

**The American Legion
Department of Nebraska
Department Executive Committee
Minutes
January 21, 2022
Ramada Inn – Columbus, Nebraska**

The Department Executive Committee meeting of the Nebraska American Legion was called to order by Department Commander Dan Benes 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 Benes, Senior Vice Commander Don Suchy, Area A Vice Commander Michael Sheridan, Area B Vice Commander William Berney, Area D Vice Commander Monte Warner, Past Department Commander Jim Costello, District 1 Commander Judy Walters, District 4 Commander Beth Linn, District 7 Commander Jerry Schulte, District 8 Commander Ron Riley, District 9 Commander Dennis Kennedy, District 11 Commander Rodd Paul, District 12 Commander William Lawrence, District 13 Commander Larry Borcher, and District 15 Commander Eddy Muggy. National representative in attendance was NEC Fred Craigie and Alternate NEC Jim Costello. Motion to seat District 3 member John Ludwig by Michael Sheridan. Second by Beth Linn and carried. Motion to seat District 5 Vice Commander Richard Colson by Rodd Paul. Second by Larry Borcher and carried. Motion to seat District 6 member Doug Boldt by William Lawrence. Second by Beth Linn and carried. Motion to seat District 10 Vice Commander Don Nelson by Beth Linn. Second by Jerry Schulte and carried. Past Department Commander Lyle Bartels, Past Department Commander Gary Wooten, and Area C Vice Commander James Doyen were excused. District 2 absent.

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

Commander Benes 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.

Commander Benes asked for the reading of the minutes from the June 24 - 25, 2021 DEC meeting. Motion to suspend reading of the minutes and approve them with two changes by Beth Linn. Second by Rodd Paul and carried.

Commander Benes 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 Benes noted that Consolidated Post Reports are due June 1, 2022. He thanked Past Department Commander Wooten for his work on them last year and being the only Department to be 100%. 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 presented the proposed 2021 District Convention schedule. Other changes to the District events calendar include District 15 Boys'/Girls' State Orientation and that Commander Benes will not be able to attend District 8 Convention due to the Lincoln Pilgrimage being held the same day in Illinois. Motion to accept the following schedule by Jerry Schulte. Second by Beth Linn and carried. Commander Wooten asked that a copy of the District Convention program including the physical address of the location be forwarded to those participating. Department Staff and Officers will be attending these events, if someone else is wanted they will have to be invited to attend.

District	Date	Time	Location
District 1	Saturday, April 9, 2022	9:00 a.m.	Ainsworth Post 79
District 2	Sunday, March 13, 2022	9:00 a.m.	Atkinson Post 86
District 3	Saturday, March 19, 2022	9:00 a.m.	Pender Community Center
District 4	Saturday, April 2, 2022	10:00 a.m.	Morrill Post 10
District 5	Saturday, March 12, 2022	10:00 a.m.	Arthur Post 207
District 6	Saturday, March 5, 2022	9:30 a.m.	Grand Island Post 53
District 7	Saturday, March 12, 2022	10:00 a.m.	Howells Post 155
District 8	Saturday, February 12, 2022	9:00 a.m.	Papillion Post 32
District 9	Saturday, March 19, 2022	9:30 a.m.	McCook Community Center
District 10	Saturday, February 26, 2022	10:00 a.m.	Edgar Post 248
District 11	Saturday, March 26, 2022	10:00 a.m.	Crete Post 147
District 12	Saturday, March 12, 2022	9:00 a.m.	Hickman Community Center
District 13	Saturday, February 19, 2022	9:30 a.m.	Sterling Post 140
District 15	Tuesday, February 8, 2022	6:30 p.m.	Lincoln Elks Club

Commander Benes stated that the 2022 Department Convention will be held June 23 - 26, 2022, in Columbus. All convention sessions for the American Legion, Auxiliary, and Sons of the American Legion will be conducted at the Columbus Ramada – 265 33rd Avenue – Columbus.

Adjutant Salak shared that the Washington Conference would be held virtually again this year.

NEC Craigie brought greetings from National Commander Paul Dillard. He introduced National Vice Commander (Midwest Region) Angel Narvaez (PR). 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. He briefed the DEC about the sponsorship of an Indy car by National. NEC Craigie shared that the Mission Blue Post Assistance program is still going, and many Nebraska Posts have received grants. He reiterated that Nebraska was the only Department with 100% CPR reporting last year. He shared that the National SAL donated \$750,000 to the Veterans and Children Foundation and \$130,000 to American Legion Baseball due to their reserve fund reaching its max capacity.

