

**THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA
MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 20, 2021 AT CEDAR SHORES RESORT, OACOMA SD**

The meeting was called to order by Department Commander Fred Nelson at 10:00 A.M.

Commander Nelson led the members in a salute to the Colors, Pledge of Allegiance and Preamble.

Invocation was given by Dept. Adjutant Kevin Hempel.

Roll call by Adjutant Hempel with the following persons present:

Commander Nelson, NEC Jim Huls, Immediate PDC Denny Brenden, Dept Vice Commanders Harry Boner and Kevin Morello; District Commanders David Booze, Eugene Iron Shell Jr., LeRoy Madsen, Bob Thomason, Matt Lagerstrom, Cindy Hoffman, Rod Smith and Jennifer Van Roekel; JAG Jay Leibel and Department Adjutant Kevin Hempel. Also, in attendance were Committee Chairmen DSO Courtney VanZanten, Doug Feltman, Doug Harris, Gary Wolkow, Krisma DeWitt, Warren Aas, Travise Flisrand, PDC Hugh Holmes, PDC Larry Price, PDC Mark Weinmann and Dan Sudbeck. Additional guests from Sons of The American Legion including Commander Terry Hansen and other observers were present.

Commander Nelson stated that the minutes were emailed out prior to the meeting. **PDC Brenden moved and Morello seconded to approve the minutes as sent. Motion carried.**

Commander Nelson welcomed everyone. He stated it had been a difficult year due to COVID and other issues but was great to be getting back together to conduct business. He informed the individuals present it was hard to cancel MidWinter, but it was the right thing to do at the time, but the Department Convention was still on. He asked for a show of hands on who had completed the National Basic Training. He asked those who had not to go online and complete it. He stated he would ask for a show of hands at the Department Convention and hoped to see many more.

Commander Nelson continued by stating communications is vital for the organization at all levels and the committee would be receiving reports from a number of Committee Chairs to update the members on the current status of the committees.

NEC Huls next spoke saying it was great to see everyone and he has missed not meeting in person. He also informed the Committee 2nd Leading Candidate for National Commander, Randall Fisher from Kentucky passed away due to COVID.

Commander Nelson then informed the committee they would start with old business.

First on the agenda was the discussion on the South Dakota Veterans Council (SDVC) building at the State Fair grounds. Adjutant Hempel gave a brief synopsis of the current building and the request by the SDVC President for the various Veterans organizations that belong to the SDVC to discuss with their members what should be done with the building. PDC Brendon gave a brief history of the building to the committee. Discussion between the committee members centered on what options there were including keeping the building, selling the building, renting the building and the current use of the building. There were also a number of questions asked which no one could answer regarding the building. **Lagerstrom moved to table the discussion until more information could be obtained for the committee. Morello seconded.** Commander Nelson asked if there was any additional discussion. PDC Price addressed the Committee stating we need to be in front of the people and he was in favor of keeping the building and if the decision was made to sell the building, he thought the Legion should purchase it. With no additional discussion, Commander Nelson asked for the vote. **Motion carried.**

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The Commander next questioned the members if they had read National Commander Oxford's Call To Action. It was included in the handouts. Commander Nelson asked everyone to re-read the letter and emphasized the National Commander's three goals; to recruit 100,00 new members, attain a 90% retention and have 100% CPR turn in. He stated the larger number of members we have, the more voice we have at the National level.

Commander Nelson invited Department Sons of the American Legion (SAL) Commander, Terry Hansen to address the committee. Commander Hansen informed the Committee the South Dakota SAL was recognized for a number of memberships awards the last year. They have started 5 new squadrons last year as well as revitalized a number of previously inactive squadrons. He then gave a number of examples what the SAL has done for Children and Youth around the state.

Commander Hansen then informed the committee there were, unfortunately, nine Squadrons that have remained inactive over the last few years and he was there to ask the DEC to revoke those charters. The Squadrons were:

Mitchell #0018	Huron #0007	North Sioux City #0319
Claremont #0262	Lennox #0174	Gettysburg #0135
Kimball #0130	Hartford #0118	Faith #0106

After a period of discussion, **Lagerstrom moved to revoke the SAL Squadrons as briefed by PDC Hansen. Madsen seconded. Motion carried.**

Commander Nelson asked the committee to go back to the National Commander's Call For Action handout. The second page identified the National 2021 Retention Strategy with specific requirements for the various levels of Department Leadership. Commander Nelson read the strategy line by line to the committee and discussed several areas he wanted the DEC to focus on.

