



Department Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2022



The meeting of The Department Executive Committee meeting was held on March 19, 2022, at American Legion Department Headquarters, 103 Legion Plaza Rd, Columbia, SC 29210.

Dept Cmdr Ron Price
Dept Adjutant Nick Diener
NEC Michael Strauss
Alt NEC Joe Lysaght
Imm PDC Walt Richardson
Dept Historian Suzy Spurgeon
Dept 1st Vice Cmdr Jim Jarvis
Dept 2nd Vice Cmdr Jim Kvam
Dept 3rd Vice Cmdr Bruce Donegan
Dept 4th Vice Cmdr Jim Rabon
D-1 Cmdr Darlene Walton
D-2 Cmdr John Coy
D-4 Cmdr-Wayne Southworth
D-5 Cmdr Jack Smith
D-7 Cmdr John Galloway
D-8 Cmdr Ed Courtney
D-10 Cmdr Doug Dilleshaw

D-11 Cmdr Jack Lonergan
D-13 Cmdr-Rick Gibson
D-15 Cmdr Richard Dorman
D-16 Cmdr Jim Defrehn
D-17 Cmdr Jerome Childs
D-18 Cmdr Larry Pouncy
D-20 Cmdr David Mills
Dept Sgt-at-Arms Kevin Joy
Dept Chaplain Richard Mullinax
PDC Jim Hawk
PDC John Britt
PDC Bob Scherer
PNEC Bud Hennis
PNEC Mickey Taylor
PNVC James Holland

Absent:

Dept J/A Cody Mitchell
Dept Asst J/A Stephen Lewis
D-3 Cmdr Kevin Brown
D-6 Cmdr Tim Burnside
D-9 Cmdr John Comins
D-12 Cmdr Charlie Davis
D-14 Cmdr Mike Brandt
D-19 Cmdr Gerald Brown

Also Present:

Grady Richardson, Dept Finance Cmte/ Dept Const & Bylaws Cmte Chairman
Tom Yarborough, Dept Finance Cmte Mbr
M. May, Dept Exec. Director
Kim Gooden, Dept C & Y Chairman

Department Commander Ron Price opened the meeting and called on Department Chaplain Mullinax for the invocation. Commander Price read Resolution 288, led the DEC in the Pledge of Allegiance and the Preamble to the Constitution.

Dept Cmdr Price: I appreciate ya'll being here, this Saturday morning, and it's a busy day ahead of us. And with that, thank you for being here and at this time I'll turn it over to the Department Adjutant for the roll call.

Department Adjutant Diener called the roll and announced that there was a quorum.

Dept Cmdr Price: I'd like to call for a motion to dispense with the reading of the previous Executive Committee minutes.

D-4 Cmdr Southworth: I make a motion that we suspend the meeting minutes.

D-11 Cmdr Lonergan: I second that.

Dept Cmdr Price: We have a motion and a second to suspend the reading of the reading of the minutes. All in favor say aye? Any object? (all present voted in favor to suspend the reading of the minutes). Ok, I'm going to call on 1st Vice Cmdr Jim Jarvis, if you would please, for the membership report?

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: Thank you, Cmdr. I just want to throw out some numbers out you. I try to stay positive when it comes to membership, but I think we're quickly approaching putting ourselves in extremis. We have one District right now that has attained the 95% level, that's due on 13 April, that's the goal date on 13 April, 95%. We do have...and that's District 4. We do have 8 and 15 that are very close, they're almost there. And then we have 1 and 5 that are within shooting distance. But what we also have is we only have six Districts in the 90% area. We have 12 in the 80's, and we have two in the 70%. That's all, that's....we're scrambling now. And we need to be able to get those numbers up. Overall we're 2,285 short and...but, as usual, our renewal rate is creeping up but it's still in the mid to high 80's. We need to get in that 90% area but, I don't know folks. It's going to take us in this room to do this. We've got to get there and get them motivated. There's frustrations out there, the frustrations are here in the room. We need to get them motivated enough that they need to get by any computer issues. Every time we turn around, we've got another issue and we're trying to handle it, we know it. Last week to this week, we've had one post that I'm aware of, that was 100% a week ago and it's now not 100%. So we've got things like that going on but as soon as we're notified, we handle it as we go along. The system's what we got, we've got to make it work to the best of our ability and it will be frustrating. We can't show that frustration, we have to try alleviate the frustration out there. We're way behind on income as far as memberships concerned. And this is the time that we should have been relatively high. Now we're going into the period that's the hardest and we're still very low, so membership is critical. The one area, we all know membership's three components, keep what we got, renewal, and if we can do the National Commander's challenge and we have over 40 posts that have done that so far, and obtain 90%, that's good. New members, that's the only of the three parts that actually puts new people into the Legion. We're doing rather well there, we're at 4.8% of our membership are new members, that's pretty good. Everybody tries to shoot to get to 5% to 6%, but we're not doing too bad in that area, and we need to keep going. We have like 875 or something like that, which is good. And then after we put that 5% and that 90% together, that's 95%, all we have to do now is go after those 172 and DMS and the fillers to get that 5%. So we need to get to each contact, each post, you have the reports, you know which ones of your posts needs help and we just got to get this one done. We're, like I said, 2,285 short and this is the lean months, this is the hard months. And remember, between the Rifle Raffle and membership, those are the two big incomes. That's all I've got, thank you.

Dept Cmdr Price: Thank you. He's absolutely right, this is not going to happen without this DEC body making it happen. District Commanders, look at your Districts, if you're not near 90%, ask yourself, what is it you're not doing? What is it your posts are not doing? You've got to make it happen, it's the

only way it's going to happen is if you do it, if you get energized, so please do so. At this time, I'd like to call on our Finance Committeeman.

