The Department Executive Committee meeting was conducted on July 22, 2020 beginning at 10:00 am via GoTo Meeting.

Executive Committee Members Present:

Dept Cmdr Walt Richardson
Dept Adjutant Nick Diener
Dept Historian Russ Cantrell
NEC Michael Strauss
Alt NEC Bob Scherer
Imm PDC John Britt
Dept Chaplain Richard Mullinax
Dept 1st Vice Cmdr Ron Price
Dept 2nd Vice Cmdr Robin Rucker
Dept 3rd Vice Cmdr Jim Kvam
Dept 4th Vice Cmdr - Vacant
D-1 Cmdr Jim Jarvis
D-2 Cmdr Reedy Hopkins
D-3 Cmdr Bridget Lewis
D-4 Cmdr Bruce Donegan
D-5 Cmdr Jack Smith
D-7 Cmdr Michael Calcutt
D-8 Cmdr Ed Courtney
D-9 Cmdr Robert Sweet
D-10 Cmdr Tommy Sinclair
D-11 Cmdr Jack Lonerger
D-12 Cmdr Charlie Davis
D-13 Cmdr Rick Gibson
D-14 Cmdr Mike Brandt
D-15 Cmdr Jamie Rumbaugh
D-16 Cmdr Jim Defrehn
D-17 Cmdr Jim Thrailkill
D-18 Cmdr Larry Pouncy
D-19 Cmdr Bob Gibbons
D-20 Cmdr David Mills
PDC/PDA Jim Hawk
Dept Sgt-at-Arms Kevin Joy

Absent:
Dept JA Stephen Lewis
Dept Asst JA Cody Mitchell
D-6 Cmdr Tim Burnside
D-10 Cmdr Tommy Sinclair
D-17 Cmdr Jim Thrailkill
D-19 Cmdr Bob Gibbons

Also Present:
M. May, Dept Exec Director

Department Cmdr Richardson called on Vice Cmdr Rucker for the opening prayer and gave his opening remarks:

Dept Cmdr Richardson: I want to welcome everybody to this special called meeting today. And let you know that things are going well with The American Legion. We have right now with our DMS list going, and Jim, correct me if I’m wrong on this, but I have us having a total of 405 transfers already and the DMS blitz is not even halfway through yet. So keep working, keep calling and we’ll get them all up there as soon as we can. That’s the main thing, that we got to keep this thing going. We’re doing good. That COVID-19, it hit us, it hit us hard, but we’re back up and we’re running and we’re going to do fine, we’re going to do just fine. Because this is a teleconference, a special called teleconference, we’re going to do away with the Resolution, the Preamble and the Pledge and we’re going to go right into business because I know it’s important, your time is valuable. Nick, would you give us a roll call please?
Department Adjutant Diener called the roll and announced to the Cmdr there was a quorum.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Thank you very much. On our agenda…on our agenda, it says reading of the minutes of the previous meeting, but because this is a special called meeting, we’re not going to read the minutes of the previous meeting and we’re going right into the new business. The first item on the agenda is going to be the Fall Conference. Now, over the past two, three years, our Fall Conference is getting bigger and bigger and better and better. And what we have to be very careful about, is with this Coronavirus, is that we don’t really take a bad nosedive and wipe out all the good we’ve done in the past three years. So, with that being said, I’ll open it up.

D-14 Cmdr Brandt: (inaudible), they don’t want to do it, they’re afraid (inaudible).

D-8 Cmdr Courtney: All of my posts say no.

Vice Cmdr Rucker: I can’t hear, background noise.

D- Cmdr Jarvis: Yeh.

Dept Adj Diener: Ok, hey Doc?

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Everybody check your surroundings, (inaudible) you got a video game going or something.

Dept Adj Diener: Doc, I think some of the feedback is coming from Doc’s, it seems like. Doc, if you can, if you’re not speaking, please mute your microphone, I think it’s picking up some static from there.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Ok, let’s start again, let’s get some input on this.

