



**American Legion Post 543  
General Membership Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, March 27, 2024**

**Meeting Minutes**

- 1) A picture slide of Past Commander & District Commander Mike Fegan was displayed on the meeting room screen during the meeting Member's arrival that recognized his passing and honored Mike for his previous contributions to the American Legion & Post 543.
- 2) The meeting was called to Order at 7:00 PM – Commander.
- 3) Opened the meeting with a presentation of the colors – Post Honor Guard.
- 4) Opening Prayer – Chaplain.
- 5) Welcome Guests & recognition of first time Veteran Visitors – Commander.
- 6) Recognition Award to Back Forty Entertainment members Diane Lusk, Deb Warner and Carl Henderson for their generous contribution to Post 543 as a result of their fundraising Christmas concert at the Seaside community.
- 7) Roll Call of Officers (Steve Muir: absent, Doc Liberty: absent) – Commander.
- 8) Remembering the American Legion Four Pillars (There are 70 Post programs that support these four pillars) – Commander.
- 9) POW/MIA Recognition – Commander.
- 10) Pledge of Allegiance – Members & Guests.
- 11) Preamble to American Legion Constitution – Members.
- 12) Motion made to approve February 28, 2024, General Membership Meeting Minutes – Motion carried, and vote was unanimous. – Commander.
- 13) The Commander reminded members that March 29<sup>th</sup> is the Vietnam Veteran's Day and asked all Vietnam era Veterans to come forward to be presented a recognition certificate, a recognition letter and a pin. – Commander.



#### 14) Officer and Committee Reports:

- a. **Adjutant** – Aaron Largent (Nothing to report.)
- b. **2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander Membership:**
  - i. Gary Purcell presented an overview of National Headquarters' offering of a three-year membership at the current rate of \$45/year. This offer is not available through the Post or MyLegion.org website. You must renew at [legion.org/renew](http://legion.org/renew) in order to take advantage of this three-year membership. The offer is extended to 2024 renewals and new joins prior to June 30<sup>th</sup> of this year. 2025 renewals and new joins will be available after July 1, 2024. Full payment for the 3 years (3 X \$45) is due up front.
  - ii. Gary Purcell announced that the Post reached 100% of the 2024 membership goal (254) set by NC Department by joining a new member the night of the General Membership Meeting (3-27-24)..
- c. **Deputy Vice Commander Americanism:**
  - i. Chuck Blackburn briefed the membership on the 2023 Post 543 Boys & Girls State program and showed pictures of the individuals. The four young men and three young ladies who participated as 2023 delegates were recognized and were presented medals for their participation and completion of the 2023 programs. In attendance receiving the awards were Landon Richardson, Steven Callaghan and Andrew Sherrod. The other delegates were unable to attend but will receive their medals at a later date. The three young men spoke highly of their experience in the program and indicated they would highly recommend it to other high school students.



- ii. Chuck Blackburn briefed the membership about the Post 543 support of the West Brunswick High School Robotics program. The Commander, Rick Sessa, Chuck Blackburn and Jim McCriskin visited the school during a recent robot demonstration and presented a check for \$1,000 in support of the program. The membership was shown pictures of the students with the robot, as well as the Post 543 Officers presenting the \$1,000 check to the program. Chuck indicated that South Brunswick High School also has a robotics program and that Post 543 will be supporting it in the near future as part of Post 543's focus on STEM learning opportunities.
- iii. Chuck Blackburn invited Andrew Sherrod (one of the Boys State Delegates) who is a member of the South Brunswick High School Robotics Team to give an update on the progress and status of the South Brunswick High School Robotics program and the robot competition that took place at UNC Pembroke and Charlotte.
- d. **Commander** – Phillip McGhee
  - i. Phillip McGhee asked any first-time visiting Veterans to stand and state their name, what service they were in and where they live.  
There were three visiting Veterans.
- e. **Judge Advocate** – Doc Liberty (Absent).
- f. **First Vice Commander Resource Development** – Dan Bennett (Nothing to report).
- g. **Post Finance Officer** – Mike Carton
  - i. Two items to cover:
    - 1. March 2024 Financial Report
    - 2. FY 2025 Budget Development (FYI)



