



**American Legion Post 543  
General Membership Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 24, 2024**

**Meeting Minutes**

- 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) Welcome Guests & recognition of first time Veteran Visitors – Commander.
- 5) Roll Call of Officers (Aaron Largent: absent, Doc Liberty: absent Chuck Blackburn: Absent) – Commander.
- 6) Remembering the American Legion Four Pillars (There are 70 Post programs that support these four pillars) – Commander.
- 7) POW/MIA Recognition – Commander.
- 8) Pledge of Allegiance – Members & Guests.
- 9) Preamble to American Legion Constitution – Members.
- 10) Introduction of Special Guest Carrie Dunlap. Presentation of Lower Cape Fear Life Care and how her organizations assist families navigate through Independent Living, Assisted Living and Memory Care Communities.
- 11) Motion made to approve March 27, 2024, General Membership Meeting Minutes – Motion carried, and vote was unanimous. – Commander.
- 12) The Commander reminded members that March 29<sup>th</sup> was the Vietnam Veteran's Day and asked all Vietnam era Veterans who missed the previous February General Meeting to come forward to be presented a recognition certificate, a recognition letter and a pin. – Commander.



13) Officer and Committee Reports:

a. **2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander Membership:**

- i. Gary Purcell 2 new Post 543 Members, Ralph Gevinson and Joe Huggins

b. **Deputy Vice Commander Americanism:**

- i. Chuck was not present at the meeting, however Doug Pratt presented Chuck's Slide indicating that the Richie Hat Trick Scholarship Recipients and their families will attend the May General Membership Meeting.

c. **Judge Advocate** – Doc Liberty (Absent).

d. **First Vice Commander Resource Development** – Dan Bennett (Nothing to report).

e. **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 20 April 2024.
  2. The Post is about 54% 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.
- f. **Deputy Vice Commander Election Committee Chairman** – Doug Pratt
- i. Doug Pratt asked if there were any additional Officer Nominations from the Membership. Hearing none Doug asked for a Motion to Close the Nominations for FY25
  - ii. Doug Pratt reviewed all the Officer positions and the Nominations of the FY25 Officers.
  - iii. Commander McGhee emphasized the need for new faces and fresh ideas from the Membership in filling the leadership positions.
- g. **Sergeant-At-Arms** – Bob Davis (Nothing to report).
- h. **Service Officer** – Steve Muir
- i. Steve updated the Membership of the Veterans Claim Process. Steve informed the Membership that FY24 has had one million Veterans Claims Processed. Steve indicated that the VA completed 35% more claims than in previous years.
  - ii. The Service Officer indicated that 8 new cases were opened this past month.
  - iii. One of the past cases of a Navy Veteran stationed in Guam was awarded a handsome disability check due the PACT Act expanding Agent Orange Exposure including Guam.



- iv. The expanded Health Care Coverage for Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards including fire pits etc. for more information contact VA.GOV/PACT.
- v. VA Sponsored Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training taking place on 4/30-5/1/24.
- vi. 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 receives the training, please contact the Commander as soon as possible.
- i. **Chaplain** – Chuck Franka & Steve Muir
  - i. 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.
- j. **Post Public Relations Officer** – Jim McCriskin
  - i. Nothing to Report.
- k. **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. Recently 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 provided details regarding the UNCW Baseball Military Appreciation Day planned for May 4<sup>th</sup> at the UNCW vs Campbell College Baseball Game. RSVP [militaryaffairs@uncw.edu](mailto:militaryaffairs@uncw.edu) to reserve tickets
- iii. 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***

14) Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, foyer; 10:30am-1:30pm

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

**16) Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, foyer; 10:30am-1:30pm**

***17) Marina Breezeway***

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

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

***20) Woodlands Park***

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

15) The upcoming events for 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 May 22, 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 19:54 hours. – Commander

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**Aaron L. Largent**  
Adjutant

**Phillip E. McGhee**  
Commander

**ATTACHMENT #1**

Upcoming Events



### **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).

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