



American Legion Post 543  
Saint James, NC 28461

SUBJECT: General Membership Meeting Minutes

DATE: Wednesday July 22, 2020

LOCATION: Virtual Meeting

- 1) Call to Order: (Freeman) Using the Zoom virtual meeting tool, members were able to join the video conference via their computer, tablet, or phone. Those without this capability were able to dial in and participate without a video connection. The meeting was called to order at 7pm.
- 2) Virtual Posting of the Colors and National Anthem: (Freeman)
  - a) The colors were posted virtually using video of the Honor Guard's 4<sup>th</sup> of July presentation. The National Anthem was also played during the video.
  - b) The Preamble to American Legion Constitution was projected and members were asked to recite it to themselves.
- 3) Welcoming Guests & Sick Call: (Freeman)
  - a) The Commander welcomed all those that had logged in and requested that everyone mute their respective devices unless or until they had a question or comment.
  - b) Rick Sessa reported the sad news that longtime member Pete Erbe passed away the previous week.
  - c) The following were reported on sick call:
    - i) Tom Bednarczyk
    - ii) Wilson Harrison
    - iii) Mary Kay Romig
  - d) The Commander welcomed new member Dennis Schmidt, a retired Army vet with service in Vietnam and Europe. Served in the Army Acquisition for 35 years and moved to St. James in December 2016.
- 4) Introduction of Officers and Committee Chairs: (Freeman)
  - a) Officers for 2020-2021 (Attachment 1)
    - i) George Freeman, Commander
    - ii) Bill Morgan, Vice Commander Resource Development
    - iii) Tom Bednarczyk, Chaplain
    - iv) Dan Bennett, Deputy Vice Commander Active Duty Support
    - v) George Freeman, Commander
    - vi) Steve Muir, Service Officer
    - vii) Mark Lieberman, Sergeant-at-Arms
    - viii) Rick Sessa, Vice Commander, Membership

- ix) Chuck Blackburn, Deputy Vice Commander Americanism (Excused)
  - x) Doug Pratt, Finance Officer
  - xi) John Muuss, Public Affairs Officer
  - xii) Tom Balbert, Historian
  - xiii) Doc Liberty, Judge Advocate
- b) Committee Chairmen: (Attachment 2)
- i) Honors & Ceremonies: Bill Morgan
  - ii) Veterans Memorial: Doug Elznic
  - iii) Elections: Tom Bednarczyk
  - iv) St. James Military Appreciation Day: Bill Morgan
  - v) Finance: Doug Pratt
  - vi) Membership: Rick Sessa
  - vii) National Security: Dan Bennett
  - viii) Americanism: Chuck Blackburn
  - ix) Children & Youth: Chuck Blackburn
  - x) Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation: Steve Muir
  - xi) House & Entertainment: Mark Lieberman
  - xii) Visiting & Comfort: Tom Bednarczyk
  - xiii) Public Relations: John Muuss
- 5) Approval of Minutes: (Freeman) Minutes of the February 26, 2020 General Membership Meeting were approved without alteration.
- 6) Membership Report: (Sessa) (Attachment 3)
- a) July started a new year for the Post – time to renew your membership is now! You can renew
    - i) By mail: send renewal to Rick Sessa at 2952 St. James Dr., Southport, NC 28461-1066
    - ii) Online: [www.legion.org/renewals](http://www.legion.org/renewals)
    - iii) See our Post website (<https://www.npost543.org/> for additional information
  - b) Post membership goal for 2020-2021 is 236. Currently at 122 renewed members (52.2%).
  - c) The Commander expressed his thanks to Rick Sessa and the entire Membership Committee for their outstanding efforts in growing our membership.
- 7) Finance Report: (Pratt)
- a) The Commander opened the discussion of the budget with a brief discussion and presentation of the financial challenges the Post faced/faces during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Attachment 4)
  - b) The Finance Officer, Doug Pratt, then reviewed the methodology used to develop the budget and the definitions of budget Priorities 1-4. (Attachment 5)
  - c) Even though the projected donations and income for 2020-2021 are half of what they were in 2019-2020, the proposed budget will fund all local veteran, children and youth, and community support activities and programs at or near the same level as last year (Priority 1-3). Budget lines for Priority 4 programs will be reevaluated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the fiscal year and funded as/if income and donations exceed projections.
  - d) After a brief discussion, the revised budget was approved by membership vote without alteration. (Attachment 6)

