

**The American Legion
Department of Nebraska
Department Executive Committee
Minutes
January 19, 2024
Holiday Inn – Kearney, Nebraska**

The Department Executive Committee meeting of the Nebraska American Legion was called to order by Department Commander John-Henry Percy 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 Percy, Senior Vice Commander Boyd Yochum, Area A Vice Commander Robert Neel, Area B Vice Commander Don Patras, Area C Vice Commander Brendan Moore, Area D Vice Commander Judy Walters, Past Department Commander Gary Wooten, Past Department Commander Dan Benes, Past Department Commander Don Suchy, District 1 Commander Gary Sones, District 3 Commander Nick Tramp, District 4 Commander Steve Stanec, District 6 Commander Burdette Chappell, District 7 Commander Adam Schweitzer, District 8 Commander Rich Klinger, District 9 Commander Ron Wiest, District 10 Commander Don Nelson, District 11 Commander Tom Crisman, District 12 Commander Martin Neal, and District 15 Commander Bruce Gubser. National representatives in attendance were NEC Fred Craigie and Alternate NEC Jim Costello. Motion to seat District 2 member Jerry Landkamer by Bruce Gubser. Second by Robert Neel and carried. Motion to seat District 5 member Richard Colson by Don Nelson. Second by Tom Crisman and carried. District 13 was absent.

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

Commander Percy welcomed members and guests to this meeting. He reminded all DEC members to submit vouchers to Department Headquarters in a timely fashion. He asked all members to reach out to those members who have not yet paid for 2024 and recognized the Posts in each District that reached 100% already.

Commander Percy introduced NECman Fred Craigie for the introduction of National Vice Commander (Midwest Region) Raymond Vail of Kansas. He gave brief remarks.

Commander Percy asked for the reading of the minutes from the June 22 - 23, 2023, DEC meeting. Motion to suspend reading of the minutes and approve them by Don Nelson. Second by Tom Crisman and carried.

Commander Percy 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 Percy noted Consolidated Post Reports are due June 1, 2024. He thanked Past Department Commander Suchy 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. He also encouraged the District Commanders to make sure that the Squadrons in their District are turning in their CSRs.

Adjutant Salak shared a proposed change to the Employee Manual. This would add Juneteenth as a paid holiday, update the sick leave to 6 hours per month and personal leave to 2 hours per month, and allow employees to accrue their vacation monthly instead of yearly. Motion to approve the changes by Tom Crisman. Second by Burdette Chappell and carried.

Commander Percy presented the proposed 2024 Time & Place. Motion to accept by Ron Wiest. Second by Bruce Gubser and carried. Following are District Conventions only:

District	Date	Time	Location
District 1	Saturday, March 23, 2024	9:00 a.m. MST	Gordon Post 34
District 2	Sunday, March 17, 2024	1:00 p.m.	Creighton Community Center
District 3	Saturday, March 9, 2024	9:00 a.m.	Lyons Community Center
District 4	Saturday, April 6, 2024	10:00 a.m. MST	Gering Civic Center
District 5	Saturday, March 9, 2024	10:00 a.m.	North Platte Post 163
District 6	Saturday, March 3, 2024	9:00 a.m.	Doniphan Post 300
District 7	Saturday, March 16, 2024	10:00 a.m.	Columbus Post 84
District 8	Saturday, February 10, 2024	9:00 a.m.	Valley Post 58
District 9	Saturday, March 16, 2024	9:00 a.m.	Gosper County Senior Center
District 10	Saturday, February 10, 2024	10:00 a.m.	Nelson City Auditorium
District 11	Saturday, March 23, 2024	10:00 a.m.	Wilber Post 101
District 12	Saturday, March 9, 2024	9:00 a.m.	Weeping Water Post 237
District 13	Saturday, February 17, 2024	9:30 a.m.	Auburn Post 23
District 15	Tuesday, February 13, 2024	6:30 p.m.	Lincoln Elks Club

Commander Percy stated the 2024 Department Convention will be held June 20 - 23, 2024, in Kearney. All convention sessions for the Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons will be conducted at the Kearney Ramada.

Adjutant Salak shared the Washington Conference would be held February 24 – 28, 2024, at the Washington Hilton.

