

Meeting Minutes

Idaho Law Enforcement, Firefighting and EMS Medal of Honor Commission

Thursday, November 15, 2007
3:00 p.m. (MST)

Office of the Idaho Attorney General
Conference Room
Joe R. Williams Building, 2nd Floor
700 West State Street
Boise, Idaho

Present at the meeting location

Bill von Tagen, Deputy Attorney General, *Commission Chairman* (arrived late)
Mitch Toryanski, Deputy Attorney General (on behalf of Chairman von Tagen)
Ron Anderson, Meridian Fire Chief
Mike Becar, P.O.S.T. Council Representative
Dia Gainor, Bureau Chief, Emergency Medical Services, Dept. of Health & Welfare
Blair Olsen, Jefferson County Sheriff
Melissa Ward, secretary to Chairman von Tagen (taking minutes)

Present via conference call

Doug Borah, President, Idaho Peace Officers Association
Bill Douglas, Kootenai County Prosecuting Attorney, *Commission Secretary*
Joe Rice, Soda Springs Police Chief

Absent

Bob Wells, Office of the Governor

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### Agenda Items I and II – Call to Order, Review of Agenda, and Prior Meeting's Minutes

Mr. Toryanski called the meeting to order at approximately 3:00 p.m. (MST).

The meeting agenda was reviewed; no amendments were made. The prior meeting's minutes were reviewed. At this time, an agenda item was added for discussion of the item in the second paragraph on page 2 of the prior meeting's minutes: Who is authorized to sign nominations. The minutes were approved upon a motion by Sheriff Olsen, a second by Chief Anderson, and aye votes from all commissioners present.

### Agenda Item III – 2007-2008 Timeline

The 2007-2008 Timeline was reviewed. Amendments were discussed and agreed upon.

Agenda Item – Added by Chairman von Tagen

At this time, Chairman von Tagen arrived at the meeting and requested the addition of an agenda item to discuss the May 18, 2007, ceremony, as the commissioners had not yet had an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Douglas commented that he believed the quality of the nominations the Commission received this year was improved over past years' nominations. He would like to see more of a firefighter/fire agency presence at future ceremonies.

Mr. Becar pointed out that both the Idaho Association of Chiefs of Police and the Idaho Sheriffs' Association would be meeting soon, and representatives from the Commission should take the opportunity to speak to those groups about the Medal of Honor.

Ms. Gainor stated that it should be stressed that the qualifications for nominees include both those who died in the line of duty and those who did not.

There was a discussion regarding the fact that the Medal of Honor Commission meetings are open to the public, and anyone who wants to attend and provide testimony regarding nominees or address the Commission on any other Medal of Honor related matter is welcome to do so. Chairman von Tagen noted the Commission had received a very complimentary letter from Jan Egge, who attended the March 13, 2007, Commission meeting.

Mr. Borah suggested that, perhaps, the Commission should, in its annual "call for nominations" letter it mails to all Idaho law enforcement, firefighting, and EMS agencies, encourage attendance at and participation in the Commission meetings.

Chairman von Tagen suggested that, perhaps, we should mention, in the letter, that Commission meetings are open to the public.

Chairman von Tagen said that he believed some agencies may not be pleased with the Commission's awarding decisions and may think that the Commission is too selective. He stated that he likes the selection criteria and believes it should remain as is.

Sheriff Olsen added that the purpose of the Medal of Honor is to provide the most honorable recognition and believes, as well, that the Commission should stick with the current process.

Mr. Borah notified the Commission that it may receive nominations from the Ada County Sheriff's Department, as three of its deputies have recently been awarded that agency's Medal of Valor.

Chief Anderson stated that there may be some misunderstanding as to the purpose of the Medal of Honor and that some may believe that being killed or injured in the line of duty is the only criteria. He believes the Commissioners should take opportunities to communicate to the various law enforcement, firefighting, and EMS groups the criteria for awarding. He also stated that he believes the May ceremony went fine. He agreed that the firefighter/fire agency presence was minimal. He believes that, with the Medal of Honor ceremony being held in conjunction with the annual Idaho Peace Officers Memorial ceremony, taking place at the Peace Officers Memorial at the Idaho State Police headquarters, it projects the image of a "law enforcement" event.

Mr. Becar commented that he is a member of the Peace Officers Memorial Board. He said that, when the planning was taking place for the annual ceremony, the Firefighters Honor Guard was invited / agreed to participate then backed out prior to the ceremony. He stated that he will work with Chief Anderson to get the firefighting community more involved at the planning level for future ceremonies.

Sheriff Olsen inquired as to whether, instead of presenting each award recipient with his or her medal in the box, the Governor (or alternative presenter) could remove the medal from the box and place it around the recipient's neck.

Chairman von Tagen commented that he noticed that the activities on stage didn't seem to go as smoothly as they had in previous years and that there didn't seem to be enough room to move around on the stage.

Mr. Becar agreed and said this would be noted for the upcoming ceremony and that, in the future, someone needs to remove the medal from the box before handing it to the presenter.

Sheriff Olsen also suggested that the recipients' names be included on the program.

Ms. Gainor commented that, so far, the weather has been good for all of the ceremonies.

It was decided that the "post ceremony" meeting to discuss the ceremony should take place directly after the ceremony, while it is still fresh in everyone's minds.

#### Agenda Item – Added by Commission

The agenda item added at the beginning of the meeting was then discussed. Chairman von Tagen stated that he believed, by law, that the only valid signature on the Medal of Honor nomination form is that of the current head of the nominating agency – the individual who is the Chief of Police, Fire Chief, etc., at the time of the nomination.

Agenda Item IV – Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled, tentatively, for January 17, 2008, and will take place only if the Chairman or other Commissioners believe it is necessary, and there are topics that need to be discussed at that time. Otherwise, the Commission will meet again in March to review and discuss the nominations that have been received and choose the 2008 Medal of Honor recipients.

Agenda Items V - Adjourn

The Commission having concluded all of its business, the meeting adjourned with a motion from Chief Anderson, a second by Ms. Gainor, and aye votes from all present.