

**The American Legion
Department of Nebraska
Department Executive Committee
Minutes
January 13, 2023
Norfolk Lodge and Suites – Norfolk, Nebraska**

The Department Executive Committee meeting of the Nebraska American Legion was called to order by Department Commander Don Suchy at 10:00 a.m. Following a salute to Colors, prayer was offered by Department Chaplain Alex Borzych. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and the POW-MIA "Empty Chair" ceremony was observed. Preamble was recited by all in attendance.

DEC roll call was taken by Department Adjutant Dave Salak. Present were Commander Suchy, Senior Vice Commander John Henry Percy, Area A Vice Commander Carl Lorenzen, Area B Vice Commander Kenneth Meyer, Area C Vice Commander Richard Binder, Area D Vice Commander Gene Von Forell, Past Department Commander Lyle Bartels, Past Department Commander Gary Wooten, Past Department Commander Dan Benes, District 1 Commander Judy Walters, District 4 Commander Steve Stanec, District 5 Commander Scott Bell, District 6 Commander Julie Schnitzler, District 7 Commander Jerry Schulte, District 8 Commander Ron Riley, District 9 Commander Ron Wiest, District 10 Commander Don Nelson, District 11 Commander Tom Crisman, District 12 Commander William Lawrence, and District 15 Commander Bruce Gubser. National representatives in attendance were NEC Fred Craigie and Alternate NEC Jim Costello. Motion to seat District 2 Vice Commander Gerald Bouska by Tom Crisman. Second by Dan Benes and carried. Motion to seat District 3 Vice Commander Nick Tramp by Richard Binder. Second by Carl Lorenzen and carried. Motion to seat District 13 member Larry Borcher by Julie Schnitzler. Second by Gary Wooten and carried.

Judge Advocate William Harris declared a quorum and the meeting was declared regularly convened.

Commander Suchy extended a welcome to members and guests to this meeting. He reminded all DEC members to submit vouchers to Department Headquarters in a timely fashion.

The first item of business was the pardon board hearing discussion. Commander Suchy reminded all in attendance that there would be order in the meeting, any outburst or other disrespect would mean being escorted from the meeting by the Sergeant-at-Arms. Commander Suchy then asked the DEC to approve the temporary appointment of two Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, Shannon Falk and Bud Neel, for the January 13th DEC meeting because of the high turnout. Motion to approve the appointments by Bruce Gubser. Second by Kenneth Meyer and carried.

Commander Suchy then stated that the rules for the Department Convention stated that the time for discussion on any one topic would be limited to thirty minutes and that each member of the DEC would be allowed up to three minutes to speak their mind on the topic. Commander Suchy called on PDC Beth Linn, What About Us representative, for her comments. He stated she would have five minutes for comment.

Bruce Gubser asked for a point of order. He asked everyone to look at Bylaws Article XI Section 2 and 3. He stated that since there was no charges made to the members Post, that the DEC had no jurisdiction. He moved that the DEC move on to the next order of business. Second by Tom Crisman. Commander Suchy asked for discussion.

Gary Wooten asked people to identify themselves when they speak.

Jerry Schulte District 7 Commander stated that if you refer to Constitution Article VII that the DEC is responsible for the administration and decisions of topics referring to the Department level.

Bruce Gubser responded that according to the Bylaws, the DEC is a body that is meant for appeals of complaints against a member of The American Legion in Nebraska. It is not for handing down punishments.

Gary Wooten asked the DEC to look at Bylaws Article II Section 4. He stated that this section gives the DEC the authority to hand down recommendations.

Judge Advocate William Harris addressed the current discussion. He stated that since this discussion involves Department Officers, that the discussion should be held in front of the DEC. Bylaws Article XI is referring to an individual member, not a Department Officer position. He ruled that the matter can be heard by the DEC.

Commander Suchy asked for a vote on the motion. A hand vote was taken of the DEC members and the motion failed. He then asked PDC Linn to address the DEC.

PDC Linn started by talking about the pardons hearing and the events before and after it. She stated that having American Legion members there highly influenced the pardon board members votes.

Commander Suchy asked if there was any other discussion.

Carl Lorenzen shared a personal story about a similar situation. He also stated that the only item of discussion that should be up today is the wearing of the American Legion cover, it has nothing to do with the past crime or any detail of the event. He stated that he cannot support the wearing of the hat at a non-Legion event, but that the crime should have no bearing on the outcome.

Gary Wooten asked that a brief synopsis of the actions that were being discussed and who was there and when it happened.