D-5 Cmdr Smith: I sent out an email to all Post Cmdr’s and I got a small response, And I estimate there would only probably be about 15 members. This is based upon last year and the response I got from this year; it would probably only be about 15 members from District Five that would be showing up for the Fall Conference.

D-8 Cmdr Courtney: All six of my posts were polled and they are all against attending.

D-4 Cmdr Donegan: Most of my posts I contacted and responded back to me, no, they would not show up.

D-14 Cmdr Brandt: Most of my posts said no also.

D-12 Cmdr Davis: Most of mine said no.

D-1 Cmdr Jarvis: Mine said no.

D-20 Cmdr Mills: (inaudible) said yes.

D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: I have a hundred percent say no.
D-3 Cmdr Lewis: Most of mine don’t come anyway so they said no.

D-9 Cmdr Sweet: Only one post was going to come.

D-11 Cmdr Lonergan: Only those who are required to be there, will be there.

Alt NEC Scherer: Since my wife works in a hospital and we’re closely associated with the cancer center, we see an increase coming, not only now but probably down the road a little bit, worse. We’re averaging right now between 85 and a hundred cases every day. And I don’t see anything getting any better.

Dept Adj Diener: Can I make a recommendation that somebody make a motion, because it seems like everybody’s pretty well in agreement but making a motion to cancel the conference and then just go ahead and vote.

D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: I make a motion to cancel the conference for the year 2020.

D-1 Cmdr Jarvis: I second.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Alright, the motion has been made and seconded that we cancel the 2020 Fall Conference. Do we have any further discussion on this?

NEC Strauss: I don’t have discussion; this is just something I’d just like to have it for the record. I just want everybody to know, if the Adjutant can tell us, when we vote for cancelling that, what does that mean for the Department as far as monetarily?

Finance Chairman Jarvis: Cmrd, can I speak to that?

Cmdr Richardson: Jim’s with the finance committee, Mike, would that be alright?

NEC Strauss: That would be fine with me. I just would like everybody to know it’s not any person’s fault and everybody, what we’re voting for is a joint decision by the DEC and not anybody from a financial standpoint, I just want everybody to know what we’re voting for when we vote for this.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Very good. Alright, Jim?

Finance Chairman Jarvis: Yes sir, Mike, we’re going to take a hit, period. But in all defense, let’s say if we cancelled the conference, we’re losing about $22,500. Correction, $24,000. If we hold the conference and let’s say we only have 25%, now, this is a swag, we have no idea. We’re still going to lose about $22,000 so it comes in the wash in the end. Either way, we’re going to lose, but for the year 2020, in the past what we’ve been doing is pre-paying the membership savings, that’s about $30,000.00. And why we have done that is to give us a cushion. Well, we can use that this year, that will cushion that, and it will make it fine for us, really, in 2020. Problem will be in 2021 where we won’t have probably won’t have the pre-paid membership savings. But we also have the rifle raffle, so I think we’re going to be fine. It’s just that whether we hold it or not, it’s going to be about the same kind of a loss. Because everything’s based on 189 nights in the hotel. And we’re just going not going to get that. If we get anybody, a lot of it’s going to be local and we’re going to have minimal people staying in the hotel. And I don’t see it as an issue, I think the cancelling it is the smart thing to do, the
safest thing to do and we’re only saving about $1500, $2,000 if we had it and assuming we had 25% of the people. Does that make sense?

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Thank you Jim.
Alt NEC Scherer: Can you do like we did for the convention, see if we can get it extended for next year, our contract? Or is that out of the question?

Finance Chairman Jarvis: We’re going to try that, Bob but we can’t, I can’t say yay or nay on that. They’ve already given us a reprieve once. I kind of doubt that they’re going to give us one again. If they give us a little bit of reduced savings, but we cancelled the convention and they gave us no cost for that based on the fact that we were going to have the conference in the fall. So we couldn’t talk to anybody until the DEC made a decision. We can hope for it, but I don’t think it’s going to be there and if it is, it might only be part of it.