Dept Adj Diener: We skipped one part, per the constitution I'm required to provide you all a copy of the Delinquent Post Report, which you'll see is in there right after the membership report. This is, from this point on, after 1 March, any post that does not have 15 paid members is considered a delinquent post and subject to us looking at future action against them. I'm not recommending that we take any action at this point against any of these posts. I know that two of the posts on the list that are...we have some actions working to get them up there. But, please, if one of these posts is in your District, ok, we need you to get with them. Because one of the things that happens is that if they're a delinquent post, they do not get to vote, come to convention or vote, ok. You know, so that's, that's very important. Same way that they also can't, a lot of ya'll still have District elections coming up, if they don't have 15 members paid, they don't get to vote to vote at the District elections. I don't think it applies to any of you all but if somebody is wanting to run for District Cmdr, and they're in a delinquent post, they don't get to run. So it's important, and if you'll look at the list, some of the folks are just one or two, two or three away, ok. And so just need you to give some encouragement to it. One thing that's not on the list and I was going to cover it later, but this is kind of a good time to do it. National Commander Dillard was here, ok, he gave...a lot of you all got one of his pins, ok, those that were there. I have a bunch of these pins in my office that he left, but he left them under the provision that anybody in your post that goes out and renews three members from this point on, ok, gets one of his pins. Notice I said from this point on, they can't be ones that they did a month ago, it's got to be three renewals that they come in now. And all I need you to do is send me who it is, and we'll get this to you for you to be able to hand out to them, ok. But just a little more incentive to try to get some of the renewals up. Commander, that's all I have.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, move on with the Finance, Chairman Richardson?

Finance Chairman Richardson: Thank you, Commander. In your packet you should have got a copy of the budget sheet. There are two things that stand out on this. If you'll look on page one at the bottom, Fall Conference expense. It's already got expense of \$18,000 and we haven't had a Fall Conference yet. The reason for this is the bills for last year's Fall Conference, did not come in until after the first of January. Therefore they had to be paid out of this year's budget. That's why that figure is what it is. That's last year's Fall Conference paid for out of this year's budget. Now, what may hit us, next December, we may get this year's Fall Conference that has to be paid out of this year's budget. We'll handle it, we'll handle it, not going to be a problem. Also, if you'll look on page three, the last page, it says as of February, we're minus \$212.00 in our budget. There's a very easy explanation for that, because we had to pay \$18,000.00 for last year's Fall Conference out of this year's budget. Any questions? Well, that was easy. Alright, you're receiving a sheet of paper. Remember, the feeling that you get when you paid off your car and you get that title in your hand. Better yet, for those of you that this applies to, remember the feeling when you get when you paid off your mortgage and you take that mortgage, and you strike a match to it, and it's gone. For those of you that were around in 2016, you may remember when the Department was in a financial bind, and I was on the finance committee then, and we were worried. If we had a major repair, how are we going to pay for it? And, no fault of anybody, but that's just the way it was. We didn't have the Rifle Raffle going on, we didn't have that tremendous influx of funds. Needless to say, since 2016, what is the cigarette commercials said, we've come a long way, baby. We've come a long way. The finance committee, with the money that we have available now, have proposed, advanced payment onto our mortgage. Now, looking at this thing, these figures are based on February 6, using the figures that bank gave us beginning January 1st, now keep that in mind. The budget surplus, and these figures came from Nick, so I know they're right. We had a budget surplus of \$255,000.00 last year, ok. We need operating expenses, because the bulk of our

membership won't come until the summer and the fall, our Rifle Raffle monies are not coming in, I think the posts are hoarding these things and will send them in all at one time. Because I know the Rifle Raffle's doing good. \$10,000.00 for the Americanism budget, that's to pay scholarships and other necessities that we have to have for Americanism. Also, \$38,000.00 for the membership fund, that's \$2.00 per member that's put into a savings account as required by the Constitution, every year. Alright, if you take the operating expenses (inaudible), the Americanism budget items that we've got to have and the membership money, we still have a surplus of \$87,000.00, ok. Membership savings, remember, I told you \$2.00 a member? We started doing that again in 2016 I believe it was and it has steadily built up. After we pay in that \$38,000.00 this year with the membership, we'll have \$347,000.00 in our membership savings account. Listen, that's because, in part, of the work that the District Commanders do. They push the posts to get members in. And remember and organization that has paid members, survives on its membership. It doesn't survive on the white hats or the blue and white hats or the red hats, it survives on the members. If it weren't for members, we wouldn't be here. We also received a blessing from National of about \$57,000.00 this year. Of that about \$57,000.00, the Department gets to keep \$47,000.00 a little over \$47,000.00. The rest of it goes to the posts, and where else, Nick?

Dept Adj Diener: SAL

Finance Chairman Richardson: SAL, they get some money back. The Department keeps the vast majority of it. In fact, we're going to keep somewhere in the neighborhood of \$47,259.50. Keep in mind, all these figures are very close. Are they exact? They may be off a little bit, but not much. Alright, let's look at the bottom of the page. The current mortgage balance as of 1/20/22, and these are the banks figures, \$422,889.00, and that equals to 51 payments or 4.25 years. This is a proposed payment plan that the finance committee has worked on diligently, along with Nick.

We want to take that little over \$47,000.00 that we got from National, we want to take the \$87,000.00 surplus that we had last year, and we want to add to it, \$83,599.22 from the membership savings, which will leave a little over \$263,000.00 in membership savings. Alright, if we take the current mortgage balance of \$422,000.00, plus, we subtract the proposed payment of a little over \$217,858.72, it will leave us with a mortgage balance of \$205,030.28. This would take 28 months, 28 payments off of the mortgage. We'll continue to make payments during this year, every month Maggie mails that check in, every month. You can count on it; you can take that to the bank.

Making those 12 payments will be another 12 payments off of the mortgage, that will leave us eleven payments of roughly 11 months left on the mortgage. Or a little bit less than \$100,000.00. However, if we do this, will save the blue hats and our Department a little over \$37,700.00. Now, with a little luck, and if funds are available...if funds are available, we might be able to pay this mortgage off before the '23 Convention, with a little bit of luck. If we don't have that luck, let's say the Rifle Raffle money doesn't bring in everything we expect it to bring in. Membership, I'm not worried about membership, ya'll are going to bring the membership back up to where it needs to be, I have confidence in you. I really do. And we still have to make monthly payments in '23, it will be paid off by December '23, vs, May of '26. We think this is a...this is a fiscally responsible plan; it doesn't delete our savings a whole lot. It takes some money out of it, but it leaves us \$263,000.00. Yet it saves us over \$37,000.00, saves the blue hats, over \$37,000.00 in interest and we can get the mortgage paid off no later than December of 2023. Oh, when Maggie mails that last payment off of \$9,200.00, roughly, the next month, that \$9,200.00 stays in the Department. The next month, \$9,200.00 stays in the Department. Now, I've got one of my committee members back here, Tom, we've talked about this, listen, that's going to be a problem. It's going to be a good problem. We've already started talking about what we need to do with that money when it starts coming in and we get to keep it. You know, not all problems are bad, some

problems are good. And that will be a tremendously good problem. Questions, and I know they'll be some.