Mike Helm shared that he was the one that initiated all of the action regarding the members attending the hearing. He stated that he supported John Arias and the work that he had been doing for veterans and the great work he had been doing for the Nebraska American Legion Family. He also expressed that there is nothing in the constitution and bylaws that says anything about wearing hats, but there are guidelines. He stated he requested those present to wear their hats to show John that he had friends there who supported his efforts, and that Commander Suchy did not make that request. Helm also shared that members of the Nebraska Veterans Treatment Court were also in attendance to support John and that they wore their uniforms. He stated that the three members of the pardon board had already made their decision prior to the meeting, and that there were many people there for hearings that didn't even get the opportunity to speak.

Jay Cole in the audience asked to speak. Commander Suchy stated that since he was not a DEC member or a PDC that he would not have a voice.

Ron Riley stated that he took the individual and the crime out of it, and instead went by legal standards and contacted lawyers that he knew for context. He shared that they stated the Nebraska American Legion could be held accountable to any lawsuit that might be brought forth since the hats were worn.

William Lawrence thanked Mike Helm for reaching out and calling him to tell about what happened. He stated that he was disappointed that the leadership didn't reach out and tell the DEC members what was going on, and that it took four months to find the details out.

Doug Boldt asked to address the body.

Gary Wooten asked if Commander Suchy was picking and choosing from those in the audience who could and couldn't speak today.

Commander Suchy stated that Doug was a PDC and the other person was not.

Doug Boldt stated that he is a proud member of the Nebraska American Legion, and he is proud of the motto of taking care of veterans. He also shared that this motto does not have to do with the veteran's personal life. Boldt expressed that he was sensitive to John's wife and other assault victims that have to live with the action for the rest of their life, but as a member of The American Legion he was also sensitive to how John has been living his life over the thirteen years that he had known him. He stated that since he had been released from prison, John has done nothing but good and all he has done is help veterans and be a mainstay in the Nebraska Veterans Treatment Court. He also shared that the Legionnaire whose son taught John's kids that Beth Linn referred to in her letter was him, and that his son never said one bad thing about John's wife.

Nick Tramp shared that he reached out to his local County Commanders and Post Commanders to get their thoughts on the topic. He believed that by attending one hearing that a precedence was being set and that people might expect hats at all veteran trials and hearings.

Judy Walters stated that she was a former Veterans Service Officer and she believed that this whole topic has been turned into a sideshow. John had already been judged by his peers and served his time. He was released from prison and has bettered his life and help other veterans. The American Legion is there to support all veterans, they do not have the power to be judge of past crime. She also stated that the What About Us group used the Department Directory inappropriately and was harassing members with emails and letters. She suggested holding a training to educate everyone when and where to wear their hats.

Michael Landkamer expressed that the Area A Vice Commander gave incorrect information during this speech. The Secretary of State was the one on the board who did not support the pardon. He also stated that the Governor spoke to the entire room after the pardon was granted and stated, "This normally doesn't happen, but because of your exemplary life and what you have done in prison and after your release is why it happened." Landkamer shared that the members who attended the hearing that day were there supporting John and what he has done for veterans, and not the crime he committed.

Jerry Schulte stated that many of the Legion leaders who attended the event had been to veterans events and other events at the Capital before, and there was a chance that Governor Ricketts recognized them. He shared that the pardon has been granted, and that this discussion is not about the pardon, it is about the leaders of the Nebraska American Legion wearing their hats to event that was not authorized. He also worries that there could be a precedence set by them wearing their hats. Schulte read the guidelines for wearing of the American Legion hat.

Jerry Landkamer asked those in the DEC to raise their hands if they attended the National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He stated that the newly elected National Commander Jim Troiola made his project for this year "Be the One." He shared that the Commander is wanting to support those veterans who were or are suffering from PTSD and for the Legion to be there to help them.

Carl Lorenzen asked to read the article from the Nebraska Examiner that stated the information about the pardon hearing to clear up any confusions regarding Mike Landkamer's previous statement.

Ken Meyer shared that the What About Us group has been all over the internet, and they are charging some individuals and trying to take away their titles. He stated that there are fallacies in those charges. One is that John Arias was allowed to attend Boys' State, and that is 100% wrong as John never set foot at Boys' State. Meyer expressed that everyone who is released from prison should look to John as an example, he has bettered his life and has not reoffended.