Warren Aas, Chairman of the VA&R Committee gave a Power Point presentation on the make up of the committee and what it has accomplished and issues it focuses on. He also described the new VA&R award the Posts can compete for. (PPT attached to original minutes)

Doug Harris, Americanism Chairman, briefed the DEC using a Power Point presentation. He stressed the "Big Three", Oratory, Boys State and Youth Trooper Academy. In addition to the Big Three, he briefly addressed Legion Baseball, Scouting and Junior Shooting Sports. (PPT attached to original minutes)

Madsen asked what happens if a Post can not afford to send a person to Boys State. Harris informed the committee if that happens, contact himself or C.P. Van Delist and something will be worked out to get the boy there.

Dan Sudbeck, Chairman of the Athletic Commission gave an update to the DEC. He stated he could hardly wait to get started this year after the issues with COVID last year. He stated baseball registration is now open and upcoming season looks good and may have several additional teams. Since the 2020 season was cancelled, the sites that were to host 2020 tournaments will host the 2021 ones and the 2021 sites will host the 2022. Sioux Falls will be hosting this year's National Regional Tournament. 2023 bids must be submitted by December 2021. Sites for 2021 are:

State B Jr in Redfield Aug 6 – 8
State B Sr in Groton July 30 – Aug 3

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State A Jr in Pierre July 23 – 27

State A Sr in Brandon July 23 – 27

Sites for 2022 are:

State B Jr in Clark

State B Sr in Gregory

State A Jr in Sioux Falls Post 15

State A St in Rapid City Post 22

Rapid City Post 22 will also be hosting the 2022 and 2023 National Regional Tournament.

This year's American Legion Golf tournament will be hosted by Wakonda. The official date has not been set but will probably be the first or second weekend after Labor Day.

Sudbeck then had discussion with the committee regarding sending the State B champions to a season end tournament in Wisconsin. The Commission pays approximately \$1000 to send the team, however at times the team does not go because lack of players and we forfeit the money. The issue is the date is close school start of football and often the baseball players are not available. After discussion, the DEC asked Sudbeck to check with the teams and get their opinion.

Commander Nelson added he would like to see more Posts participate in the golf tournament. The question was asked about having the tournament on the west side of the state in the future. The response was it is difficult to find a golf course that would host.

Commander Nelson advised the DEC the Children and Youth Chairperson, Miranda Krumm was unable to be there to give her report, so Courtney Van Zanten would read it for her. There had been no Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) claims this year yet. When she does receive applications they first go to the National office and if not approved there, the State will reconsider for a local grant. It was a good year for programs. The Children and Youth received a \$2000 grant from the South Dakota American Legion Foundation to use for the purchase of backpacks for the start of school backpack program. Operation Home Front selected the Legion as the organization to receive school supplies for the back-to-school program. They gave out over 300 back packs to veteran's children and children in need. The committee also received a \$750 grant from the SD American Legion Foundation to purchase bags for Christmas gifts also.

District Commander Dave Booze gave a check to Commander Nelson for \$500 for the Children and Youth fund from Post 315.

Gary Wolkow, Department Finance Officer gave an update on the 2020-2021 budget to the DEC. He informed the committee the cash balance as of 31 January is \$1,064,492.53 and then went section by section on the budget with comments that we are doing very well this year. The current budget used percentage as of January 31 was:

Rehabilitation	47.06%
Americanism	12.04%
Membership	24.47%
Public Relations	32.57%
Administrative	11.78%
Headquarters	54.94%
Total	42.88%

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The budget should be about 58% used. The primary reason we are currently under budget is because we have cancelled items due to COVID. He also mentioned the current make up of the Finance Commission. The Finance officer also briefed the current fund-raising status. He informed the DEC the winter label program made about \$9,600 in profit. The MidWinter sweepstakes made about \$28,000, but after paying the fund-raising company and pay outs on the sweepstakes, the profit was about \$19,000. The DEC had a brief discussion on future fund raising.

District Commander Dave Booze then handed in a \$500 donation to the SD American Legion Foundation from Post 315.

A brief discussion was held on the status of the Legion News. Van Zanten gave an update and expressed her disappointment with Leader Printing who had committed to doing the advertising for the paper. She asked the committee and guests to help her locate possible advertisers for future editions of the paper.