NEC Strauss: Yes, of the, just a question about the surplus, was the Fall Conference figured into the surplus?

Finance Chairman Richardson: No, sir. No sir. The reason being...

NEC Strauss: We'll certainly be in the hole for the Fall Conference this year.

Dept Adj Diener: Can I answer?

Finance Chairman Richardson: Yeh, I'll let you answer it.

Dept Adj Diener: When we say surplus, ok, that money that we're saying there. That is the money that was in the General Fund account, not talking about accounting money or net profit and loss. We're talking about the money that was actually in the General Fund account and when we say the \$120,000.00, that's money I need to leave in the General Fund so that we have money to operate off of so it's basically our cash on hand.

D-5 Cmdr Smith: You're going to take \$83,599.22 from the membership savings, are you planning on paying that back with that first \$9,000 that you say is going to be...

Finance Chairman Richardson: We could.

D-5 Cmdr Smith: Or are you planning on paying it back at all?

Finance Chairman Richardson: Oh yeh, yes, sir. Now, we need to...that's one of the problems, ok. The finance committee, along with this body, has got to designate where we want that membership savings to be, ok. \$200,000.00, \$250,000.00, \$300,000.00, then, the finance committee, along with this body, with \$9,000.00 a month coming in, we've got to decide to just let that money sit in the general savings account, checking account, we have got to start exploring ways to invest that money for the betterment of The American Legion Department of South Carolina. We also need to figure out what we need to do once we get that membership savings up to whatever figure is decided upon, what we going to do with that money? It's needs to be a separate entity and then each year the money that comes, \$2.00 a member that comes in, can be added to that particular account. Say, money market, 401, whatever, I'm not one of those people. And we've got to be careful, because I know what's going to happen. Once we get this mortgage paid off, there's going to be a ton of people coming, we've got all this money, we need to spend it.

No, we don't need to spend it. We don't know when the sewer lines are going to gravitate into the Department. Now, how many of ya'll have worked with repairing, replacing a sewer line, the most expensive cost in that, is your engineering cost. You're looking anywhere from \$75,000.00 to \$100,000.00 in engineering cost, that's what we need to invest this money wisely. Gets someone that does that for a living that can tell us what we need to do with it. Questions?

Imm PDC Richardson: What you're telling me is that in plain, plain language, we have \$255,000.00 surplus. Alright, we're going to take \$168,000 for operating expenses, Americanism and the \$2.00 (inaudible)....

Finance Chairman Richardson: Yes, sir.

Imm PDC Richardson: That will cover us for the 2022 year, is that correct? And you're going to take \$47,000.00 from National, you're going to take \$87,000.00 from the budget and \$83,000.00 and change from membership and you're going to pay it off and it's going to leave a balance of \$263,400.00 in membership savings?

Finance Committee Chairman Richardson: Membership savings? Yes sir.

Imm PDC Richardson: Ok. Nowhere in here do I see money that the Department is going to be getting from membership and the Rifle Raffle.

Finance Committee Chairman Richardson: No, sir.

Imm PDC Richardson: So what you're telling me is we're going to go into the year 2022 with all of our bills paid off and every bit of money we make on membership and on the Rifle Raffle, is surplus.

Finance Chairman Richardson: I'm not going to say it's surplus....

Imm PDC Richardson: Ok.

Finance Chairman Richardson:but its money budgeted, it's already in the budget for 2022. So if you look at your budget statement, there's going to be an income for the Rifle Raffle, income for membership, all that money has got nothing to do with this.

Imm PDC Richardson: I understand, but that money has already been taken care of for the operating expenses, is that correct?

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: Maybe.

Imm PDC Richardson: By doing this, by paying off the mortgage down to the \$205,000.00 and change, reducing the length, it sounds like by three years, we're still going to manage to save \$37,000.00.

Finance Chairman Richardson: Yes, sir.

Dept Adj Diener: That's in interest.

Imm PDC Richardson: In interest alone. Can we make a motion on this?

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: I've got a question. First question I have is, what is your definition of membership savings?

Finance Chairman Richardson: That's the \$2.00 per member we put into a savings account as required by the Constitution.

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: Ok, so you're telling me our savings right now is entirely those \$2.00 payments?

Dept Adj Diener: No, bottom line answer to it is, I mean, over the last few years, is whenever we've had surplus, ok, we've had the \$2.00 plus any other surplus, we have just put it in that savings account.

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: I understand, I just want people out here to understand that. So it's not entirely the \$2.00 payment that we've been putting in for each member, that we haven't been doing for years. The other thing that really concerns me is straying from the course in the original plan. There's not a person in this room that doesn't want to pay off this mortgage. But as far as I'm concerned, personally, \$37,000.00 savings in interest is a drop in the bucket compared to the risk that you're possibly taking. Now, at this time last year, we're 50% behind on the Rifle Raffle, making assumptions, and you don't make a budget on assumptions, you base it on fact. Membership is well over probably at least \$150,000.00 to \$200,000.00 off as well. You're not even talking about an inflation rate of 7%, expenses are going to go up. First off, \$120,000.00 leaving it in there until June, isn't enough. We usually been leaving \$150,000.00, and with the way the economy is right now, we have no clue what's going to happen to our expenses in the next several months. There's too much risk, and if we stay the course, we're still going to be paid off on that mortgage in 2024, and it's going to be at least six years ahead of schedule, so that's a lot of savings there as well. And I just, I don't think it's worth the risk at this point.