NEC Craigie brought greetings from National Commander Daniel Seehafer. He stated national has instituted a multi-year membership renewal on their website. Craigie stated that NEF had given out about \$350,000 in grants in 2022. He shared that the IRS had dictated that the Legacy Fund could no longer accept donations due to the amount in their account. National has decided to focus all future donations to the Veterans and Childrens Foundation (VCF). Craigie noted that national continues to hold their monthly Training Tuesdays, has their Basic Training on the website, and has other trainings on their website that members can take advantage of. The OCW program provided \$365,000 of grants to servicemembers, veterans, and their families. The NEC passed Resolution #17 Risk Management for Youth Programs that encourages Departments to establish policies and procedures for sexual abuse awareness and background checks. Craigie applauded Nebraska for already having these in place. He stated that the SAL Reserve Fund was over its allowed \$750,000 reserve amount, so they donated \$250,000 to the VCF. The NEC passed a resolution that opposes claims being filed by unaccredited parties and those who make veterans pay for those filings.

Adjutant Salak briefed the 2024 National Convention being held in New Orleans, Louisiana August 23 – 29, 2024. The Nebraska delegation will be housed at the Hilton Garden Inn with a room rate of \$149.00 per night plus 16.2% tax. First night's room deposit of \$173.38 will be due at Department Headquarters on July 5, 2024. Registration fee is \$35.00 per person. Nebraska is the host of the Tri-Stack Party.

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

Judy Walters attended the National American Legion College November 12 – 17, 2023. She stated that it was a life changing experience and that all veterans should apply to attend. Applications for the 2024 session are due to Department Headquarters by May 15, 2024.

Adjutant Salak provided updates to the new HQs building. There will be a museum directly inside the entrance that will house the memorabilia that is in Departments possession. Two bids were received for two new custom cabinets for the museum. Salak shared that PNC Helm agreed to use funds from the PNC Morgan Stanley account to purchase cabinets. Also, an outdoor sign had been installed on the headquarters building and it cost about \$5,000. He stated that PDC Suchy is working on getting the electric work done for it. Department is also

looking at having seven flag poles in front of the building. Currently, there is approximately \$11,000 in donations from previous Commander's projects and member donations for this project.

Adjutant Salak stated the 2024 Nebraska Legislative Day would be held February 2 at the State Capitol in Warner Chamber. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Commander Percy asked if there were any Post or Squadron cancellations. Adjutant Salak noted there were four this year. Mitchell Post 124 had submitted the correct paperwork to have their charter cancelled. Motion to accept the closing of Mitchell Post 124 by Gary Wooten. Second by Don Suchy and carried. Springfield Squadron 143 had submitted the correct paperwork to have their charter cancelled. Motion to accept the closing of Springfield Squadron 143 by Brendan Moore. Second by Bruce Gubser and carried. Gresham Post 13 and Gresham Squadron 13 had submitted the correct paperwork to have their charters cancelled. Motion to accept the closing of Gresham Post 13 and Gresham Squadron 13 by Tom Crisman. Second by Martin Neal and carried. Adjutant Salak reminded everyone that the cancelled Posts will not be officially cancelled until after the NEC Spring Meetings. They will still receive correspondence and need to submit a CPR or CSR. Salak also shared that Brunswick Post 357 in District 2, Alexandria Post 194 in District 11, and Hildreth Post 378 in District 10 are also in discussion about closing their Posts.

Commander Percy shared that National had passed a \$5.00 dues increase that will take effect July 1, 2024. Department is also discussing a \$5.00 dues increase to be voted on at Department Convention.

Commander Percy noted there were vacancies he is looking to fill. Athletic – Area A, Publications and PR – Area B, Area C, and Area D, and Rehab & Employment – Area C and Area D. Commander Percy asked for the approval of John Arias as the ALR Liaison for 1 year. Motion to approve the appointment by Tom Crisman. Second by Martin Neal and carried. Area B Vice Commander presented Jerry Schulte for the Pubs and PR Area B vacancy. Motion to approve the appointment by Nick Tramp. Second by Adam Schweitzer and carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Convention Committee Chairman Kenneth Schmid reported that 2025 Midyear Conference will be held January 16 - 19, 2025, at the Norfolk Lodge and Suites in Norfolk. The room rate will be \$109.00 a night. The 2026 Department Convention will be held June 25 - 28, 2026, at the Ramada Inn in Columbus for \$109.95 a night. The 2024 Department Convention will be held June 22 - 25, 2024 at the Ramada Inn in Kearney. The room rate will be \$84 a night. He also shared that the registration fee will remain at \$10. Motion to accept the report by Don Nelson. Second by Robert Neel and carried.