- 8) Presentation of Post Awards (Freeman)
- a) The following Post Members were awarded the Meritorious Service Medal:
    - Doug Pratt
    - Steve Muir
    - Bill Morgan
    - Tom Bednarczyk
    - Rick Sessa
    - Don Cunningham
    - Dennis Ryan
    - Chuck Blackburn
    - Kirk Davis
    - Pom Pomeroy
    - John Muuss
    - Jim Hilty
    - Mike Fegan
    - Doug Elznic
  - b) The following “Friends of the Post” were awarded the Meritorious Service Medal:
    - Ron Burdoo
    - Linda Burdoo
    - Paul Murphy
  - c) The following Post members were named “Legionnaires of the Year for their exceptionally outstanding service to the Post and the community:
    - Steve Muir
    - Tom Bednarczyk
    - Don Cunningham
  - d) Membership Recruiting awards were presented to: Chuck Blackburn, Don Cunningham, Bob Duke, Mike Fegan, Dennis Feltz, George Freeman (w/wreath), Steve Muir, Pom Pomeroy, Doug Pratt, Paul Witmer, and Rick Sessa (w/wreath & Century Club shield).
- 9) Officer & Committee Reports
- a) Commander’s Remarks: (Freeman)
    - i) Membership: Uninterrupted growth, over 230 strong
    - ii) Financially Sound:
      - (1) Met all essential mission elements through FY 2019 – 2020
      - (2) Successfully addressed constraints presented by COVID-19
      - (3) Plan in place to assure successful mission attainment through 2021
    - iii) Internally:
      - (1) We are taking care of one another.
      - (2) Committees are continuing to come on-line with increased members participating.
      - (3) Discernable increased impact on the community we serve.
    - iv) Externally
      - (1) Troon on-board as the SJMAD Title Sponsor
      - (2) Formal agreement executed between the Post and owners of Cape Fear Cemetery
      - (3) Formal agreement executed between TOSJ and the Post (Monument, Community Center Usage & Storage of Post Materials)

- b) SJMAD: (Morgan)
  - i) Seeking volunteers to assist with donation solicitations to support Military Appreciation Day (MAD).
    - (1) Solicit businesses
    - (2) Become a Neighborhood Captain.
    - (3) Seeking volunteers to assist with our Concert in the Woodlands Park, 23 October.
    - (4) Selling tickets.
    - (5) Set up and clean up support.
  - ii) Seeking volunteers to assist with our MAD Golf Tournament, 3 October 2020.
    - (1) Set up and recovery support.
    - (2) Selling raffle tickets.
    - (3) Registration activities.
- c) Honors and Ceremonies
  - i) The Honor Guard supported a request for a video to be part of the Southport – Oak Island Chamber of Commerce 4th of July virtual celebration. The video was shown on July 2nd by the Chamber of Commerce. The final version is on the Post website.
  - ii) The Honor Guard has been asked to provide Funeral Honors for a couple of vets in the local area. Most funeral homes in the area are now aware of this service and the Honor Guard expects an increase in the number of requests for this honor.
  - iii) Service Flags for Cape Fear Memorial Cemetery: The Post has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in place with Peacock, Newman, and White Funeral Services for the Post to place wreaths on the graves of Veterans during the holiday season at Cape Fear Memorial Garden on Southport-Supply Road. Additionally, the MOA enables the Post to display and maintain serviceability of the American and respective service flags to be flown at the cemetery on a daily basis.
- d) Americanism/Children and Youth (Blackburn)
  - i) Chuck reviewed the various scholarship and oratorical contest awards presented by the Post to local students.
  - ii) He also reported that Nicholas Berry, a 2020 graduate of Brunswick County Early College High School who was selected as Post 543's Delegate to Tar Heel Boys State wrote about his experience at Boys State in his admission essay for college. Not only was he admitted to UNC Chapel Hill, he received a full scholarship.
- e) National Security/Active Duty Support (Bennett): Dan is working with the Commander of the Oak Island Coast Guard Station to identify a date/time for the presentation of the ceremonial bugle that the Post has purchased.
- f) Service Officer Report/Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation: (Muir)
  - i) Assisted 9 Veterans in last 3 months, including 4 Post members.
  - ii) Have been successful in increasing compensation entitlement or securing benefits in several cases.
  - iii) VA Winston-Salem remains closed during COVID-19

