



**American Legion Post 543
General Membership Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 28, 2024**

- 1) The meeting was called to Order at 7:00 PM – Commander.
- 2) Opened the meeting with a presentation of the colors – Post Honor Guard.
- 3) Opening Prayer – Chaplain.
- 4) Commander reminded the Members that the meeting was recorded.
- 5) Welcome Guests & recognition of first time Veteran Visitors (Eight Veteran First Time Visiting) – Commander.
- 6) Sick Call – Chaplain (nothing to report).
- 7) Introduction of SGT Hunter Long (youngest Post member) – Commander.
- 8) Roll Call of Officers (Steve Muir excused absence) – Commander.
 - a. Commander – Present
 - b. Adjutant – Vacant
 - c. Judge Advocate – Present
 - d. 1st Vice Commander Resource Development – Present
 - e. 2nd Vice Commander Membership – Present
 - f. Finance Officer – Present
 - g. Deputy Vice Commander Active Duty – Present
 - h. Deputy Vice Commander Americanism – Present
 - i. Sergeant-At-Arms – Present
 - j. Service Officer – Excused Absence
 - k. Chaplain – Present
 - l. Public Relations Officer – Present
 - m. Historian – Present



- 9) POW/MIA Recognition – Commander.
- 10) Remembering the American Legion Four Pillars (70 Post programs that support these four pillars) – Commander.
- 11) Pledge of Allegiance – Members & Guests.
- 12) Preamble to American Legion Constitution – Members.
- 13) Four Chaplains Ceremony – Chaplain (assisted by Father Thanh from Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Reverend Carrie Evans from Southport Presbyterian Church and Rabbi Bruce Templeman of AMES International School of Ministry.)
- 14) Motion made to approve January 24, 2024, General Membership Meeting Minutes – Motion carried, and vote was unanimous. – Commander.
- 15) The Commander reminded Members that one nomination had been made for the Adjutant position at the last General Membership Meeting – Commander.
- 16) A motion was requested, carried, and passed unanimously by a verbal vote to approve Aaron Largent as the new Post Adjutant. – Commander.
- 17) A brief overview of the Saint James Military Appreciation Day event was presented to the Membership and solicitation of Volunteers to fill the vacant positions for the Committee who coordinates the event. – Commander.
- 18) Bill Morgan provided further details regarding the Military Appreciation Day event and explained how critical the event is in providing the Post revenue to support many of the Post's programs. – Bill Morgan.
- 19) Officer and Committee Reports:
 - a. **Adjutant:** Vacant.
 - b. **Judge Advocate** – Doc Liberty (Nothing to report).
 - c. **First Vice Commander Resource Development** – Dan Bennett (Nothing to report).
 - d. **Second Vice Commander Membership** – Gary Purcell
 - i. 2024 Membership goal from NC Department is 254
 - ii. Currently Post Membership is at 247 or 97% of goal.



- iii. One new Member introduced by Gary – Steven Burns (Vietnam Veteran and transfer from the NC Department Post).

e. Post Finance Officer – Mike Carton

i. Three items to cover:

- 1. February 2024 Financial Report
- 2. FY 2024 Mid-Year Budget Review
- 3. FY 2025 Budget Development (FYI)

ii. February Financial Report:

- 1. The Post is about 40.2% spent but in line with projection.
- 2. Income is currently lower than expenses by about \$2600 - but expect an influx of revenue over the next 2 to 3 months to rectify that.

- f. A motion to approve the February 2024 Financial Report was requested, motion made and carried, with a unanimous verbal approval vote. – Commander

g. Post Finance Officer – Mike Carton (continued)

- i. The Post just completed the 2024 Mid-Year Budget Review and increased the budget by \$4670 in Expenditures and Revenue. The plan is to acquire these funds through an additional fundraising event. This represents the largest increase in the budget.
- ii. The 2024 Mid-Year Budget Review was a culmination of a re-alignment of expenses from one category into another.
- iii. The Post had a couple additional operational expenses which required an increase in the budget, as well as the Post added two more Scholarships of \$1000 each – one for STEM program and the other for the Early College High School program.



- iv. Overall, the Post 2024 Mid-Year budget is a balanced budget.
- v. The Commander added that he is working on a bowling tournament as a possible fundraising opportunity.
- h. A motion to approve the February 2024 Mid-Year Budget Adjustment was requested, motion made and carried, with a unanimous verbal approval vote. – Commander
- i. **Post Finance Officer – Mike Carton (continued)**
 - i. Finance Officer Mike Carton announced the FY25 Budget development timeline.
 - 1. The process will begin April 1, 2024.
 - 2. On May 25, 2024, the Budget Leads and the Excomm will meet at the SJCC to go over the proposed FY25 budget.
 - 3. At the June 2024 General Membership Meeting, the Finance Officer will present the FY25 budget for Membership approval so that in July when the new Fiscal Year begins, the Post will have the budget already in place.
- j. **Deputy Vice Commander Active-Duty Support – Doug Pratt**
 - i. Introduced the Uncle Sam “I Want You” poster from WWII and indicated the Post not only “wants you but needs you” as part of the upcoming Post election process.
 - ii. Reviewed the election process timeline that began in February 2024 and culminates on June 26, 2024 with the swearing in of the Officers for the Post. Emphasized the need for new faces and fresh ideas from the Membership in filling the leadership positions.
 - iii. Introduced the Election Committee Members and provided their contact information should anyone have any questions. Also emphasized that the Officer responsibilities for each position are listed on the Post Website.