Americanism Committee Chairman Michael Hatfield reported that members present were Mike Hatfield, Roxanne Sones, JSSP Liaison Doug Frahm, and Assistant Adjutant Eric Martin. He shared that Mike Landkamer was excused because of a funeral and Dean Chase was absent because of illness. He stated that only twelve counties had reported about their County Government Day program. Hatfield stated that the 2023 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is Officer Andrew Ramsey of the Omaha Police Department and the 2023 Nebraska Firefighter/EMS Officer of the Year Dustin Guzman of the Fire Department. Teacher of the Year applications are due May 15th to the Department. The State Oratorical finals are at 6:00 p.m. Saturday, with the National finals in May in Hillsdale, Michigan. The Junior Law Cadet applications and Eagle Scout applications are due March 15th to Headquarters. The committee discussed increasing the scholarship amounts for these two programs. It was recommended that the Americanism Committee create a poster similar to the Boy' State poster to better share the programs. Motion to accept the report by Tom Crisman. Second by Bruce Gubser and carried.

Jr. Shooting Sports Liaison Doug Frahm attended the national competition held July 20 - 22, 2023, in Colorado Springs, CO. Nebraska had one competitor, Ashley Carr of the Guns R Us 4H Club in Alliance, attend the national competition. The 33rd Annual Air Rifle National Championships began in September and four Nebraska clubs have registered. The State Champions for Nebraska were: Sporter Class – Ashley Carr of the Guns R Us 4H Club; Team State Champion – Sara Thomsen of Pierce County Shooting Sports 4H Club; and State Team

Champions – Pierce County Shooting Sports 4H Club. Motion to accept the report by Robert Neel. Second by Tom Crisman and carried.

Boys State Committee Chairman Doug Boldt shared the minutes from the November Boys' State Committee and Boys' State Corporation meetings. He stated that the dates for the 2024 session are June 2 - 8, 2024, and the sponsorship cost will be \$400.00 and then the delegate will need to bring a \$25 registration fee to Boys' State. Motion to accept the report by Gary Wooten. Second by Robert Neel and carried.

Children & Youth Committee Chairman Donald Nelsen reported that Julie Schnitzler, Greg Smolik, and ALA Children & Youth Chairman Vicki Colson attended the morning Children & Youth Committee meeting. Member Mike Sheridan was excused due to illness. The committee decided to give \$100 to the Sunday morning guest speakers program. The committee discussed the CPRs and how to get more Posts to fill out the C&Y section. The committee discussed awards for the CPRs but tabled it to the next meeting. Motion to accept the report by Robert Neel. Second by Burdette Chappell and carried.

Membership Committee Chairman Steve Bartos reported that the Membership Committee met this morning with Dave Bruckner and Richard Baxter being present. Gary Kruse was absent. The committee looked at the membership awards for 2025 and will be approving the final version at the Department Convention. He stated he attended the Finance meeting and that a dues increase resolution and a Post 500 dues increase resolution will be going out to all Posts. Bartos addressed the multi-year membership renewal that national released in December. Motion to accept the report by Bruce Gubser. Second by Don Patras and carried.

Finance Committee Chairman Daniel Stramel reported that the committee met at Headquarters in December 2023, 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, Department Headquarters move, the baseball budget, how frugal the Department Staff have been, and new line items on the budget. Motion to accept the report by Ron Wiest. Second by Don Nelson and carried.

