

# Public Safety Memorial Fund Board Minutes October 27, 2022

The Public Safety Memorial Fund Board held a meeting on October 27, 2022, at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training located at 4190 Aumsville Hwy SE Salem, Oregon. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

## **Committee Members:**

DaNeshia Barrett, Chair, Law Enforcement Representative  
James Oeder, Vice-Chair, Fire Representative  
Matthew English, Corrections Representative  
Terri Davie, Law Enforcement Representative

## **Committee Members Absent:**

Vacant, Public Member  
Vacant, Corrections Personnel

## **DPSST Staff:**

Suzy Herring, Professional Standards Division Director  
Shelby Wright, Executive Assistant  
Jennifer Howald, Legislative and Rules Coordinator

## **Guests**

No guests attended this meeting

## **1. Introductions**

- *Professional Standards Division Director, Suzy Herring began the meeting by introducing herself and invited everyone in attendance to state their name and position for the record.*

## **2. \*Approve Minutes from July 28, 2022, Meeting**

Approve minutes

- *Terri Davie made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 28, 2022, Public Safety Memorial Fund Board (PSMFB) meeting. James Oeder seconded the motion. The vote was taken by rollcall where the motion carried with a unanimous vote.*

## **3. Public Safety Memorial Fund Budget Update**

Presented by Suzy Herring

Suzy Herring explained that as of August 2022, the Public Safety Memorial Fund has approximately \$487,000 to cover the rest of the 2021-2023 biennium. Suzy Herring noted that DPSST has separated the costs between awarded law enforcement and fire service cases to examine whether additional funds should be drawn from specific law enforcement or fire service

outlets rather than drawing all funds from CFA. Suzy Herring concluded the budget update by sharing that the Public Safety Memorial Fund will begin the 2023-2025 biennium with approximately \$700,000 in available funds.

#### **4. \*Charles Pettit (DPSST #58819) – Snake River Correctional Institution**

Presented by Suzy Herring

On August 9, 2021, Corrections Officer Charles Pettit, worked his regularly scheduled shift at the Snake River Correctional Institution. Officer Pettit never returned back to work after this day due to contracting COVID-19.

On August 31, 2021, Officer Pettit passed away due to COVID-19 complications.

On October 15, 2021, SAIF Corporation submitted a letter titled “Notice of Claim Acceptance” to Angela Pettit, spouse of Charles Pettit, stating that SAIF Corporation accepted the claim for Charles Pettit’s fatal injury. The letter included the date of fatal injury as August 8, 2021.

On May 27, 2022, DPSST received a supplemental application for benefits from Angela Pettit. After making contact with Angela, DPSST determined that an initial application for benefits and additional documentation must be submitted to the PSMFB for consideration. It should be noted that Angela initially applied for health, dental, mortgage and scholarship benefits, however the PSMFB is reviewing only Angela’s application for the initial line of duty death benefit. Angela does not qualify to receive supplemental benefits as defined by ORS 243.956.

On August 9, 2022, Human Resource Manager for the Department of Corrections, Neicha Butcher, submitted the Initial Application for Benefits form to DPSST, signed by both her and Angela Pettit. Neicha Butcher also submitted additional supplemental materials including a copy of Charles Pettit’s death certificate, a copy of Charles and Angela’s marriage certificate and a copy of the accepted SAIF claim for Officer Pettit’s fatal injury.

- *The Board briefly discussed the necessary qualifications needed for applicants to be considered for supplemental benefits and concluded that Angela Pettit’s case is being considered only for the initial lump sum of \$25,000.*
- *Terri Davie motioned to accept Charles Pettit’s death as qualifying set forth in ORS 243.954 and approve action items 1-4, awarding the lump sum benefit of \$25,000 to spouse, Angela Pettit. Matthew English seconded the motion. A vote was taken by rollcall where the motion passed unanimously.*

Suzy Herring announced that Charles Pettit’s spouse will receive the \$25,000 benefit. The check will be printed and delivered and DPSST will work through Snake River Correctional Institution to facilitate this process.

## **5. \*Jared Miller (DPSST #43904) – Marion County Sheriff’s Office**

Presented by Suzy Herring

On November 10, 2021, Sergeant Jared Miller was working a regularly scheduled shift at the Marion County Jail when he began experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms and went home sick. Sergeant Miller did not return to work, and on November 16, 2021, Sergeant Miller was admitted to OHSU Hospital and Clinics due to complications with COVID-19.