Dept Adj Diener: Can I speak to that too, please? For those of ya’ll that can’t see, this is Nick Diener. One of my concerns on that is we’re already locked in with using the hotel through 2022. If we do something like we did for the convention, and agree to another contract, and extended that out a year, that’s locking us in to 2023. And we’ve already had lots of discussions on whether we needed to change the Fall Conference around and all that and I just hate locking us in for another year. And that’s what the hotel’s going to want us to do.

Finance Chairman Jarvis: Also to add on to what Nick’s saying. Nick and I have been talking about this and I think the Cmdr has too. It’s probably about time that we send a message to the Marriott. Because each year they just keep increasing us and increasing us and increasing us. And if we extend out another year like the Adjutant said, we’re only adding misery to that. I mean even if we have to pay a little bit more, we’re considering trying to change the venue. Because Marriot thinks they’re the only thing in town and well, they almost are. And I think they’re utilizing that. We’re seeing 10, 15% raises in food and other costs. And all I can say is we need to start thinking about sending them a message. Thank you.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Any other discussion? So what it looks like it boils down to people, is a $2,000 loss worth the risk of even one of our Legionnaires coming down with this COVID-19? That’s what we’re talking about. So I think it’s going to be a very important vote and if there’s no other discussion.

D-4 Cmdr Donegan: I need to ask, prepaid membership, what does that mean, Jim, Mr. Jarvis?

Finance Chairman Jarvis: It goes into the savings. Why don’t you talk with me after the meeting, call me and I’ll explain that to you. It’s just a cushion that we have into our budget.

D-4 Cmdr Donegan: No problem, thank you.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Don’t we have to do a certain number of rooms at the convention, don’t we have to guarantee that?

Dept Adj Diener: Yes, as you slid in here later, and Jim Jarvis covered that. We have to guarantee 181 room nights and that was the discussion. Even if we had the convention, or the conference and 25% of the people show up, how many of them would stay in the rooms and we would still have to pay that. So any way that we go on this, we’re looking it costing us between $22,000 and $24,000, I just don’t
see any way around that. And by the way, for the record, we do need to note that Jim Defrehn is now on and present at the meeting.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I apologize, a little problem with the computer.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: We’ve got Mike Calcutt.

Dept Adj Diener: Yeh, we also need to note that Mike Calcutt has joined us as well, so he is present. Ok, Walt, what we need to do, if you close the voting off, we will just go through and do a roll call vote. And the motion, again, it will be a vote to cancel the conference, a yes vote would cancel it.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Is there any further discussion?

D-14 Cmdr Brandt: Yeh, Walt. Could we possibly move it to something like November?

Dept Cmdr Richardson: I don’t think so Michael?

Dept Adj Diener: I mean, we could always try, from everything that I’m getting, I don’t know that we would be changing any of the decision. You know, they’re still talking the same problems. Everything would still be the same problems and it’s also going to play whether South Carolina decides to play football or not because we hit on their football dates. It would be difficult to change it and I don’t know that we would accomplish anything because everything that we’re getting is that in November we’re still going to be in the same boat we are now.

Dept Finance Chairman Jarvis: Also, when we talked to the Marriott the last time, November and December and January are not dates to try to get a weekend locked down at the Marriott.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Any other discussion? Hearing no other discussion, we’ll do a roll call vote, Nick?

Dept Adj Diener: Ok, and again, just a reminder, a yes vote is to cancel the Fall Conference, a no vote would say to hold the Fall Conference.