Adjutant Salak briefed the DEC on the 2022 National Convention being held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 26 – September 1, 2022. The Nebraska delegation will be housed at the Drury Plaza Hotel with a room rate of \$139 per night plus 15.5% tax. Parking rates are \$22.00 per day for self-park and there is no valet service. The hotel will offer a hospitality time each evening from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. and it will include free appetizers and three free beverages during National Convention. First night's room deposit of \$160.55 will be due at Department Headquarters on July 8, 2022. Registration fee remains at \$25.00 per person. North 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.

Commander Benes and Daryl Harrison gave a report of their respective National American Legion College experiences. Harrison attended the postponed 2020 session November 14 – 19, 2021 and Commander Benes attended the 2021 session December 11 – 17, 2021. They both thanked the DEC for allowing them to attend and for the experience they were able to have.

Adjutant Salak stated the 2022 Nebraska Legislative Day had been cancelled due to HVAC construction at the State Capitol.

Adjutant Salak shared information on all Posts filing their 990s. He stated that if the form isn't filed once every three years the Post will lose their tax-exempt status. Posts should also be incorporated with the State of

Nebraska to protect its members from any legal recourse. Posts can check if they are incorporated on the Secretary of States website.

Commander Benes noted that Ralston Post 373 had submitted the correct paperwork to have charter cancelled. He shared that Adjutant Salak, PDC Costello, Area A Vice Commander Sheridan, and himself had attended their Post meeting and no one was interested in taking over officer positions, and that Lynn Bergman had been holding all of the offices and doing all work. Motion to accept the closing of Ralston Post 373 by Beth Linn. Second by William Lawrence 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.

Commander Benes requested the approval of Father Alex Borzych as Department Chaplain indefinitely. Motion to approve the appointment by Jerry Schulte. Second by Mike Sheridan and carried. Commander Benes shared that there are two appointments that he will be looking to fill. Robert Kasl resigned from the Americanism Committee and an Area C member needs to be appointed for the remainder of his three-year term. Ron Riley has become the District 8 Commander and can no longer be on the Publications & PR Committee. An Area A member needs to be appointed for the remainder of his four-year term.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Historian Report provided by Adjutant Salak on Historian Jennifer Laux's behalf. Historian Laux reported that she had finished the 2020 - 2021 Department Yearbook and submitted it to Department Headquarters for final review. She stated that there was lots of content for the Yearbook and hoped that the next years book would capture the Commander's year as well. Her Yearbook received second place in the National Competition. Finally, she noted she continued to submit an article for all of the Legionnaire Newspapers and that she continued to maintain the Department website. Motion to accept the report by Jim Costello. Second by Beth Linn and carried.

Jr. Shooting Sports Report provided by Adjutant Salak on JSSP Liaison Doug Frahm's behalf. Frahm reported that Nebraska had four clubs registered for the 2020-21 National Competition. Shelby Carr of the Guns R US 4H Club received the highest score in the Sporter discipline for Nebraska and she also finished in fifth place at the National Championships in that discipline. He reported that five Nebraska clubs have registered for the 2021-22 National Competition. The National Competition will be held July 20-23, 2022, in Colorado Springs, CO. Motion to accept the report by Jim Costello. Second by Beth Linn and carried.

Homeless Veterans Liaison Bruce Husted reported that several organizations have been collecting and donating several trailers of food, clothing, and hygiene items to the VA for homeless veterans and their families. The annual Stand Down in Omaha was held on October 28, 2021. Over 150 veterans received sleeping bags, small tents, and other items. He shared that HR 2190 – Helping Homeless Veterans Act of 2021 permanently establishes a program to assist homeless and veterans in need. Motion to accept the report by Jim Costello. Second by William Lawrence and carried.

Boys State Committee Report was provided by committee member Doug Boldt. Motion to suspend the reading of the minutes and accept them as written by Beth Linn. Second by Don Nelson and carried. Committeeman Boldt and Adjutant Salak shared the dates for the 2022 session are June 5 - 11, 2022 and the sponsorship cost will remain at \$375.00. Currently, the session will be in person, but a final decision will be made in March or April. They expressed how important it is to have the support for the program from all Posts in Nebraska. Last year many Posts stated they would not sponsor a young man for the session if it was held virtually. Adjutant Salak reminded everyone 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 Jim Costello. Second by Rodd Paul and carried.

Children & Youth Committee Chairman Ken Hanel reported that Bill Nelsen, Bruce Gubser, Don Hilger, and Vicki Colson attended the morning Children & Youth Committee meeting. Hanel shared that the committee reviewed the 2020-21 Children & Youth citations, and they will be handed out at District Conventions. The committee discussed the Children & Youth luncheon and if it should be held in June. Motion to accept the report by Michael Sheridan. Second by Monte Warner and carried.