- iv) Compensation/Pension Exams
  - (1) Currently on hold but exams are starting to be scheduled. If you are scheduled for an Exam, DO NOT MISS IT.
  - (2) Once the exam is completed, the timeframe for a decision is running 30-60 days. Any benefits adjustment will be from date VA received the claim, i.e. retroactive.
- v) IMPORTANT - if your dependency status changes (marriage, child, divorce, death, etc.) you must notify the VA if you are receiving VA benefits. Especially important if you relocated to SJP and never thought about letting VA know of your relocation.
- vi) Agent Orange Update - Senate introduced amendment to the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) adding 3 conditions for presumptive service connection due to AO exposure:
  - (1) Bladder cancer
  - (2) Hypothyroidism
  - (3) Parkinson's-like symptoms.
- vii) Post 543 has established a Veterans Assistance Committee -Join the team to help us help veterans!
  
- g) Public Relations (Cunningham)
  - i) Don reviewed the Post 543 quarterly newsletter published and mailed by the Post. Contact Don Cunningham if you do not receive a mailed copy.
  - ii) The Post has received significant coverage in local media such as Cat Tales and the State Port Pilot. Keep up the good work!
  
- h) House and Entertainment (Lieberman): Mark reviewed the Post's highly successful support of two local restaurants, Bella Cucina and the Southport Smokehouse.
  
- 10) Recent and Coming Events
  - a) The Commander reviewed the many activities the Post had sponsored and participated in and thanked all for their tremendous support and teamwork.
  - b) The Commander also reminded all to go to the Post website ([ncpost543.org](http://ncpost543.org)) for details on scheduled and planned events.
  
- 11) The next Post General Membership Meeting will be held virtually September 23, 2020, at 7:00PM. Log in/dial in instructions will be sent out in advance and posted on the website.
  
- 12) Closing Remarks, Ceremony & Adjournment (Freeman)
  - a) George thanked everyone for their continued support and efforts.
  - b) A video of the retirement of the colors, along with Taps was played.
  - c) Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

CHRIS ROMIG  
Adjutant

GEORGE R. FREEMAN  
Commander

Attachment 1



**Our Post 2020 – 2021 Officers**

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POSITION	OFFICER
Commander	George Freeman
Adjutant	Chris Romig
Judge Advocate	Doc Liberty
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Cmdr Resource Development	Bill Morgan
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Cmdr Membership	Rick Sessa
Finance Officer	Doug Pratt
Dep Vice Cmdr Active Duty Support	Dan Bennett
Dep Vice Cmdr Americanism	Chuck Blackburn
Sergeant-At-Arms	Mark Lieberman
Service Officer	Steve Muir
Chaplain	Tom Bednarzyk
Public Relations Officer	John Muuss
Historian	Tom Balbert

Attachment 2



**Our Post 2020 – 2021 Committee Chairs**

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COMMITTEE	CHAIR
Honors & Ceremonies	Bill Morgan
Veterans Memorial	Doug Elznic
Elections	Tom Bednarzyk
Military Appreciation Day	Bill Morgan
Membership	Rick Sessa
Finance	Doug Pratt
National Security	Dan Bennett
Americanism	Chuck Blackburn
Children & Youth	Chuck Blackburn
House and Entertainment	Mark Lieberman
Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation	Steve Muir
Visiting and Comfort	Tom Bednarzyk
Public Relations	John Muuss

Attachment 3



# JULY 2020 Monthly Post Membership Report

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (Jul 1 2020 – Jun 30 2021)	NUMBER TO DATE	2021 GOAL (Members)	VARIANCE (Members)
PAID UP FOR LIFE (PUFL)/WWII/Active Duty	31	236 (est)	-117
MAIL IN / CASH RENEWALS / NEW MEMBERS	57		
ON-LINE RENEWALS	31		
<b>TOTAL PAID 2019-2020 MEMBERS TO DATE</b>	<b>119</b>		



- **Time to renew is NOW!!**
- Online: [www.legion.org/renewals](http://www.legion.org/renewals)
- Mail - send check:  
Rick Sessa  
2592 St. James Drive  
Southport, NC 28461-1066
- See Post website  
<https://www.ncpost543.org/> for more information