Finance Committee Chairman Richardson: The mortgage is paid off in 2026.

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: If we stay the course, and never put anything in, just kept making monthly payments, it would have been 2029. But over the years, we've been able to put stuff into it. If all of a sudden, the Rifle Raffle pops up, that's a plus for us, we can just turn around and deal with that at that point. But putting ourselves, \$300,000.00 in savings was a magic number I pulled out of my you know what. And that'll pay about half of our operating expenses for a year, slightly below that. But, at this point, I think we're doing fine and it's jumping the gun. Doing it at this point is just jumping the gun. Thank you.

Finance Committee Chairman Richardson: Thank you, Commander.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I'd like to make a motion at this point that we accept the finance committee's recommendation.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, we have a motion that we accept the finance committee's recommendation of additional payments towards the mortgage. Do we have a second?

Imm PDC Richardson: Second.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, we have a motion, and we have a second. Is there any further discussion needed on this?

D-10 Cmdr Dilleshaw: I was wanting to know if anything of this right here has anything to do with the veteran relief fund or is there a veteran relief fund for the state of South Carolina in with the money (inaudible).

Dept Cmdr Price: No, it has nothing to do with that, we don't have a veteran relief fund in existence at this time. That might be something that could be done once we get where we have money rolling in but right now, we do not have any of that. Any others? Ok.

Dept Adj Diener: I have to make one or two comments, ok. First of all and in answer to Commander Jarvis on the \$120,000.00 of staying in there. I do think that's a, I looked hard at it. Last year we left \$150,000.00, not sure, because with transitions and all we were making, \$150,000.00 was more than enough, ok. So I did fudge that, I mean, I left myself plenty of leeway in there when I came up with the

\$120,000.00. I would be remiss though if I didn't say, and when we talk about the \$300,000.00, you know. Talked with Grady on it, on the, you know, dropping it down to the \$263,000.00. You guys, or you folks in here, just have to understand, if you go with the \$260,000.00, ok, there is risk involved in that, ok. The \$300,000.00, like Jim said, it was gut feeling on an amount to leave in there. But we do have to worry about with inflation, with what's going on with the economy, we don't know how all that's going to affect, ok. And so, if you make that decision to that additional, to drop that below the \$300,000.00, with (inaudible) all the rest of it. If you make that decision to drop below the \$300,000, there's some added risk in there. Now, there's ways to overcome that risk, (inaudible) but it's not financially responsible if I didn't stand up and say that is some risk that goes with that. That's all I have.

PDC Hawk: I understand that you put \$70,800.00 to rental income, does that play in the total budget? And what repercussions do we have if somebody falls out of the lease due to all what's going on right now? We'll have to pick that money up, right, someplace?

Dept Adj Diener: That would end up being a budget shortfall. Right now, all the leases are signed. We wouldn't immediately be able to just dip into the \$300,000.00 for that but again, that's some of the various risk that we have to worry about that go on with this.

PDC Hawk: If nothing ever happened between now and this plan the finance committee's put forth, Grady, I think said, right around \$9,000.00 will be in the coffers every month.

Finance Committee Chairman Richardson: \$9,200.00.

PDC Hawk: Ok, that will also include rental property, right?

Dept Adj Diener: Correct.

PDC Hawk: If everybody still rented, you're looking at \$16,000 every month, rental property income and saving on the mortgage

Dept Adj Diener: Well, that would all still be coming in, the \$9,000.00 mortgage payment would go away. The income from the rental in there, what would happen is the expense line would go away and there would be an extra \$9,000.00 in the budget every month, or less expenses.

PDC Hawk: If something happened, like Jim was saying, these people reneged on their lease on their rental property, you have a budget plan to offset that?

D-1 Cmdr Walton: Ok, we're talking about the convention coming up. Look at how much more we're having to pay for our conventions and our conferences, where are we going to be this year into the next year with those inflation prices raised along with everything else as far as operating The American Legion. Nickels and dimes start adding up, so we've got to be cautious, I think.

Finance Chairman Richardson: You know, we looked at this, and we're also going to add back into the membership savings account, we'll add in the \$2.00 per member once again at the end of the year so it's going to go back up to almost \$300,000.00 at the end of this year. So we'll be back at that magical \$300,000.00 (inaudible) at the end of this year. That, with the doing this payment plan, as we have presented. Plus, keep in mind, at the end of 2023, we're going to have \$9,200.00 a month we're going to have to cover anything that comes up.

D-11 Cmdr Lonergan: I'm just curious when we're going to start using some of this surplus money to pay for helping out non-profit veterans' organizations out there? Seems like we always take the surplus money to pay off the mortgage but we're not doing anything for the veterans themselves.

Dept Adj Diener: We haven't got there as far as that, but this is Nick Diener's personal opinion. I don't mind money going out to help veterans but what you just was "to help other non-profit organizations". And we are a non-profit veteran's organization, we need to look some at getting ourself solidified. And if we start looking at other veterans' programs, I'm a full supporter in the Department of South Carolina coming up with a program to help veterans, ok. But our program to help veterans shouldn't be solely other people's programs. That's just Nick Diener's opinion.

Finance Chairman Richardson: One thing has been brought to my attention, or a suggestion is that the oratorical contest. We don't have a lot of participation; we don't have as much participation as we want. Once we get the mortgage paid off, it may be something we consider, upping the ante on the oratorical contest, making it more attractive for these seniors to participate. And other programs of The American Legion that we have, the sooner that we get this paid off, the sooner we can start helping those other programs of The American Legion.

Dept Cmdr Price: Any other questions before we move forward?

D-20 Cmdr Mills: Since we've kind of touched on Americanism, did want to throw something out there, I'm also the Chairman of Boy Scouts, it's another youth program. We just went and did the awards for that. But there is no monetary award for the scholarship or whatever. I know it falls in line with teachers and law enforcement and whatever, but they're in paid positions and stuff. So I wanted to just, since we touched around that, throw that out there as well, that we should look into that (inaudible) motion on the floor for this.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, thank you. We're getting a lot of input on what we could do, we're not there yet, we're not getting \$9200 extra a month yet. When we get that, these great ideas that you have, should come forward, and that's what we should look at as a DEC. But right now, we're trying to figure out, is the risk of going ahead and paying off early on the mortgage, worth it or not. Is the getting the extra, whatever, \$9200 or whatever it is a month that we'll get that will put us in, put us in a scenario where we can support additional scholarships, but we're not there yet. We need to vote on whether or not we want to take that risk. And is that risk big enough or is it not that big, that's your decision. Any other discussion on that? Ok, if we've got no other discussion, those....all in favor of paying the mortgage off earlier....

