location for the next Commission meeting.

Chairman von Tagen asked Chief Anderson to report back on the exact dates of the Fire Chiefs meeting and that a firm date and location for the next Commission meeting would be chosen at a later time.

The Commission having concluded all of its business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:15 p.m. by a motion from Chief Anderson, a second by Chief Rice, and aye votes from all present.