Dave Salak was granted a point of personal privilege by the Chair. Salak shared that there is misinformation being shared in many different platforms and that John Arias was not allowed to participate in Boys' State, there is no background requirement for American Legion college, and that the support for John was not done in secrecy. He also stated that PDC Linn had been stating these allegations in newspapers for months. He quoted an excerpt from January 2019 DEC minutes where Mike Helm stated that the Nebraska IA Committee

had met with national and both national and Nebraska continued to support John Arias. Salak then shared that John had been awarded the District 6 Citizenship medal at the Department Convention in June of 2021. He went on to state that John was then appointed by Commander Benes and approved by the DEC to be the Nebraska ALR Liaison. Again in 2022, Commander Suchy appointed John and the DEC approved the appointment. He shared that PDC Linn had been on the DEC from 2010 to 2021 and not once had she gone on record not supporting John Arias. He stated that the Legionnaire Newspaper had even run a front-page story in the January/February 2021 issue about the Nebraska Veterans Treatment Court and in the picture was John Arias shaking Governor Ricketts hand. He finished by sharing that until John proved otherwise, he would continue to support a veteran who changed his life and was helping other veterans do the same.

Gary Wooten asked why the discussion on the pardon was still happening since the decision was made and the DEC had no authority to override it. He then stated that the only question was if those wearing covers should be reprimanded, and that the Post Officer's Guide stated exactly when the Legion hat should be worn. Wooten then expressed that he supported John and what he has done to help veterans, but that he wished that they wouldn't have worn their covers.

Jerry Schulte recommended that those Legion members on National and Department committees and hold National, Department, District or DEC level Offices be removed from their positions for a period of 2 years and all members wearing their Legion caps at the Pardon Hearing provide a written apology to the Nebraska Legion Member Family for their inappropriate actions of wearing their Legion Caps at a pardon hearing, to be placed in the Nebraska Legionnaire.

Lyle Bartels moved that the DEC remove any wrongdoing against Adjutant Salak. Second by Julie Schnitzler.

A female Legion Rider from Norfolk in the audience started yelling and left. Commander Suchy brought the room back to order.

Bruce Gubser rose and asked if Lyle would consider amending his motion to include Fred Craigie since he was not there either.

Lyle Bartels amended his motion to add Fred Craigie to the motion. Second by Don Nelson and carried.

Commander Suchy went back to the main motion. Motion carried.

Gary Wooten asked if Jerry Schulte originally made a motion or recommendation. He stated that he made a recommendation.

Jerry Schulte moved that those Legion members on National and Department committees and hold National, Department, District or DEC level Offices be removed from their positions for a period of 2 years and all members wearing their Legion caps at the Pardon Hearing provide a written apology to the Nebraska Legion Member Family for their inappropriate actions of wearing their Legion Caps at a pardon hearing, to be placed in the Nebraska Legionnaire. Second by Ron Riley.

Bruce Gubser stated that since the discussion of the Department Officers being removed was on the table, that the Judge Advocate should rule if the motion needed to be discussed in a private forum. Judge Advocate Harris stated that there was nothing the constitution and bylaws that prevented this and that the DEC could decide how to handle it.

Jerry Schulte moved that a ballot vote be taken.

Gary Wooten asked for a point of order. He stated that discussion could happen in executive session, but all decisions had to be made in regular meeting.

Julie Schnitzler stated that the motion needed to be clearer on who was being asked to step down and what positions would be vacated instead of the general motion.

Michael Landkamer stated that the DEC needed to seriously consider this motion, because by passing it the Department Commander would be removed, the District 6 Commander would be removed, the Oratorical Chairman would be removed, the Boys' State Chairman would be removed, and many other places. He stated that PDC Linn accused him of calling her a liar and threatening her with a lawsuit, and that never happened. He also shared that in her statement PDC Linn stated that John had three kids and he only has two.

Judge Advocate Harris stated that the constitution and bylaws does not have a mechanism on how the removal of an officer is decided. He shared there are two items to decide: If the conduct is inappropriate and how to handle it. The first question is if they violated any conduct and at what level. If so, then what should happen. He shared that he has been an attorney for twenty-two years and that he had argued before the same pardon board before, and that 100% they had already decided before they came in. They have between 200 and 250 people that they automatically, and they have between 20-30 that they do a dog and pony show with. They 100% have already established what their decision is before they come out. He expressed that other speakers had spoken about precedence, and the DEC is the one who decides the precedence. The DEC can make a motion to decide future precedence as long as it doesn't break the constitution and bylaws.

Lyle Bartels spoke in opposition of the motion on the floor. He stated that a letter of reprimand would be more than sufficient and that the motion to remove from positions is too far.