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: Wait, wait....

Dept Cmdr Price: No, not early, but paying...

Imm PDC Richardson: With that plan.

Dept Cmdr Price: Yeh, paying the mortgage, this plan that has been presented by the committee, all in favor of that, signify by raising your hands, please.

Dept Adj Diener: We'll need to do it again.

Dept Cmdr Price: All those that are against doing this, please raise your hand.

Dept Adj Diener: I got 23, there should have been 22, and that's only 19 votes. Alright, let's do this again, because it didn't add up. Unless somebody's left.

D-5 Cmdr Smith: We had some abstentions too.

Dept Adj Diener: Oh, oh.

Dept Cmdr Price: Any abstains? We got one abstain.

Dept Adj Diener: We got 20.

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: Let's do a roll call.

NEC Strauss: Abstain
Alt NEC Lysaght: Yes
Imm PDC Richardson: Yes
Dept Historian Spurgeon: Yes
1st Vice Cmdr Jarvis: No
2nd Vice Cmdr Kvam: No
3rd Vice Cmdr Donegan: No
4th Vice Cmdr Rabon: Yes
D-1 Cmdr Walton: No
D-2 Cmdr Coy: No
D-4 Cmdr Southworth: Yes
D-5 Cmdr Smith: Yes
D-7 Cmdr Galloway: Yes
D-8 Cmdr Courtney: No
D-10 Cmdr Dilleshaw: No
D-11 Cmdr Lonergan: No
D-13 Cmdr Gibson: No
D-15 Cmdr Dorman: No
D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Yes
D-17 Cmdr Childs: Yes
D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: Yes
D-20 Cmdr Mills: Yes

Dept Adj Diener: 11 to 10 and one abstain. 11 yes, 10 no, one abstain.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, motion passes.

Dept Adj Diener: I don't know if they could hear me, the vote was 11 yes, 10 no, and one abstain. You need to know, you technically can cast a vote to create a tie, if you so desire.

Dept Cmdr Price: Yes. Ok,

Dept Adj Diener: I do have one other quick item to bring up to you. Ya'll are aware, as we've been trying to (inaudible) Shooting Sports, you know, program. And one of the things that occurred last year, we had a young lady from Nations Ford that actually went up and won the National Championship for Shooting Sports, and our Shooting Sports program, as far as something given to her from the state of

South Carolina recognizing her as our Champion, ok, we gave her nothing, ok. So for this year, our state Champion has been crowned to go forward again to National. Our state championship team has been crowned and nominated to go forward to National, and right now, on the books, the plan is we give them nothing, to recognize them. Ok, so, having said that, the Shooting Sports Chairman came in with a request that we get a plaque to give to the top shooter in the top team and present it at the convention this year to recognize their efforts. His request went to the Trophies & Awards committee, and they approved, and they concurred with his request. The request went to the finance committee and the finance committee concurred with his request. We haven't went out and got the plaques yet but we're talking two plaques, we're probably talking, you know, max, \$150.00, probably closer to \$100.00. But because that's not in the budget, ok, to spend that, to spend that additional \$150.00, requires this body to approve the awards and approve changing the Americanism budget to add \$150.00.

Finance Chairman Richardson: It's coming out of the Americanism budget.

Dept Adj Diener: Yeh, this is Americanism's budget, not the General Fund.

Vice Cmdr Kvam: I make a motion that we go ahead and approve the recommendations of the Trophies & Awards committee and of the Finance committee to purchase those plaques up to \$150.00.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, we have a motion on the floor to approve...

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: I second that.

Dept Cmdr Price: And we have the second. Discussion?

NEC Strauss: I have a question, just for clarification purposes. This is going to be an ongoing plaque, each year, for the state champion?

Dept Cmdr Price: Correct. It will be ongoing and part of the Americanism budget. Questions?

Vice Cmdr Donegan: Would the girl that didn't get anything last year, would she be included now?

Dept Adj Diener: It's already, already...

D-11 Cmdr Lonergan: We give scholarships to boys' baseball, we give scholarships to oratorical, our state champion for shooting, shouldn't we give them a scholarship, as well?

Dept Cmdr Price: That's a different issue and has not been submitted and it would have to be submitted to be approved.

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: I agree with you, we also have to look at ladies fastpitch softball, we got to get scholarships for those and that's been recognized, and I think that's something that we've got to work towards and consider in the next budget.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, no further discussion? Those all in favor of approving the additional funding for the shooting plaques, signify by raising your hand please. All against, please signify by raising your hand. Motion's approved, move forward. Now, we'll move on to Constitution & Bylaws, if you would, Chairman Richardson?

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Every year, when amendments are submitted to the Constitution & Bylaws committee, Const & Bylaws committee can do one of three things, we can recommend approval, we can recommend disapproval, or we can recommend rejection. Now, if we recommend approval or recommend disapproval, the amendment goes straight to the blue hats at the convention for their votes. If it's recommended rejection, it comes before this body. This body is the only body that can reject amendments. We have some that have some that we have recommended rejection this year, and all the rejection votes were unanimous. A lot of people, you know, when we did the training last year at the Fall Conference, it was stated explicitly for amendments to be in the Department no later than the 1st of May and there's a reason for this. If they come in by the 1st of May,

Dept Adj Diener: March.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: No, I'm doing this. If they come by the 1st of May, the committee can look at it, if there's a problem with it, we're going to recommend rejection, we're going to recommend disapproval. We can send it back to the post for them to work on. We only have a few of those this year. Each one of these that we're recommending rejection came in after the 1st of May.