Finance Officer Mark Novak reported that the department finances are under stress after the 2022 - 23 fiscal year finished with a negative balance with withdrawals from the investment account. This was partially because of the Headquarters move, but also because of membership decline. As of the December 31, 2023, financial statement, the Department is ahead of the estimated expenses by \$73,436 because of the watchful eyes of Department Headquarters staff. The markets were down this year and the balances as of December 31, 2023, were as follows: PIF \$790,702, Scholarship \$95,858, Hurlbert \$69,979, Past National Commander \$150,429 and Stoldorf \$72,140 and will have a \$8,000 check deposited soon. Investment funds are expected to generate \$31,000 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. He spoke about the dues increase that the Department is putting forward. He shared that the Auxiliary is looking to do a quit claim deed to show their 1/3 ownership of the building. Motion to accept the report by Don Patras. Second by Burdette Chappell and carried. Motion to allow for a quit claim deed by Robert Neel. Second by Gary Wooten. Discussion was held. Motion to table the motion by Dan Benes. Second by Don Nelson and carried.

Publications & PR Committee Chairman Carl Lorenzen reported that the committee looked at the Constitution and Bylaws definition of the committee duties. Once a full committee is formed, he would like to execute changes to be in compliance with Bylaws duties. He asked that Richard Binder be appointed as the Area C committee member. Motion to accept the report by Martin Neal. Second by Bruce Gubser and Carried.

Commander Percy asked for a motion to appoint Richard Binder to the Pubs and PR Committee. Motion to approve the appointment by Burdette Chappell. Second by Bruce Gubser and carried.

Scholarship Committee Chairman Carroll Mohlman reported that the committee had awarded 16 scholarships in the 2023 year in the amount of \$500 each. There was 1 Hurlbert, 5 Boschult, and 10 Maynard Jensen

scholarships. All 2024 scholarships are due to Department by March 1. He thanked his committee for their work this past year. Motion to accept the report by Dan Benes. Second by Tom Crisman 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. Motion to accept the report by Don Nelson. Second by Adam Schweitzer and carried.

Sons of The American Legion Liaison Mike Reimers reported there are many Squadrons who haven't turned in their reports and who have zero membership turned in. He shared there are over 6,000 Sons members in Nebraska. He expressed how important it is to reach out to their Sons members and invite them to attend events and meetings. He stated that there would be some motions coming from the Sons to be voted on at Department Convention. Motion to accept the report by Martin Neal. Second by Robert Neel and carried.

Athletic Committee Chairman Jody Moeller reported the Committee met to select the forty-nine sites for the 2024 Area and State tournaments and they will be announced tomorrow at the coach's meeting. He shared there were 275 teams that registered for the 2023 season. Lincoln Post 3 Carpet Land finished second at the ALWS. He shared travel teams have become a problem, and many students participate in both leagues and are required to fill out a form for dual participation. He stated the committee is looking to create a new division of Legion Baseball for 10- to 13-year-old players and that the 100th anniversary of Legion Baseball will be in 2025 and planning has started for the event. Motion to accept the report by Robert Neel. Second by Gary Wooten and carried.

Homeless Veterans Liaison Bruce Husted reported that the annual Stand Down in Omaha was held in November 2023 at the UNO campus. Over 60 veterans received sleeping bags, small tents, received hygiene checkups, and haircuts. He shared that Gold Star Mothers of Nebraska have been providing meals for the veterans at Victory Village in Lincoln and Victory Garden in Omaha. The city of Omaha is looking at starting to build tiny homes for homeless veterans. Motion to accept the report by Robert Neel. Second by Rich Klinger and carried.

Department Historian Jennifer Laux reported she had finished the 2022-23 Department Yearbook received 1st place at National's contest. She attended Fall Meetings and watched the Yearbook judging and attended some Historian training. She shared the 2023-24 Yearbook contest would be electronic next year and that the Post History Contest through National will be ending. Laux stated she continues to provide articles for the Legionnaire newspaper and maintain the Department's website. Motion to accept the report by Tom Crisman. Second by Don Suchy and carried.

American Legion Riders Liaison and Department Service Officer Levi Bennett were excused. Rehabilitation and Employment Committee currently does not have a Chairman.

For the Good of The American Legion

Commander Percy asked the DEC for approval to write a letter to the counties that do not have certified Veterans Service Officers and express how important it is for the veterans. Motion to approve the writing of these letters by Martin Neal. Second by Tom Crisman and carried.

Candidate announcements were made by Boyd Yochum, Department Commander; Judy Walters, Senior Vice Commander; Jim Costello, NECman; and Gary Wooten, John-Henry Percy, and Mike Reimers, Alternate NECman. No candidate for Area A, Area B, Area C, or Area D 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