At 12:03 Commander Nelson recessed the committee for lunch and to return in an hour.

At 1:09 Commander Nelson reconvened the Department Executive Committee with all members present.

As a follow up question to the finance brief, Lagerstrom asked for clarification on the fund raising. Following another brief discussion, the committee agreed to investigate alternate methods of fund raising and keeping it in state rather than using an out of state company.

PDC Weinmann, Chairman of Internal Affairs Committee, next briefed the DEC. He started by explaining the process of making changes to the constitution and explaining the roles resolutions played in the process. He informed the DEC he had three resolutions the committee would be reviewing. One was for formally recognizing the Youth Trooper Program. Another for changing the limitation on funds for the Youth and Children committee and the last for updating eligibility of Legion membership due to the passing of the Legion Act.

Doug Feltman, Chairman of the Legislative Committee, gave an update. He identified the committee members and then discussed current legislation. He informed the DEC the committee had meet earlier in the month and reviewed all bills the Legion might have interest in. The committee then decided which bills would be watched, which we would support and those that we would not support. He added if anyone wanted additional information, he could make it available.

Courtney Van Zanten, Chairperson of the Media and Communications Committee next addressed the DEC. She briefly described her committee. Then stated there have been major changes to the Legion News. She has received a lot of positive feedback to all members receiving the paper. However, she has not been able to get the number of advertisers that would be needed to make the financially viable in the future. She asked the DEC to assist in finding advertisers and to let her know of potential ones. She next explained the committee was also busy with various social media including Facebook, Instagram, Linked In and Twitter. She also informed the DEC she was having a lot of success with campaigns in social media. She went on to explain she had done a Native American month where she featured prominent Native American veteran each day. She was currently doing the same with Black History month. Next month will be focused on Women veterans each day. So far, the campaigns have significantly increased visibility on the social media.

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Additional discussion was held on the Legion news and what was needed to make the paper a success as well as social media. Commander Nelson reminded each District they have a Facebook page. He then asked for a show of hand of how many post to Facebook. He asked Van Zanten how many Posts Facebook pages and she said she would find out.

Travise Flisrand, Department Membership Chairman next addressed the DEC. He began by describing how the current membership goals were developed and then gave an update on current Department membership. He informed the DEC recruiting of new members seems to be going well, however retention is the Achilles heel. He explained the department had mailed over 4,000 letters to expired members and members in Post 500 but received very little response. He encouraged the DEC members to engage those Posts who were struggling with membership and get them back on track.

Flisrand next explained the goals of the newly formed Membership and Marketing committee and they were having their first in person meeting the 21st. The committee is to develop methods to improve membership and retention. Lastly, he asked the DEC to push all posts to complete the Consolidated Post Reports because they contain the information he hoped the new committee could use to develop the marketing campaign.

Commander Nelson expressed the importance of membership. He finished by saying everyone knows one veteran who is not a member of the Legion. He stated if every member of the Legion recruited just one new member, think of the possibilities.

PDC Larry Price, Chairman of the newly formed Public Safety Committee addressed the DEC. He started by giving a brief on the committee and then discussed the programs they would be responsible. He stated they would be responsible for promoting and selecting the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year as well as the Firefighter/EMT of the Year. They would also be responsible for promoting and assisting with the Youth Trooper Academy. He added they will most likely be submitting a resolution to change the way the Fire Fighter/EMT was selected because it limited who could apply and there are a number of individuals who deserve the recognition but can not be selected because of the restrictions.

Van Zanten informed Commander Nelson there are 81 Posts in South Dakota with Facebook pages.

Krisma DeWitte, Chairperson of the Training Committee next addressed the DEC and used a Power Point presentation. She first described the make up of the committee as well as a brief history. She stated the responsibilities and the current activities including the following courses that were being developed; Training New Members, Mentorship, Successful Posts and a face-to-face Legion Basic Course. Future training should include Americanism Programs, an Adjutants course, Retention and Recruitment as well as Using Technology to communicate. She concluded with current training available at the National website and asking if there were any other suggestions for future training. (PPT is attached to original minutes)

C.P. "Van" Van Delist gave an update to the Boys State Program. The next Boys State is May 31 through June 4th. Because COVID cancelled last year's Boys State, both Juniors and Seniors are being allowed to participate. The program will be in person but will be following current safety guidelines. He also invited members to visit Boys State and stated the program could always use more volunteers to participate. He finished by saying they were looking at some organizational changes to make the program more efficient.