Scholarship Committee Chairman Carroll Mohlman reported that the deadline for Maynard Jensen and Boschult scholarship applications is March 1, 2022. Applicants for this scholarship must be a Nebraska resident who is going to attend a Nebraska school of higher education. The judging for these scholarships will take place in April. He asked all members in attendance to promote the scholarships as the number of applications has been declining. He shared that the committee would be discussing increasing the dollar amount of the scholarship at their next meeting. Any recommendation will be presented to the DEC in June. Motion to accept the report by Larry Borchert. Second by Rodd Paul and carried.

A recess was called until 1:00 to allow for lunch.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

District 6 Commander Julie Schnitzler arrived and was seated at the DEC.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Americanism Committee Chairman Jim Scott stated that Mike Hatfield shared the Oratorical report. The 2021 National Oratorical finals were not held due to COVID. The 2021 Nebraska winner, Sarah Lasso of Columbus, and all other Department finalists were able to receive a \$2,000 grant from The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The State Oratorical finals are at 6:00 p.m. Saturday, with the National finals in April in Indianapolis, Indiana. Chairman Scott noted that only seven County Government Day reports had been submitted to Department Headquarters to date. Awards being presented at the Midyear Conference include Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for 2021 Officer Christopher Goley of the Papillion Police Department and Nebraska Firefighter/EMS Officer of the Year James E. Liptrott of the Offutt Air Force Base and Emergency Services. Also being honored is the 2021 Nebraska American Legion Baseball Player of the Year Cole Kreber. Motion to accept the report by Rodd Paul. Second by William Berney and carried.

Convention Committee Chairman Dave Smith shared that he was the only committee member that showed up, and none of them had contacted him about not attending. He reported that the 2022 Department Convention would be held June 23 - 26, 2022, at the Columbus Ramada in Columbus for \$99.95 a night with a hot breakfast. The 2023 Midyear Conference will be held January 13 - 15, 2023, at the Norfolk Lodge in Norfolk for \$100.00 a night with hot breakfast. The 2023 Department Convention will be held June 20 - 23, 2024, at the Ramada Inn in Kearney for \$84.00 a night with a hot breakfast. He also shared that the registration fee will remain at \$10. Chairman Smith stated he was resigning from the committee due to his health. Motion to accept the report by Jerry Schulte. Second by William Lawrence and carried.

Membership Committee Chairman Steve Bartos stated that the Membership Committee met this morning with Dave Bruckner and himself being present. Richard Baxter and Douglas Vance were excused. The committee discussed the Stoldorf Trust and wanted more information to see if these incentive awards were the best use of the \$4,000. He shared that they discussed the new MyLegion.org website and they believed many Post officers are still having issues with it. Chairman Bartos reminded the District Commanders that members of the Membership Committee are willing to travel to their District meetings, but they need to be invited. The committee looked at the membership awards for 2023 and will be approving the final version at the Department Convention. He stated that as of the January 14 membership report that there were a few Posts who were short of the minimum ten members, and many other Posts have more than ten members, but are short of the 80% mark. The committee will be contacting District Commanders and Posts to check in on them. Motion to accept the report by Michael Sheridan. Second by Larry Borchert and carried.

Finance Committee Chairman Daniel Stramel stated that the committee met at Headquarters in December 2021, 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, how frugal the Department Staff have been, and the changing of the current bequest policy in the constitution and bylaws. Motion to accept the report by Jim Costello. Second by Rodd Paul and carried.

Finance Officer Mark Novak reported that the department finances are in good shape and the 2020 - 21 fiscal year finished with a positive balance with no withdrawals from the investment account. As of the December 31, 2021, financial statement, the Department is ahead of the estimated expenses by \$64,691 because of the watchful eyes of Department Headquarters staff. The markets were up this year and our Permanent Investment Fund (PIF) grew by over \$300,000. The balances as of December 31, 2021, are as follows: PIF \$1,087,684, Scholarship \$141,042, Hurlbert \$75,574, Past National Commander \$156,734 and Stoldorf \$56,784 and will have a \$8,000 check deposited soon. Investment funds are expecting to generate \$30,000 worth of dividends and interest in the next 12 months. Novak shared that there is a Bequest Fund with Morgan Stanley that sits at \$82,927. These funds are currently set aside for the HQ move. 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. Motion to accept the report by Richard Colson. Second by Julie Schnitzler and carried.

Past Department Commander Lyle Bartels arrived and was seated at the DEC.

Publications & PR Committee Chairman Ron Riley reported that the PR Committee met this morning, and two members were present. The committee discussed working with NE-ALPA to help those who need technology assistance. The committee will be presenting an Outstanding Public Relations award on Saturday. This will happen at both Mid-Year and Convention. Motion to accept the report by Larry Borchert. Second by William Berney and carried.

