



**American Legion Post 543
General Membership Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 24, 2025**

Meeting Minutes

- 1) The meeting was called to Order at 7:00 PM –Commander Michael Carton.
- 2) The Commander ordered the advancement of the Colors and a hand salute.
- 3) Opening Prayer – Chaplain Templeman.
- 4) The Commander recognized the POWs and those Missing in Action, as well as honored them by referring to the empty chair.
- 5) The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Commander with audience participation.
- 6) The Commander led the Members in reciting the Preamble to the American Legion Constitution.
- 7) The Commander welcomed the Guests and asked them to introduce themselves. Commander Carton welcomed Coast Guardsman Veteran Norman Macleod.
- 8) The Commander reviewed the four pillars and how the Post supports over 70 programs.
- 9) The Commander inquired of the meeting attendees if there were any other Vietnam era Veterans in the audience who had not received their 50th Anniversary commemorative pin and certificate for their service. Two Viet Nam Veterans were presented a commemorative pin and recognition certificate.
- 10) The Commander introduced Post Member Jim Hilty (Oratorical Contest Chair) who Introduced Levi Spensor. Levi was the 2025 Post, District and Division Oratorical Winner. Levi thanked the Post for their support during these competitions. Levi will compete again in the Oratorical Competition in 2026.
- 11) The Commander then introduced Paula Kallay and presented her with a plaque of appreciation for her continued excellent performance as the SJMAD Business Sponsorship Lead during the past 2 years.

12) The Commander then introduced Mrs. Toni Reale (2024-2025 Dept. of North Carolina, Past Legion Auxiliary President),. Mrs. Reale gave a brief review of her years of service to the North Carolina Department. Mrs. Reale was followed by her Husband Joseph Reale Sr., Division 4 District Vice Commander, currently running for NC Department Commander and provided the Post Membership with his past experiences in the many offices he has held at the Post, District and National Level. The Commander then thanked the Guest for their support and provided each with an American Legion Challenge Coin.

13) The Commander asked if there were any Veterans visiting the Post for the first time. Jim Alford (US Navy) was welcomed and is now a Post 543 Member.

14) The Commander took a Roll Call of Officers.

Officers Absent were:

Doc Liberty, (Judge Advocate/Parliamentarian)

Tim Edman, (Finance Officer)

Chuck Francka (Historian)

The Commander announced that there was a Quorum in Attendance.

15) The Commander requested the Chaplain brief the Membership regarding any sick call Members:

The Chaplain requested the Membership to remember Mark Lieberman and George Cassel in their prayers.

16) The Commander requested a motion be made to approve August 27, 2025, General Membership Meeting Minutes. ***A motion by Post Member Steve Muir and Seconded by Aaron Largent was made to approve August 27, 2025, General Membership Meeting Minutes*** No discussion was required. ***The motion carried, and the voice vote was unanimous.*** – Commander.

17) Finance Officer Report – Tim Edman

The Finance Officer was excused from the Monthly meeting, and the following Finance report was provided in his absence by Commander Carton.

The Post 543 Commander Reported that the Finances are in excellent condition. The Chart provided by the Finance Officer indicated that the following 2025-2026 Budget reflected: Income Budget \$85,759, Expense Budget \$31,400. The percentage of Expense used thus far 9.57%.

18) The Commander requested a motion be made to approve September 24, 2025, Finance Report. ***A motion by Post Member Rick Sessa and Seconded by Post Member Dan Bennet was made to approve September 24, 2025, Finance Report. No discussion was required. The motion carried, and the voice vote was unanimous.***

19) The Commander invited Gary Purcell (2nd Vice Commander, Membership) to the podium to provide the Membership with an update.

- a. The 2nd vice Commander, Membership that the number of Total paid members to date is 141.
- b. The 2nd vice Commander, Membership reminded the Membership that the 2026 Goal is 269 Members, and that we are 128 members shy of our 2026 100% goal.