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PDC Price asked if future Boys State would be allowing both Seniors and Juniors. Van DeList stated this year was a trial and if successful, they may consider doing it in the future.

At 3:00 pm, Commander Nelson stated there would be a 15-minute recess to allow the Area Vice Commanders time to meet with their District Commanders and discuss business.

At 3:18 Commander Nelson reconvened the DEC.

Adjutant Hempel gave several updates.

1. Spring meetings would be starting in March. He still needed District 4 and 6 meeting locations and times.
2. He had finally received information from Wells Fargo he would be able to submit to request the Paycheck Protection Program loan be converted to a grant in March. He would keep the DEC informed.
3. The new MyLegion site is supposed to be online 1st of April now. National is still developing training and should know next week when the training should be available to Department staff.

Commander Nelson asked for updates from the District Commanders:

1. District 1 – David Booze. Personal visits to the Posts have been slow. However, he has been using email and phone calls to stay in contact with the Post leadership. He is working the schedule for the Spring meeting which will be held at the Piedmont Post.
2. District 2 – Eugene Iron Shell. Eleven Posts are at 100% membership or better. Still working with several posts. March 9th, the Custer Post will have it's 102nd Birthday party. Still working the Spring District Meeting.
3. District 3 - LeRoy Madsen. Emailing the Posts about every 3 months. Many Posts are still not holding meetings. He (District Commander) has had recent health issues that has kept him from traveling. He is hoping someone will come forward to volunteer to be the next District Commander.
4. District 4 – Bob Thomason. Has a post that needs help so have sent a letter to all members for a meeting to held April 5th to try and get the Post back on track. The Pollock Post #272 has stopped functioning. He tried to get the Post back on track, but there are very few members who all getting older and no one to step up and take over. He has completed the charter cancellation check list.

District 4 Commander Bob Thomason moved to cancel the charter for Pollock Post 272. Madsen seconded. Motion carried.

5. District 5 - Matt Lagerstrom. District 5 is amazing. Will be holding training for the District in Watertown next Sunday. All are invited. Brookings County is very active. He is currently working on some community events.
6. District 6 – Cindy Hoffman. Boys State effort is ongoing. She is still new and trying to get on track.
7. District 7 – Rod Smith. Getting out to do Post visits. Have also tried hybrid meetings where some meet in person and others by Zoom. Worked fairly well. District Spring meeting will be in Montrose with social at 12:00, meal at 1:00 and meeting at 2:00. Post 15 will be having their big Birthday Party March 14th. Nine Posts are at 100% or better.
8. District 8 – Jennifer Van Roekel. Still new at the District Commander job and learning slowly. Marion Post is doing well.

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Commander Nelson informed the DEC he was planning a Legion motorcycle ride around the state. He was still working on the details but hoped to raise money to submit to a program.

Doug Harris reminded the DEC the oratorical contest was tomorrow. There are currently six contestants. Everyone will be required to wear a mask. He hoped many would be attending. He reminded the volunteers to be there at 9:30. Contest starts at 10:30.

Post 9 turned in \$100 for the Popcorn Fund.

Commander Nelson next held the sweepstakes drawing. The following winners were drawn by District Commander Hoffman:

\$1000 to Killian Stricherz of Chamberlain
\$500 to Bruce Beckman of Lake Preston
\$300 to Michael Stapleton of Browns Valley
\$200 to Leo Van Sambeek of Hermosa
\$100 to John Richter of Sioux Falls

The Chamberlain Post Commander also held their sweepstakes drawing and notified their winners.

Commander Nelson asked if anyone wanted to address the DEC.

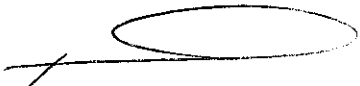
Gary Wolkow stated he was a candidate for Department Commander and asked those in attendance for their support.

Greg Geiman stated he was running for Department Sergeant at Arms and for everyone's support.

Doug Feltman stated he was running for Department Vice Commander for Districts 3-8 and would appreciate everyone's support.

Adjutant Hempel gave the benediction.

Commander Nelson led a salute to the colors and adjourned the meeting at 4:01 p.m.



Kevin Hempel
Department Adjutant
SD American Legion

