



Richard H. Stewart, Jr.
American Legion Post 543

SUBJECT: General Membership Meeting Minutes

DATE: Wednesday July 24, 2019, 7:00pm

LOCATION: St. James Community Center, Saint James, NC, 28461

1) Call to Order and Advance the Colors (Opening Ceremony): (Freeman)
Per Agenda previously provided, the meeting was called to order at 7pm in the Town of St. James Community Center. (See Attachment #1)

- Colors were posted
- Our Post Chaplain offered the opening prayer
- The POW/MIA Empty Chair was formally recognized
- Pledge of Allegiance
- The Preamble to American Legion Constitution was recited by all

2) Roll Call of Officers: (Freeman)

- Officers Present:
 - Tom Balbert, Historian
 - Tom Bednarczyk, Chaplain
 - Dan Bennett, Deputy Vice Commander Active Duty Support
 - Chuck Blackburn, Deputy Vice Commander Americanism
 - Woody Dashiell, Adjutant
 - George Freeman, Commander
 - Doc Liberty, Judge Advocate
 - Bill Morgan, 1st Vice Commander Resource Development
 - Steve Muir, Service Officer
 - John Muuss, Public Relations
 - Doug Pratt, Finance Officer
 - Rick Sessa, 2nd Vice Commander Membership
- Officers Not Present:
 - Pom Pomeroy, Sergeant-at-Arms

- 3) Welcoming Guests & Sick Call: (Freeman)
 - Veterans attending for the first time were invited to stand and introduce themselves and share their Branch of Service.
 - Special guests were recognized and included:
American Legion District 9 Commander, Dale Smith
- 4) Approval of Minutes: (Freeman)
 - Minutes of the June 22, 2019 General Membership Meeting were approved without alteration.
- 5) Membership Report: (Sessa)
 - To date, we have reached over 50% of our renewal goal for the 2019-2020 FY. Rick Sessa also mentioned other ways available for members to renew online at myLegion.org, through the mail, or dropping off the form and payment at his house.
- 6) Finance Report: (Pratt)
 - Doug Pratt reported on the monthly/end of the year finance report that showed donations exceeded expectations while expenses were underspent. Leftover funds will be allocated to the annual 2019-20 Post budget with a portion going to the reserve fund. The Finance Report was approved without alteration.
 - Doug presented the 2019-2020 Budget developed by the finance committee. The expenditure for defense had an increase so the Post could assist the Marines and the Coast Guard. There was a slight increase for Post operations. A motion to accept the new budget was approved.
- 7) Service Officer Report: (Muir)
 - Steve Muir reported that the Legion Act had passed both houses of Congress and the President was expected to sign it in the near future. This will allow any veteran who served honorably under federal orders since WWII to join the American Legion.
 - Steve will be serving on the Legion legislative committee for the Department of NC.
 - Assisting local veteran who passed away with burial benefits.
 - Assisting homeless veteran to obtain a VA case worker to recover his service compensation and find housing.
 - Attended a meeting of the Brunswick county Veterans Coalition.
 - Veterans Community care act.
 - 2 Local urgent care centers to accept vets.
 - Local VA clinic understaffed.
 - Blue Water Veterans act.
 - Disabled vets eligible for lifetime National Park pass.
 - Post 543 provided over 10,000 volunteer hours last year

8) Guest speaker retired Chief Master/Sgt Mike Carton of the Air Force Sergeants Association.

- Over 100,000 members worldwide in 125 chapters. Open to all service branches.
- To advocate for the improved quality of life for their members and families.
- Lobbying congress to increase military healthcare benefits, improve funding and access to VA healthcare for all veterans and their families, sustain military compensation with the private sector, and support to education legislation.
- Discussed the recruiting and retention of the membership

9) Commander Comments & Awards: (Freeman)

- George discussed recent and coming events such as the Military Appreciation Day Golf tournament. 20th anniversary parade, and the 4th of July parade
- Attorney Mark Bachara will discuss wills and estate planning at our next meeting on August 28th.
- 9/11 Day memorial day ceremonies.
- Veterans Day November 11th.
- Recognized Paul Witmer for 7 consecutive years as service officer.
- George discussed the revised Vision and Goals aimed at helping veterans and their families.
- Looking to partner with Habitat for Humanity.
- Reviewed our Strategic Approach and the Post Structure chart.
- Identified the committee chairs and the need for volunteers to assist them.

10) Comments from District 9 Commander Dale Smith

- Praised Post 543 as one of the better Posts in North Carolina.
- Discussed the Legion Act waiting to be implemented
- Membership down nationwide by 60,000 members.
Membership in North Carolina down by 1,500-2,000 members.
- Changes to the NEC term limits.

11) Closing Remarks, Ceremony, and adjournment (Freeman)

- Post Chaplain offered the closing prayer.
- Retirement of the colors.
- Final comments by the Commander

WOODY DASHIELL
Adjutant

GEORGE R. FREEMAN
Commander



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St. James Community Center

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Opening Ceremony
3. POW/MIA Recognition
4. Pledge of Allegiance
5. Preamble to American Legion Constitution
6. Welcome to Guests & Sick Call
7. Roll Call of Officers
8. Membership Report: Rick Sessa
9. Finance Report: Doug Pratt
10. Service Officer Report: Steve Muir
11. Guest Speaker: Retired AF Chief Master Sergeant (E-9) Mike Carton,
and current President of the International USAF Sergeants Association
and fellow member of Post 543
12. Coming Events and Commander's Report
13. Closing Ceremony: George Freeman, Post Commander
14. Adjournment and Fellowship

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING: Monday, August 19, 2019

ATCH #1