20) The Commander invited Steve Muir (Post 543 Resource Officer) to give an update on the current active cases he is working on behalf of the Post.

- a. The Service Officer Informed the Membership that the “MyHealthVet.com” will be shut down on September 30, 2025, and the members will need to log in to the VA using “Log in.Gov” or “ID.Me.com”
- b. The Service Officer informed the Membership Federal Electronic Health Record is being deployed to 13 new VA sites with all VA sites to have access by 2031.
- c. VA stated that the 29th Million Home Loan was provided this week.
- d. The Service Officer informed the Membership that the VA has processed more VA Claims this year than ever before. The VA is processing the VA Claims in three days.
- e. The Service Officer asked Post Member Ray Bolling to provide the Membership with an update on Post Member Joe Kinzer. Ray suggested that Post Members would be welcomed to the Terre Bella Facility to talk with Joe as he looks forward to visitors.

21) The Commander called on Active-Duty Support Officer (Dan Bennett) to the podium to provide his Report.

- a. The Active-Duty Support Officer Reported on the “Peer to Peir Fishing Tournament” scheduled for October 20th at the Town of Oak Island Fishing Pier. Post 543 supports Operation North State in hosting 120 Wounded Warrior and Disabled Veterans for 5 days of Saltwater Fishing on the Oak Island Peir. Post 543 is requesting support from its membership to help with the Registering from 0600hrs.

22) The Commander called on Deputy Vice Commander, Americanism, Chuck Blackburn to provide the membership with the Post 543 “Adopt a Classroom” Program.

- a. The Deputy Vice Commander updated the membership with the status of this new program and how it could provide support for the Middle School Teachers as they prepare their pupils for the High School experiences and possibly getting involved with the American Legion Oratorical Program

23) The Sergeant-at-Arms/House & Entertainment Report – Rick Sessa

- a. Sergeant-at-Arms Rick Sessa and the House and Entertainment team have arranged a Bus Trip to Ft. Bragg on November 5th. The Bus will leave the HWEC at 8:30am and return to HWEC at around 9:00pm. 40 passengers are required to attend, and the cost will be \$75 p/p. The Sergeant at Arms introduced Post Members Lou Panigutti and Phillip McGhee to elaborate on the planned trip.
- b. Rick Sessa reminded the membership of the Post 543 “Salute to Veterans Dance” at the Homer Wright Event Center on November 14th and tickets are available after the General Membership Meeting at \$15/p/p or \$25 per couple.

24) The Commander called on 1st Vice Commander Phillip McGhee to provide the Membership with information pertaining to the Upcoming “Toys for Tots” Program.

- a. The 1st Vice Commander informed the membership of the Toys for Tots - SJP Partnership – Kickoff Potluck lunch on Friday, October 10, 2025, 11:00-3:00pm.
- b. The 1st Vice Commander provided information on the need for volunteers for the distribution of the collected toys at the HWEC on December 20, 2025.

25) Adjutant Report – Doug Pratt

a. **October 2025 Meetings**

- Peer to Peir Fishing Contest at Oak Island (10/20/25)
- ExCom Meeting (10/21/25)
- Post 543 Honor Guard Meeting (10/15/25)
- Post 543 General Membership Meeting (Guest Rosey Greer Shoudy) (10/22/25/25)

26) Commander's Topic

- a. Commander Carton updated the Post Membership on the Recognition of POW/MIA at the Saint James Veterans Memorial (Sacred Ground).
- b. The Area would be an 18" X 18" Square Stone with the POW/MIA Flag etched in the square stone.

27) Commander's closing comments – Commander Mike Carton

- a. The Commander reminded the Membership of 2025 St. James Military Appreciation Hats for sale as well as Post 543 Legion Baseball Shirts and Hats.

28) General Membership Meeting Closing Prayer – Chaplain Templeman

29) The Commander requested the colors be retired – Commander Carton

30) The General Membership Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM. – Commander Carton

Douglas Pratt

Douglas Pratt
Adjutant

Mike Carton

Mike Carton
Commander