Commander Suchy stated that there would be no ballot vote. He clarified that the motion was "Legion members on National and Department committees and hold National, Department, District or DEC level Offices be removed from their positions for a period of 2 years and all members wearing their Legion caps at the Pardon Hearing provide a written apology to the Nebraska Legion Member Family for their inappropriate actions of wearing their Legion caps at a pardon hearing, to be placed in the Nebraska Legionnaire." The following names were added as those in attendance: Doug Boldt, Mike Landkamer, Mike Helm, Jerry Landkamer, Don Suchy, Julie Schnitzler, Dan Benes, Dave Bruckner, and Bill Crosier.

Lyle Bartels stated that if the members are removed from the national appointments that Nebraska will lose those appointments and other states will take them. He then went on to ask Jerry Schulte to amend his motion to go with a letter of reprimand instead of removal from office.

Julie Schnitzler asked the Judge Advocate that if the motion passed if her and the other members listed on the motion were done and if they had to leave if it passed.

Judge Advocate Harris stated that yes, if the motion passed and then everyone on that list would be immediately removed.

Nick Tramp shared that while he agreed with the veterans going to support John, he did not agree with them wearing their covers. He also stated that he disagreed with the motion because it would put a black eye on Nebraska and would be almost impossible to recover from at the State and National level. He asked that Jerry Schulte amend his motion to be a two-year censure, where they serve their roles, but not have a vote, instead of being removed.

William Lawrence stated that he agreed with Nick Tramp and that those in attendance at the hearing had a good intent but made an error in wearing their cover. He shared that the impact that removal would have would be detrimental to the Department, and that a censure would be sufficient.

Judy Walters expressed that we all know that wearing the hat at the hearing was not a good choice, but that destroying the reputations of these Legion members is not the way to do that. She stated that everyone has probably worn their hat in the wrong time at least once in their life, and they deserved a second chance.

Tom Crisman stated that he did not think that the motion fit the crime and that Lyle Bartels and Nick Tramp had more reasonable approaches to dealing with the issue.

Commander Suchy stated that they would be voting.

Gary Wooten rose to state that it needed to be a ballot vote.

Commander Suchy stated that it would be a standing vote.

Jerry Schulte asked what censuring would do.

Judge Advocate Harris stated that censuring would be a reprimand and that the DEC would be telling those Legion members that you did this wrong and they would receive a letter stating what is done and why it was wrong. It also would state that different action would be taken if the action was repeated.

Jerry Schulte amended his motion by changing it to read, Legion members on National and Department committees and hold National, Department, District or DEC level offices be censured for a period of 2 years and all members wearing their Legion caps at the Pardon Hearing provide a written apology to the Nebraska Legion Member Family for their inappropriate actions of wearing their Legion caps at a pardon hearing, to be placed in the Nebraska Legionnaire. Second by Ron Riley.

Judy Walters asked if censured members would have voting rights.

Judge Advocate Harris stated that they would still have voting rights and that the censure would remain in their permanent file at Department Headquarters.

Don Nelson asked for clarification on what was being voted on.

Commander Suchy stated that the amendment was being voted on. The change would read, Legion members on National and Department committees and hold National, Department, District or DEC level offices be censured for a period of 2 years and all members wearing their Legion caps at the Pardon Hearing provide a written apology to the Nebraska Legion Member Family for their inappropriate actions of wearing their Legion caps at a pardon hearing, to be placed in the Nebraska Legionnaire. He then asked for a vote on the amended motion. Motion carried.

Commander Suchy then asked for a vote on the main motion. He asked those in favor to stand. He then asked those against to stand. Motion carried.

Commander Suchy shared that he had gone to the hearing to support a veteran who was reformed. He stated that his theme for this year is "Leading Veterans on the Road to Success" and if he hadn't attended then he would feel like he wasn't doing his job as Commander. He thanked everyone for their opinions during the meeting and for acting respectfully during the meeting. He then expressed his thanks for the support he had received throughout the year.

Commander Suchy then called for a fifteen-minute recess. After a short recess, the Commander then called for a recess until 1:00 p.m.

Commander Suchy called the meeting to order.

Commander Suchy reminded all of the DEC members to submit their expense vouchers in a timely manner.

Commander Suchy introduced the National Vice Commander (Midwest Region) Glenn Wahus of North Dakota. He gave brief remarks.

Commander Suchy asked for the reading of the minutes from the June 23 - 24, 2022 DEC meeting. Motion to suspend reading of the minutes and approve them by Don Nelson. Second by Ron Wiest and carried.

Commander Suchy distributed the District Dues checks and expressed that they are to be deposited into the District bank accounts – not personal accounts. The next District Dues checks will be distributed in July.