- iv. Reviewed the slate of Officers list and encouraged the Membership to reach out to any of the Election Committee Members if they have questions.

k. **Deputy Vice Commander Americanism** – Chuck Blackburn

- i. Provided an update on the Americanism Youth program and briefed the Membership that March 28th is the cut off for submittal of **ALL** candidates who will be nominated for any of the Post's Americanism Youth Scholarships.
- ii. Indicated a request from Patrick Boldt whom the Post had supported earlier this year was conducting a fundraising campaign to purchase statistic tracking data for the SBHS baseball team. Chuck volunteered to collect donations after the meeting.
- iii. Jim Hilty who coordinated the Post, District and Division Oratorical contests at the Saint James Community Center was invited to give a brief overview of the events to the Membership.
 - 1. The Post and District Oratorical contests took place at the Saint James Community Center in January.
 - 2. The Division Oratorical contest took place in February.
 - 3. At the Division Oratorical contest, two very qualified students were present to speak on their knowledge of the US Constitution. Both were exceptional.
 - 4. The Post winner Connor Walls is a Junior at South Brunswick High School and an Eagle Scout. He has expressed interest in the West Point Leadership program, as well as attending the Boys State program.



5. Noah Snyder is from Jacksonville, NC and was able to progress to the Department Oratorical contest through an outstanding performance of his knowledge of the US Constitution. The judges were extremely impressed with his knowledge and performance.
 6. The Oratorical contests provide a good incentive to stimulate interest in the US Constitution and supports two of the American Legion pillars.
 7. Jim Hilty thanked the Volunteers who supported the Oratorical contests and recognized them all by awarding each an American Legion "We the People" pin.
- l. **Sergeant-At-Arms** – Bob Davis (Nothing to report).
 - m. **Service Officer** – Steve Muir (Excused Absent)
 - n. **Chaplain** – Chuck Franka (Previously did the Four Chaplains Ceremony).
 - o. **Post Public Relations Officer** – Jim McCriskin
 - i. Commander recognized Jim McCriskin and his team for the outstanding coverage in the local media that the Post has been receiving as a direct result of the Public Relations Team's efforts.
 - ii. Jim McCriskin provided an introduction to the current Public Relations team and their responsibilities.
 - iii. Jim McCriskin reviewed the Post Newsletter, Post Facebook page and other venues the Post utilizes to get the Post information out to the public.
 - iv. Jim McCriskin encouraged anyone who attends a Post sponsored or supported event to request a photographer in advance or take pictures and provide a narrative to ensure the event gets the proper coverage through the local media.



p. **Post Historian – Rick Sessa**

- i. Transition from the US Army memorabilia display in the Saint James Town Hall to the US Marine memorabilia is going very well. Recent acquired memorabilia are a captured Japanese flag and rifle that were loaned for the display.
- ii. The Annual Odell Williamson BCC Nurses Training Benefit is scheduled for March 14th and features the Johnny/June Carter “Cashback” Tribute. Tickets are \$50 and are limited. Contact Rick Sessa directly at 973-724-5253 to get your tickets. Tickets will no longer be available after March 6th.

q. **Honors and Ceremonies – Bill Morgan**

- i. The Post 543 Honor Guard held its first inaugural golf tournament on December 8, 2023 at the exclusive Olde Fort Country Club. Aaron Largent and Doug Pratt were recognized by Bill Morgan for organizing and conducting the tournament. The winning team was Team Lieberman which consisted of Richie Ewing, Frank Watkins, Dennis Ryan, and Mark Lieberman.
- ii. Next Honor Guard Golf Tournament is in April.
- iii. The Post 543 Honor Guard was organized 10 years ago and has provided support to the local communities, Veterans, and the Post.
- iv. The Post 543 Honor Guard is currently training a rifle team to expand the Honor Guard capabilities in supporting Veteran Burial ceremonies. The Post Honor Guard is one of the busiest organizations within the Post. Please contact Bill Morgan if any Members are interested in joining the Honor Guard.

r. **The Post 543 Baseball Program – Leo Mercado**

- i. Post 543 sponsored an American Legion baseball team for the 2022 and the 2023 baseball seasons.



- ii. Several factors caused youth participation to decrease from the 2022 season to the 2023 season. Some factors were employment, vacations, travel team baseball, varsity football team workouts and recreation leagues.
 - iii. A compressed play schedule occurred in 2023 due to severe weather conditions, player availability and field conditions.
 - iv. The recommendation to the Post Excomm was to suspend the program for the 2024 season and reassess it at the end of the year.
- 20) The upcoming events for March 2024 and April 2024 were reviewed (see Attachment 1) – Commander.
- 21) Request for any input or comments from the Membership – Commander.
- 22) General Membership Meeting Closing Remarks – Commander
- a. Thank you to the new Members for joining Post 543.
 - b. The Post's next General Membership Meeting is March 27, 2024, at 19:00 hours.
 - c. Post Member Tom Picinich announced that he wanted to present on behalf of the Sacred Heart Knights of Columbus, 4th Degree, REV. ROBERT T. LAWSON ASSEMBLY, Southport, NC a \$500 donation check to Post 543. The Commander thanked Sacred Heart Knights of Columbus for the donation.
- 23) General Membership Meeting Closing Prayer – Chaplain
- 24) The Post 543 Color Guard recovered the colors. – Commander
- 25) The General Membership Meeting closed at 20:35 hours. – Commander



ATTACHMENT #1

Upcoming Events

MARCH 2024

- Honor Guard Maintenance of Flags at Cape Fear Memorial Park.
- EXCOMM Meeting. (3-18-2024)
- General Membership Meeting. (Nominations open) (3-27-2024)
- Guest Speaker for 3-27-2024 General Membership Meeting is Colonel Blacketer who is the Commander for 596th Transportation Brigade, Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point.
- Vietnam Veteran Recognition Day. (3-29-24)

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)

Aaron L. Largent
Adjutant

Phillip E. McGhee
Commander