



**American Legion Post 543
General Membership Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 27, 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 – Chaplain Bruce 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 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 50th Anniversary commemorative pin and certificate for their service. There were none.**
- 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 Guests Tom McAndrews USAF.
- 10. The Commander asked Chuck Blackburn, Deputy Vice-Commander Americanism,** to the podium to introduce this year's Post 543 Student Scholarship Winners. The Deputy Vice-Commander introduced the Scholarship Winners in the following order:

- ECHS Scholarship Winners of the Rodney Johnson Memorial- Jennifer Zhenga
- Post 543 Scholarship Winners Giuliana Migliosa & Ja'Maya Brown
- Post 543 Scholarship Criminal Justice, Riley Paglione & McKenzie Yastremski
- Post 543 Scholarship STEM Science, Addison Mearns
- Post 543 Scholarship Teacher, Avella-Psalm Merriam
- Post 543 Scholarship STEM Robotics Gavin Hilbig
- Post 543 Richie Hat Trick Scholarship-Jacob Sherrod, Cooper Pittman, Gregor Brock, Carly Clewis, Owen Mclaughlin, Addison Mearns, Avella Merrian, Abigail Key, Hailey Adkisson.

11. The Commander took a Roll Call of Officers.

Officers Absent were:

Phillip McGhee- 1st Vice Commander, Resource Development

Gary Purcel- 2nd Vice Commander, Membership

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

13. The Commander introduced the Post 543 Membership to “Post 543 Membership Processing Policy 016. After a discussion on the benefits of this new Policy a motion was provided to approve the Membership Processing Policy to the Post 543 list of approved policies: Motion by Post Member Aaron Largent and Seconded by Service Officer Steve Muir.

The motion carried, and the voice vote was unanimous.

14. The Commander requested the Chaplain to brief the Membership regarding any sick call Members:

- Chaplain Templeman requested Post Membership to remember Mark Lieberman in their Prayers.
- Sergeant at Arms Sessa informed the Post Membership that Charter Member John Lewis had passed. No additional information was available at this time.

15. The Commander requested a motion be made to approve April 22, 2026, General Membership Meeting Minutes. *A motion by Post Member Steve Muir and Seconded by Active-Duty Support Chair, Dan Bennett was made to approve April 22, 2026, General Membership Meeting Minutes* No discussion was required. *The motion carried, and the voice vote was unanimous.*

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 \$90,191 has been spent on the Budgeted \$179,257 or 50%. The Finance Officer informed the Post Membership that the Memorial Day Poppy Distribution raised \$3,860.

The Commander requested a motion be made to approve May 27, 2026, Finance Report. *A motion by Service Officer Steve Muir and Seconded by Active-Duty Support Chair, Dan Bennet was made to approve May 27, 2026, Finance Report.* No discussion was required. *The motion carried, and the voice vote was unanimous.*

17. The Commander invited Teresa Brookover, (Membership Team Member) to the podium to provide the Membership with an update on the current Membership 2025-2026 Membership Goal.

- Teresa Brookover reported that the number of total paid members to date is 272. This number exceeded our 2025-2026 Membership Goal by 3

members thereby exceeding the Department Goal and the Post achieving 100%.

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 Information on the 5th Annual “Fallen Hero’s Ceremony.

The Resource Officer reminded the Membership that Past Post Member John Fryar will be a recipient of the Ceremony.

- The Post Resource Officer provided updates on 8 Active Post 543 Cases
- The Need for VEAC Volunteers and that a sign-up sheet will be distributed to the Membership. The date for the VEAC (at the NC Armory) is May28-30.
- The Service Officer Provided a pictorial on the Hero’s Memorial Ceremony which was used by Passed Post Member John Fryar Family. The Ceremony took place at The Fort Johnston Front Lawn and lasted for 3 days.

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

- Sergeant-at-Arms Rick Sessa provided information on the May 30 Honor Flight Fund Raiser Dance with Music by “Mike’s Garage Band”. The event will take place at Palmetto Creek Club House. Post Member and Drummer for Mikes Garage Band provided some historical information of Mike’s Garage Band in terms of amounts of money being raised for charities.

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.

- The Adjutant provided information for post members to order new uniform shirts, this information was especially helpful to the new members recently being added to the Post 543 Roster.

21. The Commander asked for the Committee Chair of Honors & Ceremonies Report

Honor Guard Aaron Largent provided a Slide for the upcoming Events. Those events included:

- June 16 Flag Day at the USS North Carolina
- June 27,28 Sea Notes Patriotic Concert
- July 2, Loggerhead Game Opening with Color Guard
- July 4th Festival Parade

22. The Commander asked for the Committee Chair of Veteran Legislation to provide an update.

- The Post Resource Officer mentioned that NC General Assembly is reviewing a bill to provide a reduction or elimination of Property Tax on 100% disabled Veterans and that he will keep the Members up to date on this important matter.

23. The Commander asked for Additional Officer or Committee Reports.

- Past Commander Steve Ratti provided the Post Membership That St. James Military Appreciation Day Street Donation Funding was starting on June 1 and that many streets still do not have post member Volunteers to solicit funds for this primary fund raiser event.

24. The Commander asked for Membership Comments

- There were none

25. The Commander provided the Post Membership of the upcoming Events

The list of Upcoming Events discussed was:

- Newly installed Executive Committee Officers Oath 6/24/26
- VEAC Wilmington Armory 5/28-5/30
- NC Department of the American Legion Convention 6/11-6/13
- Women Veterans Healthcare Summit 6/18 & 6/19
- Sea Notes Patriotic Concert OWA 6/27 & 6/28

26. The Commander showed the Post Membership the Approved Slate of Executive Committee Officers for FY 27.

- In Accordance with the By-Laws of the Richard H. Stewart Jr. Post 543 Article IV Elections.
- As there is an uncontested Election for these Nomination, I ask the Adjutant to cast one Vote by Proclamation.
- The Motion to approve the FY27 Executive Committee Officers' Nominated.
- Motion by Service Officer Steve Muir, Second Active-Duty Support Chair Dan Bennett.

Motion Carried

27. The Commander requested the Chaplain to provide the General Membership Meeting Closing Prayer –

- Chaplain Templeman provided the Closing Prayer

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

The Post 543 Color Guard Retired the Colors.

29. The General Membership Meeting was adjourned at 8:11 PM. – Commander Carton

Douglas Pratt

Douglas Pratt

Adjutant

Michael R Carton

Michael R. Carton

Commander