Rehabilitation and Employment Committee Chairman Daryl Harrison reported that the next Training Tuesday through National will be about Legislative priorities and how to talk to your representatives. He shared that the Veterans Homes in Nebraska are not accepting residents because of the staffing shortage at the facilities. Harrison passed out information from national on a resolution that focuses on veteran suicide. He also reported that he had received an email regarding Employers employing veterans. He asked Beth Linn to speak more about this program since she is on the National Committee. She shared that there are nine awards that are given to employers who hire and employ veterans. Currently, only two applications have been received at National, so the committee extended the deadline. Motion to accept by Jerry Schulte. Second by Ron Riley and carried.

POW/MIA Liaison Boyd Yochum reported that he was really enjoying the appointment and was not aware what was all involved. He shared that he was getting the information for his monthly articles from DPAA and Task Force Omega. He thanked Fred Baumert for contacting him regarding POW/MIA Michael Klinger. He shared that he received a phone call from POW/MIA Michael Bosiljevac's wife, Kay Schnieder, and she thanked him from writing the article for the Nebraska Legionnaire about her husband. Motion to accept the report by Monte Warner. Second by Michael Sheridan and carried.

Sons of The American Legion Liaison Mike Reimers reported that the Detachment Sons officers will be contacting each Squadron who has not yet sent in their Squadron Data Report. The Sons will be pushing for Squadrons to send in their Consolidated Squadron Report to Detachment on time. There are two new Squadrons and there are a few more in the works. He shared there are over 6,000 Sons members in Nebraska, and they are a great help to their local Post. Motion to accept the report by William Berney. Second by Michael Sheridan and carried.

Athletic Committee Chairman Jody Mohlman reported that the Athletic Committee met to select the sites for the 2022 Area and State tournaments, these will be announced tomorrow at the Coach's meeting. He shared that there 274 teams that registered for the 2021 season. He stated that the 2021 Regional Tournament was held in Hastings at Duncan Field in August of 2021 and was well attended by both Nebraska and out of state fans. 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. The Athletic Committee is looking at creating a third division of baseball for younger students aged 10 - 13. The target date for this is the 2023 season. 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 Jerry Schulte. Second by Rodd Paul 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. There was a Legacy Run across Nebraska in September, and the ride started at Benson Post 112 and ending at Gering Post 36. \$1,400 was raised for the national Legacy Fund. He stated that South Central Liaison Greg Martin spearheaded a relief event for the people affected by the Kentucky Tornadoes in December worth over \$150,000. Motion to accept the report by Mike Sheridan. Second by Jerry Schulte and carried.

Commander Benes read a letter of resignation from Don Kivineimi of the Athletic Committee. Kivineimi will resign effective August 15, 2022, but recommended Tim Riskowski as his replacement. Commander Benes asked the DEC to approve his resignation and his recommendation. Motion to approve by Jerry Schulte. Second by Ron Riley and carried.

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 to hosts a team during the CWS, and Kiwanis is looking to partner with the Nebraska American Legion. He believes this partnership will be beneficial for both organizations. He stated the only challenge is the CWS is held the week before and during the Department Convention. There will be an ad in the CWS program for the Nebraska American Legion this year.

Adjutant Salak provided an update on the Mission Blue Grants through National. He noted dozens of Posts have submitted their applications and that they have been approved.

Past National Commander Mike Helm asked for a moment of personal privilege. He shared information about National's Veterans & Children's Foundation and the ways to donate and learn more about the foundation.

A ten-minute recess was taken.

NEC Craigie introduced National Vice Commander (Midwest Region) Angel Narvaez (PR) to the DEC.

Commander Benes shared that he spoke to the two parties involved in the Papillion Post 32 hearing during the recess. The parties worked out their differences and the matter was closed. Hearing was cancelled.

For the Good of The American Legion

Jerry Schulte moved that the DEC approve the purchase hundreds of various stickers from Emblem Sales that would be divided up between District Commanders to hand out at their respective meetings. Total cost is \$1,495 plus shipping and tax. Second by Ron Riley. Discussion was held. Finance Officer argued Districts should use the membership rebate that comes from Department to purchase their own stickers. Motion failed.

Candidate announcements were made by Don Suchy, Department Commander; Daryl Harrison, Senior Vice Commander; Fred Craigie, National Executive Committeeman; and Jim Costello, Alternate National Executive Committeeman. No candidate for Area A, Area B, Area C, or Area D at this time.

Julie Schnitzler moved that a thank you be sent on behalf of the Nebraska American Legion to Americanism Director Jill Druskis from Nebraska Post 331 since she is retiring from National Headquarters after fourteen years. Second by Jerry Schulte and carried.

Commander Benes shared that Catholic Mass will be held at 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. He shared that there is an Afghan fundraiser on the back table.

Adjutant Salak shared that Columbus Post 84 invited everyone out to the Post and lottery tickets will be sold immediately following the Oratorical contest.

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

David W. Salak
Department Adjutant

APPROVED