Commander Suchy noted that Consolidated Post Reports are due June 1, 2023. He thanked Past Department Commander Benes for his work on them last year. District Commanders and Department officers were asked to lead the way to another 100% performance. He asked the District Commanders to encourage Posts to track their activities and to fill them out with the correct information.

Adjutant Salak stated that both the District 8 Commander Ron Riley and the District 8 Vice Commander Doug Vance resigned following the morning DEC session.

Motion to seat District 8 member Fran Shelton by Gary Wooten. Second by Nick Tramp and carried.

Commander Suchy presented the proposed 2023 District Convention schedule. Motion to accept the following schedule by Tom Crisman. Second by Kenneth Meyer and carried.

District	Date	Time	Location
District 1	Saturday, March 25, 2023	8:00 a.m. MST	Rushville Post 161
District 2	Sunday, March 12, 2023	1:00 p.m.	Atkinson Post 86
District 3	Saturday, March 18, 2023	9:00 a.m.	Winside Post 252
District 4	Saturday, April 1, 2023	10:00 a.m. MST	Gering Post 36
District 5	Saturday, March 11, 2023	10:00 a.m.	Heartland Museum Lexington
District 6	Saturday, March 4, 2023	9:00 a.m.	Kearney Post 52
District 7	Saturday, March 18, 2023	10:00 a.m.	Dodge Post 122
District 8	Saturday, February 11, 2023	9:00 a.m.	Herman Post 24
District 9	Saturday, March 11, 2023	10:00 a.m.	Curtis Community Building
District 10	Saturday, February 18, 2023	10:00 a.m.	Wilcox Post 377
District 11	Saturday, March 25, 2023	10:00 a.m.	Beatrice Post 27
District 12	Saturday, March 18, 2023	9:00 a.m.	Hickman Community Center
District 13	Saturday, February 18, 2023	9:30 a.m.	Falls City Post 102
District 15	Tuesday, February 14, 2023	6:30 p.m.	Lincoln Elks Club

Commander Suchy stated that the 2023 Department Convention will be held June 22 - 25, 2023, in Kearney. All convention sessions for the American Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons of the American Legion will be conducted at the Kearney Ramada at 301 2nd Avenue.

Adjutant Salak shared that the Washington Conference would be held February 27 – March 1 at the Washington Hilton. He asked all who planned to attend to talk to him after the meeting.

NEC Craigie brought greetings from National Commander Jim Troiola. He introduced National Vice Commander (Midwest Region) Glenn Wahus (ND). He shared that Fall Meetings were held in October in Indianapolis. He stated that 25 Nebraska members were assigned to a committee, commission, or council, and that Jody Moeller was the Vice Chairman of the Baseball Commission. He shared that since the passing of the PACT Act that two

new Agent Orange presumptives and five new locations have been added. He added that Resolution 15 passed during the Fall Meetings and this is to ensure that predatory law firms can't charge exorbitant fees for assisting veterans with their claims. Craigie congratulated Nebraska on being one of nine Departments who achieved 100% CPR reporting. He also thanked the twenty delegates who attended the National Convention committee meetings. Nebraska had 100% attendance. The NEC passed Resolution 11 that reduced the number of National Convention committee meetings to 9. He then spoke about the Veterans and Children Foundation and all of the program that it assists. He stated that Adjutant Dave already had talked about Washington Conference.

Adjutant Salak briefed the DEC on the 2023 National Convention being held in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27 – September 1, 2023. The Nebraska delegation will be housed at the Sheraton/Le Meridien with a room rate of \$159 per night plus 15.25% tax. Parking rates are \$20.00 per day for self-park and \$25.00 for valet service. First night's room deposit of \$183.25 will be due at Department Headquarters on July 7, 2023. Registration fee is \$35.00 per person. South Dakota is the host of the Tri-Stack Party. More information will be distributed as it becomes available from National Headquarters.

Adjutant Salak stated that all Department officers have been certified to National Headquarters with official documents verifying eligibility in the American Legion.

Kelly Hanvey was not in attendance, so she did not give a report of her National American Legion College experiences. She attended December 11 – 16, 2022.

Adjutant Salak stated the 2023 Nebraska Legislative Day would be held February 3 at the State Capitol in Warner Chamber. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Commander Suchy asked if there were any Post or Squadron cancellations. None mentioned.