Dept Adj Diener: March, we're not into May yet.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: I'm trying to get this year over with, March, alright. On the amendment 8a. One of the main reasons is when an amendment is submitted, you have to submit in its entirety, the section that you are dealing with, not just a little tiny sentence that you want to change. It has to be submitted in its entirety. Otherwise, if the amendment is approved, that line that's not on the amendment is poof, gone! It will no longer be in the constitution. And if you look at this one, it's not a bad amendment, but if you look at the constitution, it's got listed 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and then it's got listed 2nd, 4th, it's got all those listed when they're going to be elected, and all of that. All of that's left out. This amendment would have been, if it's not rejected, all that's going to be left out. Now, if this body decides that a recommended rejection amendment is forwarded to the Department, to the convention in May, it will go forward with a recommendation from the committee as disapproval. But you take the chance of all that writing, that's been left off the amendment, if this amendment's passed, all that writing's gone. How you wanting to do this, one at a time or en mass?

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, on 8a, do we change the Constitution and everything's that in there. Ok, the recommendation of rejection has been provided by the committee, do we uphold the committee. Do we uphold that rejection, please signify by saying yes?

NEC Strauss: Are we going to have discussion?

Dept Cmdr Price: I got to have a motion and all that, right? I'm sorry. Ok, if I can get your attention again, please, thank you, I appreciate that.

D-5 Cmdr Smith: Why didn't we get these before this so we could have looked at if they need objections at all? Because it's kind of late to be reading all this.

Dept Adj Diener: Because they just met Thursday?

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Wednesday.

Dept Cmdr Price: Yeh.

Dept Adj Diener: This was all just finalized Wednesday with all the other ones that they let go forward.

D-5 Cmdr Smith: It says received February 14th at the top of the page.

Dept Adj Diener: They just met Wednesday.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: The committee just met Wednesday.

Dept Adj Diener: The committee just met Wednesday to go through all of them.

Dept Cmdr Price: Any further discussion on that, Jack? Ok, I've got to have a motion to accept the rejection.

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: I made the motion that we concur with the constitution committee and reject this amendment.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I second that motion.

Dept Cmdr Price: We have a motion, we have a second, is there any further discussion?

NEC Strauss: I don't know why the rest of the amendment would go poof, there's no line striking out the rest of the amendment. The purpose of this amendment being written the way it was written is because all the other part of it is irrelevant to the changes. The section 3 was the only section that we wanted to be changed, there was no line strike through the rest of the amendment. Just for, so we didn't have multiple changes and confusing loopholes, I didn't want, I was the author of this, by the way. I did not want to confuse the body on what the changes were, there is no intention to send forward to change any part of that other than that section 3, and that's why the full section of section 3 wasn't added. None of the other part of the thing changed, therefore, I didn't want to confuse anybody, there was no line stricken through any of the other things so it wouldn't go poof, and go away.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Appreciate that, Commander, I really do. However, you know, you've got in here, current wording, and it's got, it should have all been put in there. And I see what you're saying, and then it's got proposed wording and in the proposed wording, it was the committee's decision, the committee idea thought processes, that this proposed wording was sent, and even leaves out "to be eligible to hold the office of district commander" yada, yada, yada yada. When we held the meeting, we said put the section in its entirety.

NEC Strauss: I have a space up there about six inches, you know, to put that in there.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: You also have a place at the bottom where it says page one of one and you go...and we've got one in here that's like that.

NEC Strauss: These forms are too small, they needed to be widened, there's no reason that have all this up here and down here...this could be made in about one inch. So you can put it in there.

D-7 Cmdr Galloway: Good morning, folks, John Galloway, new District 7 person, explain to me what we're doing.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Ok.

D-7 Cmdr Galloway: Because I've got this seat here and we're talking about these forms and changing something, and on this part, and I don't know what that is, but I guess we're talking about changing (inaudible).

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Yes, sir.

D-7 Cmdr Galloway: So the top part was there so the change is what you're proposed?

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Yes.

Dept Cmdr Price: Any further discussion?

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: I think if they didn't put that bold at the bottom, odd numbered districts, even numbered districts, if they hadn't put that in there and just put that line through the Department, that would have been ok.

Dept Adj Diener: Can I speak? One of the things that from my standpoint, ok, when an amendment gets passed at the convention, ok. If it says make an amendment to section 3 and there's no other (inaudible). If it was section 3, section 1, and all you included was section 3, section 1, then that is, I have to change that to its entirety, just to the way that's it's worded. In this case, what you have it says section 3, well, section 3 is another half page worth of stuff that's all still technically included under section 3, it's not a section 3 (inaudible) 1, or anything else. So, in theory, I would have to go in and change that entire section to only read like what this read. So all the rest of that would have to stay out, is what he's saying.

NEC Strauss: There's no line stricken through it though, to remove it.

Dept Adj Diener: I still have to remove it. Your recommendation is to change that section to that, I don't get to interpret what I think you mean. And that's where we get into trouble is if we're interpreting it when we actually make the change to the constitution.

NEC Strauss: Strike out what you don't want here, with a line through it. I mean, I didn't strike out the entire section 3 so that means....

D-11 Cmdr Lonergan: The constitution doesn't allow it, because the constitution says the full amendment, so we're not shortchanging them.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, at this time, I'm going to call for a vote. You've heard the motion and you've heard the second.

D-5 Cmdr Smith: Repeat the motion, please?

Dept Cmdr Price: If you would, please, repeat the motion?

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: My motion was we concur with the rejection of this amendment from the constitution committee.

Dept Cmdr Price: All in favor of rejection?

D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: Roll call, roll call.

Dept Adj Diener: We're going to be here....is there a second to a roll call?

Dept Cmdr Price: I've got a motion for a roll call. If we do a roll call for all these amendments, we're going to be a while. In any case, I've got a motion for a roll call, is there a second for a roll call? There is no second, ok?

D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: Ok.

Dept Cmdr Price: So, let's move forward. All in favor of upholding the rejection, please signify by saying yes? All against? Ok. (Motion to reject Amendment # 8a passed)

NEC Strauss: Mr. Commander, I'm just going to make a note for the record that it was not sent back to me saying that you needed to put the entire thing in.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: That's because it came after the date. We met in February....