- ii. February Financial Report:
  - 1. The financial report was presented as of 26 March 2024.
  - 2. The Post is about 50.2% spent, but in line with projections.
- iii. A motion to approve the March 2024 Financial Report was requested, motion made and carried, with a unanimous verbal approval vote. – Commander
- iv. The FY 25 budget development timeline was presented by the Finance Officer as follows:
  - 1. The budget call will occur between April 1 to April 30.
  - 2. Budget and Finance/Budget Lead input, with follow on discussions will occur between May 1 to May 22.
  - 3. Budget Lead/EXCOM final review will take place on May 23 between 1300 hours and 1500 hours at the Saint James Community Center.
  - 4. The EXCOM final budget and approval will occur on June 10<sup>th</sup>, with Membership approval to occur at the June 26<sup>th</sup> General Membership meeting.
- h. **Deputy Vice Commander Election Committee Chairman** – Doug Pratt
  - i. Doug Pratt reviewed the election process timeline that began in February 2024 and will culminate on June 26, 2024 with the swearing in of the Officers for the Post. Doug Pratt emphasized the need for new faces and fresh ideas from the Membership in filling the leadership positions.
  - ii. Doug Pratt reviewed all the Officer positions and emphasized all positions are open for nominations.



- iii. Doug Pratt introduced the Election Committee Members and provided their contact information, should anyone have any questions. The election Committee Chair also emphasized that the Officer responsibilities for each position are listed on the Post website and encouraged the Membership to reach out to any of the Election Committee Members if they have questions about any of the positions.
- iv. Doug Pratt announced the open position of JROTC/CAP Liaison Officer and reviewed the type of duties/responsibilities the position would be responsible for. He encouraged the members who enjoy working with youth and especially high school aged students to please contact him to discuss the position. The need is immediate!
- i. **Deputy Vice Commander Active-Duty Support:** Doug Pratt
  - i. Post 543 teamed up with the Cape Fear Blue Star Mothers of America in providing Spring care packages to active-duty members by providing a check for \$500 to help with their operating expenses. Doug Pratt offered a special thank you to members who supported this effort.
  - ii. Post 543 supports the local Operation at Ease program which provides complementary weekends in Southport to military members and their families who are either focusing on long term deployments or returning home from a remote assignment. This program offers these military members and their families the opportunity to relax, reconnect and spend quality time together, without having to worry about logistics or expenses.



- j. **Sergeant-At-Arms** – Bob Davis (Nothing to report).
- k. **Service Officer** – Steve Muir (Excused Absent)
  - i. In Steve Muir’s absence, the Adjutant showed a slide that informed the membership that the Veteran’s Administration had recently set a major milestone by processing their one millionth case this year. The Adjutant indicated that without Steve Muir, Paul Witmer, Jim McCriskin and Chaplain Franka’s efforts, many local Veterans may not have had the opportunity to apply for and receive additional benefit coverage or compensation. The Membership applauded their efforts.
  - ii. The Commander updated the Membership on the Veteran Steve Muir referred to as the “Walmart Veteran”. This Veteran had struggled with addiction, with Steve and the team working with the Veteran for several years. Recently, this Veteran was designated 100% disabled due to Steve Muir and the team’s efforts. Sadly, the Veteran was hit by a car recently and killed while walking along a local road.
  - iii. The Commander also informed the Membership that the Suicide Intervention Training was scheduled for April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup>. There are currently 2 open slots. If any of the Membership is interested in participating in this program and receive the training, please contact the Commander as soon as possible.
- l. **Chaplain** – Chuck Franka
  - i. The Chaplain briefed the Membership on the Easter Food Basket distribution he and his team have completed recently and the plan to do another one in April.