NEC Strauss: Yes
Imm PDC Britt: Yes
1st Vice Cmdr Price: Yes
3rd Vice Cmdr Kvam: Yes
District 2 Cmdr Hopkins: Yes
District 4 Cmdr Donegan: Yes
District 7 Cmdr Calcutt: Yes
District 9 Cmdr Sweet: Yes
District 12 Cmdr Davis: Yes
District 14 Cmdr Brandt: Yes
District 16 Cmdr Defrehn: Yes
District 20 Cmdr Mills: Yes

Alt NEC Scherer: Yes
Department Historian Cantrell: Yes
2nd Vice Cmdr Rucker: Yes
District 1 Cmdr Jarvis: Yes
District 3 Cmdr Lewis: Yes
District 5 Cmdr Smith: Yes
District 8 Cmdr Courtney: Yes
District 11 Cmdr Lonergan: Yes
District 13 Cmdr Gibson: Yes
District 15 Cmdr Rumbaugh: Yes
District 18 Cmdr Pouncy: Yes

Dept Adj Diener: Ok, Cmdr, the vote was unanimous to cancel the Fall Conference.
Dept Cmdr Richardson: Alright, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. That was indeed a hard decision to make, But moving on, alright, our next item on the agenda was or is going to be the procedures for the special election coming up on August the 22nd, I think it is.

Dept Adj Diener: August the 15th, I get them confused. Alright, Nick? I think Nick sent out to everybody a copy of the procedures, do we have any questions on that, any discussion on this?

D-1 Cmdr Jarvis: I make a motion that we accept the procedures as set forth by the Adjutant in that e-mail that we got.

D-15 Cmdr Rumbaugh: I second that.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Alright, the motion has been made and seconded that we accept the procedures as set forth for the special election, do we have any discussion on it? Hearing no discussion, we will proceed on to voting. Once again, this will be a roll call vote, Nick, make sure everybody understands what we’re voting on, please?

Dept Adj Diener: Ok, yes. And a yes vote again is to accept the recommended procedures for the special election to fill the 4th Vice Cmdr vacancy that I sent out, of course a no vote would be to not accept those. So with no further ado, we’ll go back through the list again here.

NEC Strauss: Yes
Imm PDC Britt: Yes
1st Vice Cmdr Price: Yes
3rd Vice Cmdr Kvam: Yes
District 2 Cmdr Hopkins: Yes
District 4 Cmdr Donegan: Yes
District 7 Cmdr Calcutt: Yes
District 9 Cmdr Sweet: Yes
District 12 Cmdr Davis: Yes
District 14 Cmdr Brandt: Yes
District 16 Cmdr Defrehn: Yes
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District 5 Cmdr Smith: Yes
District 8 Cmdr Courtney: Yes
District 11 Cmdr Loneran: Yes
District 13 Cmdr Gibson: Yes
District 15 Cmdr Rumbaugh: Yes
District 18 Cmdr Pouncy: Yes

Dept Adj Diener: Ok, Cmdr, the vote was 23 to zero in favor of accepting the procedures.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: Alright, thank you very much. Those were the two items that were on the agenda for the special called meeting. This being a special called meeting, we will not entertain any other items of business. I do want to take this opportunity to thank you all, each and every one of you, for helping with this DMS blitz, this is something that can really help us in the long run. We’re going to forge on, keep moving, we have a plan, and we’ll continue to work that plan. Any questions, any comments?

D-1 Cmdr Jarvis: Just to add, Cmdr, as of last night, we’re at 450.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: 450, very good, fantastic, we’re up another 45, that is great.
NEC Strauss: I just wanted to pass along to the Executive Committee John Collins is recovering from a heart procedure, I’m told that the heart procedure went well so John is in need for your prayers for recovery.

Dept Cmdr Richardson: I appreciate you letting me know and we got him a card from the Department, thank you Michael. Anything else? Hearing nothing. Robin, put a prayer on us.

Vice Cmdr Rucker gave the Benediction and Cmdr Richardson closed the meeting.

For God and Country,

Nick I. Diener
Department Adjutant

ND/mm