NEC Strauss: You see the date on there, I never got a letter saying I should put down the entire section.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Alright, let's move, amendment # 11, this is a six-page amendment. The committee had a lot of discussion on this amendment, and the committee felt that this is more of a policy and procedure situation, rather than a constitution. This should be handled by policies & procedures; it deals with investing money so forth and so on. This would tie the hands of this committee here in any future investment with extra money, is what this would do. If this is done under policy and procedures, your hands are not tied. Commander Hawk, is that correct? That's what we said, policies and procedures.

PDC Hawk: This is a finance issue, not a constitution and bylaws issue, therefore finance would recommend to the DEC any savings procedures or investment polices that they come up with should go before the DEC for the Department, not the Constitution & Bylaws.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, so, on this amendment # 11, it is felt that should be a policy and procedure, not constitution & bylaws. The committee has given the recommendation of rejection, can I get a motion on that?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I make a motion that we accept the finance committee's recommendation.

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: I second that.

Constitution & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Constitution & Bylaws committee.

Dept Cmdr Price: Yes, Constitution & Bylaws. That's what happens when you have two hats. So, I've got a motion and I've got a second, is there any discussion on this?

Dept Historian Spurgeon: I'm still trying to read it all.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, I understand you're trying to read it.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Can we get the Cliff notes? (Laughter).

Dept Adj Diener: Can I? The actual amendment and the plan that he puts into the amendment, is not necessarily a bad plan, it was well thought out, something that needs to be looked at. What the committee looked at though is, yes, a plan needs to be done that way, but it needs to be a policy & procedure and not put into concrete into the constitution, ok. So it's not that they're necessarily saying, this is a bad plan. It 's just there's so much of it in there and once it goes into the constitution, you're locked in for at least a year and if any changes in the market that you needed to adjust, this body couldn't adjust that, they'd have to wait until the next convention to adjust it, that's all they're saying. They're not saying it's a bad plan.

PDC Hawk: It's a policy and procedure of the finance committee. Not the constitution and bylaws committee to make such policy. Because finance committee takes care of the finances, right? Not the constitution & bylaws committee. In doing this, this plan, as Nick says, it's a good plan. You have to tweak it, but that comes through the finance committee, they would then make their recommendation, as I said earlier, for an investment policy, we need to put this much into savings every year, whatever they want to do, that's a policy of the finance committee. If the constitution & bylaws committee got this (inaudible) part of the discussion, you'd never get anything done. Everything'd have to go before the convention every year to spend a damn penny. This will allow the finance committee to do what the finance committee's supposed to do, they recommend investment policies to come forward to this body etc. It's not backwards like it's presented now. You sure don't want to tie this body down or the Department down to a once year meeting, on spending money.

Dept Cmdr Price: Thank you, Commander.

PDC Hawk: Thank you.

D-5 Cmdr Smith: If you take a look it, it says, the local posts shall pay into the treasury of the Department, we don't do that anymore. We do it all electronically and we pay National first and then National sends the money down to State.

Dept Cmdr Price: Again, what we're dealing with is should this be a policy and procedure process for the finance committee, or should this be in, or should this be in our bylaws and constitution? So, that's what we're dealing with. The committee has said and recommended a rejection of this. I've gotten a motion and I've gotten a second and I'm going call for a vote now. All in favor of rejecting this, signifying by saying yes? Any opposed? (one no). Any abstaining? It is rejected. (Motion to reject Amendment # 11 passed)

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Alright, let's look at # 16. Once again, they put the current wording in, but they do not put the whole blurb in. And it also says the annual department convention delegates will elect the following department officers. The proposed wording is the department officers will consist of the following positions.

But the main reason is, just like in the one before, they didn't put the whole blurb, for lack of a better word, into the proposed wording or the current wording. Complete section.

Dept Cmdr Price: The committee, because they did not, put the complete section, like the other one, has rejected this, that's their recommendation. Can I get a motion to reject this?

D-13 Cmdr Gibson: I make a motion to reject because of their recommendation.

Dept Cmdr Price: Do I get a second?

D-20 Cmdr Mills: I second that.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, I have a motion and a second to reject this as previously recommended. Is there any further discussion?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I'm sort of, like Michael says, you got it late, I guess, so maybe we should the dates of when you get these amendment changes because, you know, you shouldn't even be voting on it, ok. You should send it back immediately to whoever wrote it and let them make the change.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: I understand, Commander. The problem with that is, getting it back to them, and them getting it back to us.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Well, then maybe we have to look at the dates.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: That's something we can look at next year, definitely.

Dept Adj Diener: There's still work that we have to do with these.

NEC Strauss: Where in the instructions does it say anywhere that you have to put the whole blurb?

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: That was in the training session.

Dept Cmdr Price: Yes.

NEC Strauss: I don't think every post attended the training session and saw it, shouldn't it be in the instructions that you want to have the entire blurb and put in the entire blurb? Where does it say that? I was sent something back, and not getting to this one, but I could make changes but there was nothing ever said to me about including the entire blurb.

Dept Adj Diener: Which is a good point, and I don't want to argue with that, but you also made additional changes besides what it was sent back to you for.

NEC Strauss: True, true. I'm on this one too. But, I mean, this person (inaudible) in good faith...

Dept Adj Diener: But yours is a different thing, ok. You sent yours in, in time, for the committee to look at once. It was sent back to you once, now you can argue whether it, you know, it should have other in it, but it was sent back to you for the opportunity to change. This last one, ok, came in and the instructions we put out said if you want to have a chance to make any adjustments, you have to have them into us by February the 1st so the committee could meet, send it back, give you time to adjust it, ok. They didn't it in within that time frame so there was no time for them to meet and send it back and have a chance for adjustments on theirs. So that's why nothing was sent back to them, ok?

Dept Cmdr Price: Any further discussion? Ok? No further discussion, the committee has recommended rejection. So with that, all in favor of rejecting this please signify by saying yes?

All opposed (one opposed) Any abstain? Move forward. (Motion to reject Amendment # 16 passed)

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: The last one, # 19. Once again, in the proposed wording here, they listed all the officers and in the proposed wording, the only thing they did, the Immediate Past Department Commander position be removed from Article VI, section 2, effective at the close of the Department State Convention.