- ii. The Chaplain also requested that the Membership notify him and his team if they knew of any Jewish Veteran shut-ins or a Veteran who might need to receive a food basket.
- iii. The Chaplain informed the Membership that the annual Poppy Distribution would take place on May 25<sup>th</sup> and May 26<sup>th</sup> at the Lowes Hardware store in Southport. The reason for two days at Lowes this year is associated with the cancellation of the Southport Spring Fling event which served as an additional poppy distribution day. The Adjutant mentioned that commitments were made by both JROTC and Civil Air Patrol to supply Cadets for the project to help meet the Cadet's community service obligations.

m. **Post Public Relations Officer** – Jim McCriskin

- i. Jim McCriskin provided an update on Mike Yunker who currently manages the Post Website and Facebook account/page. Mike is in the process of relocating out of state and will not be able to provide support any longer for these two critical Public Relation tools. Jim McCriskin requested any member who might have IT skills and experience with webpage/Facebook and would be interested in assisting, please contact him directly as soon as possible.
- ii. Jim McCriskin indicated that some members may not be receiving the Post 543 E-Newsletters or Commander's Communications. If any member has not been receiving these directly, please contact Jim McCriskin and he will ensure the member gets put on the distribution list. Jim McCriskin provided all his contact information.



n. **Post Historian** – Rick Sessa

- i. The transition from the US Army memorabilia display in the Saint James Town Hall to the US Marine memorabilia display is going very well. Recent acquired memorabilia are a captured Japanese flag and rifle that were loaned for the display. The display will be transitioning from the USMC memorabilia to the US Navy memorabilia starting April 1<sup>st</sup> and will be displayed until June 30<sup>th</sup>.
- ii. Rick Sessa also announced that the Saint James Military Appreciation Day's annual Patriotic Concert in the park would take place on May 18<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the Woodlands Park Pavilion. Mike's Garage Band will be the featured musicians, playing a wide variety of favorite songs. Wallace Catering will have their Signature Culinary Classics on site and Chuck's Homemade Ice Cream will be available for an after-dinner treat. Wrist bands will be available at the below listed locations at the indicated times and dates.

***St James Community Center***

- 15) Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, foyer; 10:30am-1:30pm
- 16) Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, foyer; 10:30 am-1:30pm
- 17) Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, foyer; 10:30am-1:30pm

***18) Marina Breezeway***

- 19) Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, under the arch; 5:30 -7:30pm
- 20) Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, under the arch; 5:30 -7:30pm

***21) Woodlands Park***

- 22) Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, near the Flagpole; 3:30-5:30pm





- 15) The upcoming events for April, May and June 2024 were reviewed (see Attachment 1) – Commander.
- 16) General Membership Meeting Closing Remarks – Commander
  - a. Thank you to the new Members for joining Post 543 and helping us achieve our goal of 100%.
  - b. The Post's next General Membership Meeting is April 28, 2024, at 19:00 hours.
- 17) The Commander solicited any additional input or comments from the Membership. There were none.
- 18) General Membership Meeting Closing Prayer – Chaplain
- 19) The Post 543 Color Guard recovered the colors. – Commander
- 20) The General Membership Meeting closed at 19:50 hours. – Commander

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**Aaron L. Largent**  
Adjutant

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**Phillip E. McGhee**  
Commander



## **ATTACHMENT #1**

### Upcoming Events

#### APRIL 2024

- Honor Guard Maintenance of Flags at Cape Fear Memorial Park.
- Poppy Distribution. (May 25, 2024)
- EXCOMM Meeting. (4-15-2024)
- General Membership Meeting - Post Officer Nominations close. (4-24-2024)
- Suicide Intervention Training – Southport (4-30-24 & 5-1-24)

#### MAY 2024

- Honor Guard Maintenance of Flags at Cape Fear Memorial Park.
- Senior Awards night at South Brunswick High School (5-15-24)
- Patriotic Concert in the Park (5-18-24) Woodlands Pavilion
- EXCOMM (5-20-2024)
- General Membership Meeting/Post Election (5-22-2024).
- Poppy Distribution (May 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>) Lowes Hardware Store, Southport.
- Memorial Day Ceremony (5-27-2024)

#### JUNE 2024

- Honor Guard Maintenance of Flags at Cape Fear Memorial Park
- EXCOMM (6-17-2024)
- General Membership Meeting and installation of new Officers (6-26-2024).