Commander Suchy requested the approval of the following appointments: Americanism Katie Lovelace 3 years; Children & Youth Greg Smolik 3 years; Children & Youth Donald Nelsen 2 years; Pubs & PR John Vela 3 years; Nebraska Home Board William Crosier 2 years; and Assistant Adjutant Eric J. Martin indefinitely. Motion to approve the appointments by Tom Crisman. Second by Kenneth Meyer and carried. Commander Suchy shared that there are three appointments that he will be looking to fill. Americanism Area A and Rehab & Employment Area A and Area C.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Americanism Committee Chairman Michael Hatfield stated that members present were Mike Hatfield, Dean Chase, Mike Landkamer, and Assistant Adjutant Eric Martin. Hatfield shared that he had attended the Americanism Conference this year in Indianapolis, and that a resolution from Illinois was introduced to change the oration times and the number of assigned topics. After discussion, all of those in attendance voted to reject the resolution. Hatfield stated that the 2022 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is Officer Audrey Arbuckle of the Crete Police Department and Nebraska Firefighter/EMS Officer of the Year Jeremy J. Genier of the Offutt Air Force Base and Emergency Services. He reported that only nine counties had reported about their County Government Day program. The State Oratorical finals are at 6:00 p.m. Saturday, with the National finals in April in Indianapolis, Indiana. Motion to accept the report by Michael Hatfield. Second by Don Nelson and carried.

Convention Committee Chairman Kenneth Schmid shared the entire committee showed up. He reported that at the 2022 Department Convention in Columbus had 192 Legion members registered. The 2024 Midyear Conference will be held January 19 - 21, 2024, at the Holiday Inn in Kearney for \$114.95 a night. The 2025 Department Convention will be held June 25 - 29, 2025, at the Ramada Inn in Columbus for \$109.95 a night with a hot breakfast. The 2023 Department Convention will be held June 22 - 25, 2023 at the Ramada Inn in Kearney. He also shared that the registration fee will remain at \$10. Motion to accept the report by Kenneth Schmid. Second by William Lawrence and carried.

Jr. Shooting Sports Report provided by Adjutant Salak on JSSP Liaison Doug Frahm's behalf. Frahm reported that he attended the national competition held July 20 - 23, 2022, in Colorado Springs, CO. Thirty individuals were invited to compete in the event. Nebraska had three competitors attend the national competition. Austin Rahmig of the Western Nebraska Shooting Sports Club finished as the third highest score in the Sporter discipline, Gavin Carrizales of the Western Nebraska Shooting Sports Club finished as the fifth highest score in the Sporter discipline, and Julia Winstrom of the Dead Eye Shooters Club finished as the sixth highest score in the Sporter discipline. The 32nd Annual Air Rifle National Championships began in September and five Nebraska clubs have registered for the 2022-23 National Competition. The National Competition will be held July 20 - 23, 2023, in Colorado Springs, CO. Motion to accept the report by Dave Salak. Second by Ron Wiist and carried.

Boys State Committee Chairman Doug Boldt asked the other members of the Boys' State Committee to please stand. He then shared the minutes from the November Boys' State Committee and Boys' State Corporation meetings. He stated that the dates for the 2023 session are June 4 - 10, 2023 and the sponsorship cost will be \$400.00 and then the delegate will need to bring a \$25 registration fee to Boys' State. He expressed how important it is to have the support for the program from all Posts in Nebraska and that Boys' State is the premier leadership program in the state and The American Legion is its main sponsor. Motion to accept the report by Doug Boldt. Second by Dan Benes and carried.

Assistant Adjutant Eric Martin was given his new Department white hat and shared a few words.

Children & Youth Committee Chairman Don Hilger reported that Michael Sheridan, Don Hilger, and ALA Children & Youth Chairman Deb Albers attended the morning Children & Youth Committee meeting. He stated that there were two new members added today. Hilger shared that the committee reviewed the 2021-22 Children & Youth citations, and they will be handed out at District Conventions. The committee discussed if the ALA would be a good help reviewing the CPRs each year, more discussion will be held. He stated that there will be a Children & Youth Luncheon at Department Convention. Motion to accept the report by Tom Crisman. Second by Bruce Gubser and carried.

Membership Committee Chairman Steve Bartos stated that the Membership Committee met this morning with Dave Bruckner, Doug Vance, and Steve Bartos being present. Richard Baxter was excused. He stated that the committee looked at the December 29, 2022, membership report from both National and Department. The committee looked at the membership awards for 2024 and will be approving the final version at the Department Convention. The committee would look at changing the Early Bird Award. He reminded the District Commanders that members of the Membership Committee are willing to travel to their District meetings, but they need to be invited. He then explained about the 2023 goal setting procedures and making sure that the Department goal matched the National goal. He encouraged Posts and members to register and use MyLegion.org, he can be contacted with questions. Motion to accept the report by Steve Bartos. Second by Bruce Gubser and carried.