On December 9, 2021, Sergeant Miller passed away, after spending almost an entire month in the hospital due to COVID-19 complications.

On April 19, 2022, Sheriff Joe Kast wrote a letter detailing Sergeant Miller’s COVID-19 complications and cause of death. Sheriff Kast noted that the Oregon Health Authority documented 30 COVID-19 cases associated with the Marion County Jail between September 5, 2021, and December 15, 2021.

On July 11, 2022, DPSST received an initial application for benefits from Jolene Miller, spouse of Sergeant Miller. On this day, DPSST also received a copy of Sergeant Miller’s death certificate dated on December 15, 2021. The death certificate stated that the cause of death was caused by acute hypoxemic respiratory failure due acute respiratory distress syndrome as a consequence of COVID-19. The death certificate noted that an acute kidney infection and obstructive sleep apnea also contributed to Sergeant Miller’s death.

On September 21, 2022, Kathie Carter, Employee Benefits Specialist from the Marion County Sheriff’s Office, provided DPSST with the Sergeant Miller’s denied accidental death benefits claim from Cigna Corporation. Additionally, Professional Standards Division Director, Suzy Herring contacted the Worker’s Compensation Division (WCD) and confirmed that there have not been any benefits applied for under Sergeant Miller’s social security number.

- *After discussing the application timeline for SAIF and Workman’s Compensation applications, as well as the contributing factors pertaining to the denial of Sergeant Miller’s Cigna Corporation application, the Board found the provided information to be inconclusive and therefore could not make a final determination on the application for initial benefits for spouse Jolene Miller. The Board requests that DPSST continue their research in determining why the Cigna Corporation denied Sergeant Miller’s claim and if there are employment records pertaining to the claim that Sergeant Miller caught COVID-19 while working.*

Suzy Herring noted that DPSST will gather more information pertaining to this case and will present the findings at the next PSMFB meeting in January 2023 in hopes of reaching a final determination.

## **6. \*Brian Gaunt (DPSST #37820); Supplemental Application for Benefits – Beaverton Police Department**

Presented by Suzy Herring

On October 24, 2021, Sergeant Brian Gaunt with Beaverton Police Department passed away after spending almost an entire month in the hospital due to COVID-19 complications. On January 27, 2022, the Public Safety Memorial Fund Board (PSMFB) considered the initial application for Public Safety Memorial Fund benefits submitted by Beaverton Police Department and Holly Gaunt, spouse of Brian Gaunt. Ultimately the PSMFB determined that Sergeant Gaunt's death was a qualifying death as defined by ORS 243.954. As a result, Holly Gaunt was awarded the lump sum benefit of \$25,000.

On September 15, 2022, Holly Gaunt submitted the supplemental application for benefits, requesting further reimbursement for medical and dental benefits for herself and three children.

- *Terri Davie motioned to accept Holly Gaunt's supplemental application for discretionary benefits for herself and three children. DaNeshia Barrett seconded the motion. A vote was taken by rollcall where the motion passed unanimously.*

## **7. Public Safety Memorial Fund Board Position Discussion**

Presented by Suzy Herring

Chair Barrett explained that after recently discussing the PSMFB position vacancies with DPSST staff, she decided to take the conversation to the Board have the group participate in the recommendation of a new Corrections Personnel Representative, Law Enforcement Representative and Public Member from the Board on Public Safety Standards and Training (BPSST). James Oeder also noted that he will soon be expiring out of his seat in June of 2023 which will leave an additional vacancy on the PSMFB.

- *Terri Davie motioned to recommend BPSST member, Jennifer Cameron as the Corrections Personnel Representative. DaNeshia Barrett seconded the motion. A vote was taken by rollcall where the motion passed unanimously.*
- *The PSMFB unanimously agreed for DPSST staff to reach out to all other applicable BPSST members to determine who would be interested in filling the additional vacancies.*

After brief deliberation of the Board, Chair Barrett announced that the PSMFB will meet again on November 17, 2022, to discuss and select additional BPSST members to be recommended for appointment to the PSMFB.

## **8. Next meeting – November 17, 2022, directly following the Police Policy Committee meeting at 10:00 a.m.**

- *With no further items to discuss, Chair Barrett adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:04 a.m.*