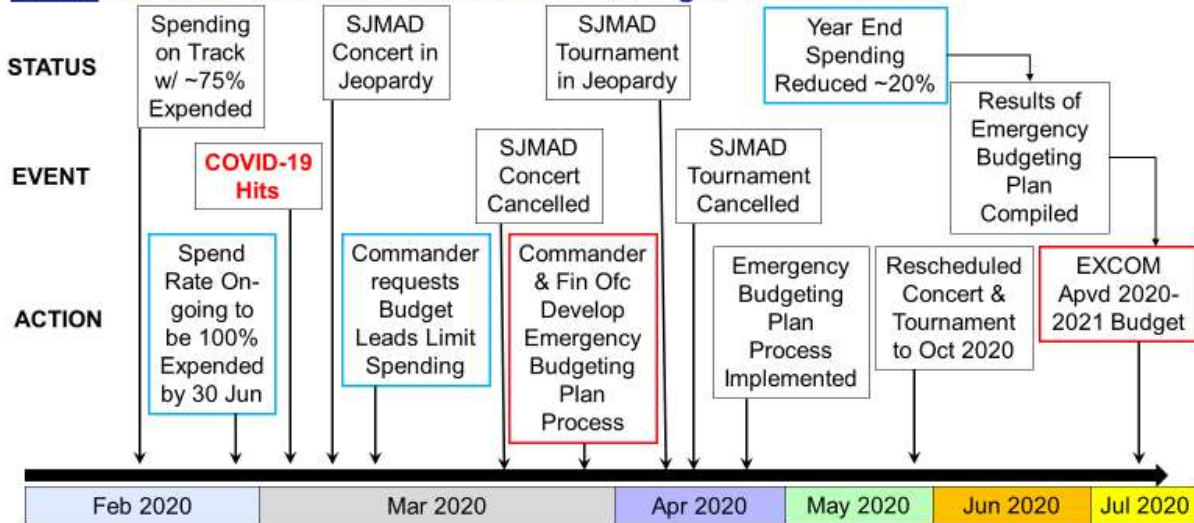
## Attachment 4



## Facing The COVID-19 Financial Challenge Timeline

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### GOAL: Sustain essential Post activities during uncertain times



## Attachment 5



## Facing The COVID-19 Financial Challenge Emergency Budgeting Plan Development

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### GOAL: Sustain essential Post activities during uncertain times

**PROCESS:**

1. Defined expenditure priorities
2. Secured feedback and buy-in from all Budget Leads
3. Applied priority definitions to individual budget lines
4. Validated alignment with Budget Leads & EXCOM
5. Budget Leads rebuilt their line items from zero
6. Individual inputs compiled into single master budget
7. 2019-2020 20% underrun & donations incorporated
8. 2020-2021 Budget Shortfall satisfied from Post Reserves
9. Fully funded \$32,625 Budget presented to EXCOM
10. EXCOM approved budget for presentation to Members

**Expenditure Priority Categories**

**Priority 1**

- Programs needed to maintain a functioning Post

**Priority 2**

- Programs needed to meet the needs of our fellow Post members

- Essential Programs not included above

**Priority 3 (Support within Greater Brunswick County)**

- Programs Supporting Non-Post Member Veterans

- Programs Supporting Active Duty Personnel

- Programs Supporting Children and Youth; Flag

Programs

**Priority 4**

- All other Budget Lines not covered above

### Successfully Fully Funded Priorities 1, 2 & 3 Absorbing 50% Budget Reduction

Attachment 6



## July 2020 Membership Proposed Budget

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ACCT #	July 2019 – June 2020 ACCOUNT	Donations / Income			Expenses		
		Budget	Actual	% Rcv'd to Budget	Budget	Actual	% Actual to Budget
1.0	VETERAN SERVICES	\$ 1500	\$ 0	0%	\$ 2,685	\$ 0	0%
2.0	VETERAN SUPPORT	\$ -	\$ -	N/A	\$ 5,000	\$ 0	0%
3.0	DEFENSE	\$ 2,250	\$ -	N/A	\$ 5,870	\$ 0	0%
4.0	AMERICANISM	\$ 6,000	\$ 0	0%	\$ 10,120	\$ 0	0%
5.0	YOUTH	\$ 1,500	\$ 0	0%	\$ 2,150	\$ 0	0%
7.0	POST OPERATIONS	\$ -	\$ -	N/A	\$ 7,018	\$ 0	0%
8.0	POST FINANCE (Includes Membership Fees To State)	\$ 21,375	\$ 0	0%	\$ 218	\$ 0	0%
9.0	SJMAD	\$0	\$ 0	0%	\$ -	\$ -	0%
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 32,625</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>\$ 32,625</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>	<b>0%</b>