Finance Committee Chairman Daniel Stramel stated that the committee met at Headquarters in December 2022, and Stramel reviewed the highlights of the minutes of their meeting. Stramel also spoke on revenue enhancement, the investment portfolio, and the condensed monthly financial statements. Other topics discussed by the Finance Committee included the building and grounds report, changing the Nebraska Legionnaire from 8 issues a year to six issues a year, how frugal the Department Staff have been, and the Athletic Committee Budget. He stated they would be working with the Athletic Committee to better understand the budget. Motion to accept the report by Daniel Stramel. Second by Jerry Schulte and carried.

Finance Officer Mark Novak reported that the department finances are in good shape and the 2022 - 23 fiscal year finished with a positive balance with no withdrawals from the investment account. As of the December 31, 2022, financial statement, the Department is ahead of the estimated expenses by \$9,160 because of the watchful eyes of Department Headquarters staff, but there is a chance a withdrawal from the PIF may be needed. He then shared that there are approximately 2,000 DLM that are paid for each year, and it is important that Posts turn in deceased members promptly. The markets were down this year and the balances as of December 31, 2022, were as follows: PIF \$975,025, Scholarship \$115,279, Hurlbert \$67,722, Past National Commander

\$138,468 and Stoldorf \$56,817 and will have a \$8,000 check deposited soon. Investment funds are expecting to generate \$41,000 worth of dividends and interest in the next 12 months. Novak briefed the DEC on the audit that was completed by BMG CPAs. A copy of the audit was provided to all members of the DEC. Bruce Gubser asked that all DEC members be sent a list of their DLM two months prior to them being paid. He asked all other DEC members to use this list to reach out to their Posts to double check the members. Motion to accept the report by Mark Novak. Second by Jerry Schulte and carried.

Building Committee Chairman Mark Novak gave a short report. He stated that there are currently no available properties that fit our size requirements or the financial scale. He shared that he continues to get emails from the relator and will keep looking to see if he can find anything. DEC members asked questions regarding building a new building, leasing a location temporarily, and about moving out of Lincoln. Adjutant Salak stated that there were many repairs that needed to be made at the current building. They were put off, and now they are needing to get done. Motion to get bids on the front steps and parking lot and provide them to the DEC by Nick Tramp. Second by Jerry Schulte and carried.

Gary Wooten stated that the DEC of both the Legion and Auxiliary have approved the sale of the building and the purchase of a new building. Each organization appointed members to a Building Committee who is responsible for the purchase of a building, no further DEC approval is needed. Commander Suchy restated that, that is correct and that if the committee finds the right building that they will make an offer.

Scholarship Committee Chairman Carroll Mohlman reported that the committee had awarded 35 scholarships in the 2022 year. There was one Hurlbert, 4 Boschult, and 30 Maynard Jensen Scholarships. All scholarships are due to Department by March 1. Area D Committee member Terry McCune has resigned due to health reasons, and the committee is looking for a replacement. He thanked his committee for their work this past year. Motion to accept the report by Carroll Mohlman. Second by Don Nelson and carried.

Rehabilitation and Employment Committee member Boyd Yochum reported that the committee did not meet this morning. There are currently two vacancies on the committee. Motion to accept by Boyd Yochum. Second by Kenneth Meyer and carried.

POW/MIA Liaison Boyd Yochum reported that the POW/MIA issue is a never-ending issue and that it is up to all of us to get everyone home. He stated that he had found that many of the facts that he is looking for, for his articles are classified and that he hopes one day more information will be available. Motion to accept the report by Boyd Yochum. Second by Kenneth Meyer and carried.

Sons of The American Legion Liaison Mike Reimers reported that there are many Squadrons who haven't turned in their reports, and he asked the Districts to reach out to the Post Commanders for help. He shared there are over 6,000 Sons members in Nebraska, and they are a great help to their local Post. He expressed how important it is to reach out to their Sons members and invite them to attend events and meetings. Motion to accept the report by Mike Reimers. Second by Tom Crisman and carried.

Homeless Veterans Liaison report was given by Adjutant Salak. He shared that the annual Stand Down in Omaha was held in October 2022 at the UNO campus. Over 60 veterans received sleeping bags, small tents, received hygiene checkups, and haircuts. Veterans Moving Forward in Sarpy County provides temporary housing for homeless veterans and provides them with the items they need. He stated that there are about 33,000 homeless veterans in the U.S. Motion to accept the report by Dave Salak. Second by Larry Borchert and carried.

