



**American Legion Post 543  
General Membership Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, March 25, 2026**

**Meeting Minutes**

- 1. The meeting was called to Order at 7:00 PM –Commander Carton**
- 2. The Commander ordered the advancement of the Colors and a hand salute.**
- 3. The Commander ordered Opening Prayer – Tom Bednarczyk**
- 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 reviewed the four pillars and how the Post supports over 70 programs.**
- 8. The Commander inquired of the meeting attendees if there were any other Vietnam era Veterans in the audience who had not received their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorative pin and certificate for their service. There was one.**
- 9. The Commander asked if there were any Veterans visiting the Post for the first time.** The Commander welcomed the Guests and asked them to introduce themselves. The Commander then welcomed Guest Bill May USAF.

**10. The Commander then called Post JROTC/CAP Liaison Officer Aaron Largent to the Podium to introduce our guests for this General Membership Meeting, LTC Glenn Baker, JROTC Senior Instructor for a Presentation to Post Commander Mike Carton. Post JROTC/CAP Liaison Officer then called JROTC Cadets Baez and Stevenson for Cadet of the Year Awards from Post 543 and the American Legion Department of NC Cadet of the Year Award to Cadet Stevenson. Cadet Stevenson also was awarded a Plaque for his success at the American Legion Marksmanship Competition in which he finished in the top 5 competitors.**

**11. The Commander took a Roll Call of Officers.**

**Officers Absent were:**

Doc Liberty, (Judge Advocate/Parliamentarian)  
Phillip McGhee, (1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander)  
Chuck Francka, (Historian)  
Bruce Templeman (Chaplain)  
Jim McCriskin (Public Relations Officer)

**12. The Commander announced that there was a Quorum in Attendance.**

**13. The Commander requested the (Tom Bednarczyd to brief the Membership regarding any sick call Members:**

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

**14. The Commander requested a motion be made to approve February 25, 2026, General Membership Meeting Minutes. *A motion by Post Member Steve Muir and Seconded by Dan Bennet was made to approve February 25, 2026, General Membership Meeting Minutes No discussion was required. The motion carried, and the voice vote was unanimous.* –Commander.**

**15. The Commander asked Past Commander Steve Ratti to report on the upcoming Post Fund Raiser St. James Military Appreciation Day.**

- Past Commander Ratti provided information on the dates of the upcoming fund raiser activities including:
- Military Appreciation Dance May 1, 2026

- The Golf Tournament August 8, 2026
- And the need for volunteers to help with accumulating donations from businesses that they know or use on their day-to-day needs.

**16. The Commander called on Post 543 Finance Officer Report – Rick Haley**

The Finance Officer provided the Membership with the current view of accounts by type and use of each of the various line items. (Attachment “A”). The Finance Officer Stated that \$75,671 has been spent on the Budgeted \$179,257 or 42%

**The Commander requested a motion be made to approve March 25,2026, Finance Report. A motion by Post Member Jim Sullo and Seconded by Post Member Dan Bennett was made to approve March 25, 2026, Finance Report. No discussion was required. The motion carried, and the voice vote was unanimous.**

**17. The Commander invited Gary Purcell (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander, Membership) to the podium to provide the Membership with an update.**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> vice Commander, Membership, said that the number of total paid members to date is 254.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> vice Commander, Membership, reminded the Membership that the 2026 Goal is 269 Members, and that we are at 90% of our FY26 Goal. May 11<sup>th</sup> is the last day that we can achieve our 100% Membership Goal of 269 members.

**18. The Commander invited Steve Muir (Post 543 Resource Officer) to give an update on the current active cases being worked on in addition to an Update on American Legion State and National policies.**

The Post Service Officer provided updates from his visit to Washington and his meeting with the Veterans Administration Secretary. Steve Muir then provided the following goals of the Secretary of the VA.

- Review of the Veteran Healthcare Policies
- The use of Artificial Intelligence in VA Claims
- The Elimination of waste within the Department

- Review of National Guard and Army Reserve VA Benefits
- Veteran Suicide is the number one priority for the VA

**19. The Commander called on Post 543 The Sergeant-at-Arms/House & Entertainment Report – Rick Sessa**

- Sergeant-at-Arms Rick Sessa thanked the Post Members which attended the Ft. Bragg Tour, which was a huge success. Rick Sessa continued with an announcement that Tickets for the Military Appreciation Dance were available at this General Membership Meeting and our April General Membership Meeting.

**20. The Commander called on Post 543 Adjutant to the Podium to provide a report.**

- Adjutant Doug Pratt discussed the American Legion Department of North Carolina Rifle Raffle. The Department Raffle is a “D-Day Commemorative Thompson .45 ACP Rifle” with an estimated value of \$3,000. The Adjutant advised the membership that Raffle Tickets for the Rifle will be available to members after the General Membership Meeting.

**21. The Commander asked for an update on the Saint James Veteran Memorial and Brick Sales.**

- Tom Picinich informed the Membership of the current Brick sales. Tom also advised the General Membership that Bricks purchased would be available to be viewed at the Memorial Day Ceremony.

**22. The Commander asked for Additional Officer or Committee Comments.**

- There were none.

**23. The Commander asked for Membership Comments**

- Post Member Ron Scardina requested that other Post Members planning to attend the 2026 Honor Flight to Contact him for carpooling to and from Wilmington Airport.
- Another comment from Post Member Dennis Feltz requested clarification of a recent letter from the commander. The Commander ask to meet with Post Member Feltz to explain the issues that were addressed by the letter.

**24. The Commander requested the Chaplain to provide the General Membership Meeting Closing Prayer – Tom Bednarczyk**

**25. The Commander requested the Colors be retired -Michael R. Carton**

The Post 543 Color Guard Retired the Colors.

**26. The General Membership Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM. – Commander Carton**

*Douglas Pratt*

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**Douglas Pratt**

Adjutant

*Michael R. Carton*

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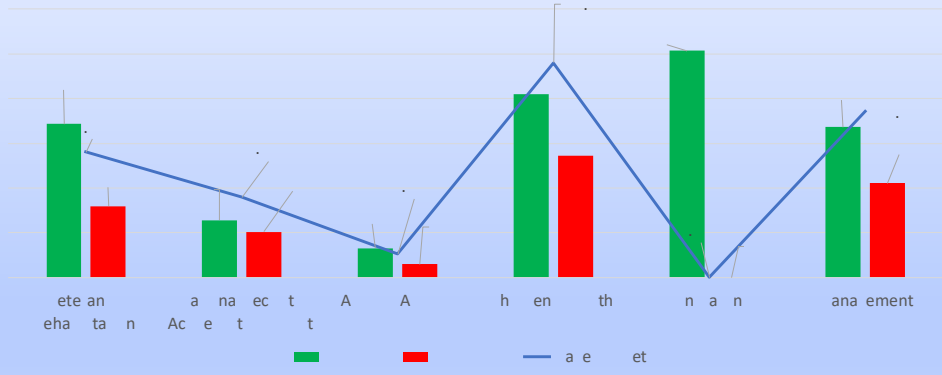
**Michael R. Carton**

Commander





**PROPRIETARY INFORMATION**



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