Athletic Committee Chairman Jody Moeller shared that he also serves as the National Vice Chairman for the Baseball Committee. He reported that the Athletic Committee met to select the sites for the 2023 Area and State tournaments, these will be announced tomorrow at the coach's meeting. He wanted to thank Don Kivineimi for his twenty years of service to the committee and thank Tim Riskowski and Jason Sidel for joining the committee. He shared that there were 283 teams that registered for the 2022 season, which is second nationally. He shared that travel teams have become a problem, and many students participate in both leagues and are required to fill

out a form for dual participation. Creighton Prep from Omaha made the ALWS this past season and he congratulated them on their season. National has created a new patch for the teams to wear on their uniforms. He stated that teams have a one-year grace period to get the new patches on their uniforms. He shared that the 100th anniversary of Legion Baseball will be in 2025 and planning has started for the event. Motion to accept the report by Jody Moeller. Second by Kenneth Meyer and carried.

Motion to send a letter from Nebraska to National to have a three-year grace period for teams to get the new baseball patch on their uniform by Nick Tramp. Second by Jerry Schulte and carried.

Legion Riders Liaison John Arias stated that there are 45 Chapters statewide with over 1,200 riders and there are four Assistant Liaisons. Chapters have been participating in Quilts of Valor presentations, funeral escorts, poker runs, and have been collecting donations for OCW, the Legacy Scholarship, and the State Patrol K-9 Initiative. They have ridden over 250,000 miles and donated over 10,000 hours to their communities. He shared that the 2022 State Romp was held in Ashland. There was a Legacy Run across Nebraska, and the ride raised \$3,525 for the national Legacy Fund. Grand Island Chapter 53 will be hosting the 2023 State Romp August 18 - 20, 2023. Their meeting will be at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday. Motion to accept the report by John Arias. Second by Ron Wiest and carried.

Historian Jennifer Laux and Department Service Officer Levi Bennett were excused due to health problems.

Publications & PR Committee Chairman Steven Bussen was absent.

Area A Vice Commander Carl Lorenzen stated that he had the names of two members for committee appointments. Area A Americanism 2 years, Gary Wachter of Herman Post 274 and Rehab and Employment 4 years, Edward Lautrup of Fort Calhoun Post 348. Motion by Julie Schnitzler to approve those appointments. Second by Kenneth Meyer and approved.

Alternate NEC Jim Costello provided a report on the College World Series (CWS) and the Legion's involvement. He shared that currently the Kiwanis club that he belongs enjoyed working with the Nebraska American Legion last year during the CWS. The partnership was beneficial, and there was an ad in the CWS program for the Nebraska American Legion this year. He stated that The American Legion Family has the opportunity to display the large US Flag on the field during the finals game, and he will need volunteers. He asked the DEC to discuss adjusting the Department Convention for future years. Adjutant Salak asked them to consider holding the Convention in late May. Motion to accept the report by Jim Costello. Second by Don Nelson and carried.

For the Good of The American Legion

NECman Fred Craigie stated that Nebraska had donated about \$15,800 to the Veterans & Children Foundation.

Gary Wooten asked Adjutant Salak to update the DEC on the state coins that were purchased last year. He stated that he would be doing so soon.

Tom Crisman asked the DEC if any action would be taken against those members who made false claims against other members and sent anonymous emails to DEC member employers. Commander Suchy stated that anything that was done previously will be let go, but any further claims will have action taken against them.

Adjutant Salak shared that there will be an AEF/NEF Auction in the back of the room after the Oratorical Contest. The Nebraska American Legion Family coins that were purchased by the Department are back on the registration table and they are \$10 apiece. There is an 8 & 40 basket raffle out there that supports the National Chapeau Lorene Bartos. Lottery tickets will be sold immediately following the Oratorical contest Saturday night.

Commander Suchy shared that the meeting will start at 8:00 a.m. in the morning and that Catholic Mass will be held at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. He stated that President Vicki Ozenbaugh and he are hosting a hospitality event at the new Norfolk Post 16 starting at 6:00 p.m.

Candidate announcements were made by John Henry Percy, Department Commander; Boyd Yochum, Senior Vice Commander; and Judy Walters, Area D. No candidate for Area A, Area B, or Area C at this time.

Having no further business to conduct at the Department Executive Committee, Chaplain Borzych provided a prayer and the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

David W. Salak
Department Adjutant