If this was to pass, that would be what Article VI, Section 2 said. And that would be all that it says. Everything else would be left off.

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, for discussion, can we get a motion first? Let's get a motion first?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I make a motion that we accept it, the rejection.

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: I second that.

Alt NEC Lysaght : The proposed wording only affects one entry in the original wording, it does not impact the entire section. So taking out one position will not impact the structure of Article VI, Section 2.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: I understand what you're saying.

Alt NEC Lysaght: Good.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: However lists the Department Executive Committee with full voting rights shall consists of the following members, Immediate PDC, NEC, Alt NEC, Historian, yada, all the way down, all those are listed, ok? Under proposed wording, it says the Immediate Past Department Commander position be removed from Article VI, Section 2, effective at the close of the Department State Convention.

You're putting that proposed wording in and that's all you're putting in, that's all that the Adjutant has to put into the constitution, if it passes.

Dept Cmdr Price: All those others go away.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: All those others go away.

Alt NEC Lysaght: But the interpretation of what I read here, unless I've got something different, it says the Immediate Past Department Commander position be removed from Article VI, Section 2.

Dept Cmdr Price: We understand that.

Vice Cmdr Jarvis: Are we going to argue about the same thing on each one? Is it right, maybe not. But that's the way the policy is right now. That proposed section, right there, that is all that he can put into the constitution. We need everything, we don't want the adjutant to have to second guess or think this one out or, what did they mean? Yes, this needs to be changed, but right now, that's the policy that we've been using. Why explain it each time, it's the same issue on every one of them.

Dept Adj Diener: The wording that I would be required to actually put into the constitution, and I quote, “The Immediate Past Department Commander position be removed from Article VI, Section 2, effective at the close of the Department State Convention”.

I have to put those exact words in there, I can’t just remove the position, I have to put those exact words in.

Alt NEC Lysaght: And I said that...

Dept Cmdr Price: Ok, and we can keep arguing the point. Go ahead.

Alt NEC Lysaght: It’s not a question of arguing the point. The question is we’re simply making a change to an amendment, ok. And by the way, the Adjutant does not make that decision, that decision is made by the constitution & bylaws committee. If they look at it and say, for reasons, whatever, but the reasoning is not there. It’s a call saying, well, we’re taking everything out, ok. And if that’s the written policy and I didn’t hear it in the workshop, but if that’s the policy, ok.

Dept Cmdr Price: We have voted that way on two others. So.

PDC Scherer: That was in the instructions, how to write a resolution and how to write an amendment.

Dept Cmdr Price: Any other discussion? I’m calling for a vote now, all in favor of accepting the committee’s rejection of this amendment, signify by saying yes? All opposed? All abstain (one abstained) (Motion to reject Amendment # 19 passed)

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: If you have a concern, please those to Nick before the end of convention, or Mike, after the end of convention, and sometime in July, August, the committee will sit down with the new Adjutant, and we will go over it. Please, let your posts know that, if the new Adjutant and the new Commander will allow, we will have training again at the Fall Conference. Once again, I’d like to thank all of you.

Dept Historian Spurgeon: In here it says the committee will be meeting at designated times throughout the year, is that posted?

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: I have asked that it be posted onto the website, yes. And if you’ll look, the very first page, it states in there, all amendments must be at the department no later than the 1st Tuesday in March in their final version including those amendments sent back to the post for review/change. And if you look at # 6, in bold, the first Wednesday in February will be the last day amendments that can be returned to the post for possible corrections. I stressed that at both training sessions that we had. I urged, I begged, and I pleaded, for everybody to get them in the 1st Wednesday in February. I’d much rather send it back and get it back, once again, thank you for your patience.

D-5 Cmdr Smith: I’m curious, all carry the same date, 3/16/22, how come # 8a has only two votes and all the rest have three.

Const & Bylaws Chairman Richardson: Because one member was late getting there, and I start my committee meetings on time.

Dept Cmdr Price: The Adjutant will give his update.

Dept Adj Diener: I've just got a couple quick things that I need to hit over here. First of all, just a reminder to go out to your posts, the call to convention has been sent out to all of your posts on February 2nd. The forms are on the webpage. The registration is due back to Department Headquarters, physically to Department Headquarters, by May the 5th, ok. So you need to make sure all your posts know that and there are no exceptions to that. It can't be that it was mailed, that it was postmarked. They have to be physically be received by May the 5th, in the office. So please, please, make sure your posts know that.

Second thing, and now I'm going to pick on ya'll. We just recently had two events, we had the National Commander came in for a visit ,he was only here for really, one day that anybody could see him. We held an event down at the hotel and then he spoke at the State House. At that event, between the hotel and the State House, we had four District Commanders show up, four out of 20. At the event at the hotel, not counting the head table party that was there, we only had 21 people show up for the National Commander's visit, and several of those were Auxiliary members. Last weekend we had the State Oratorical Contest, we had three District Commanders there. And it was noted the lack of caps of both of the situations. Now, I know there's going to be times, we're never going to get everybody there. But I would just put out a plea for next year, as you're looking at these, when it's a Department level event, please make more of an effort. It didn't look good for us as a Department, in both of those with us having that little of attendance of our senior leadership, ok. Enough of the chastising, but I had to say that. One, those kids at the oratorical, they work their tails off to get there, they are very impressive, and there weren't a lot of folks there to be able to see it.

Last thing, we now have some of it nailed down with the retirement rules with the police department and all those things, March the 28th is when Mike Strauss will come on board and become an employee. He won't take over as Adjutant until after the convention, but he will be on board to start training and working so that's a good point. And with that, this is kind of a bittersweet moment for me, but this is my last scheduled DEC meeting that I will be standing up in this position on. And I just want to say thank you to this committee for all the support that you've given, the friendships that we've developed. Don't always have to agree on everything but we've got a lot of things done and I certainly appreciate it. And I just want to say that during my time it has been a true honor to get to serve the Department as it's Adjutant (applause).

Dept Cmdr Price: This is also my last DEC meeting (applause and laughter). I would like to give a special thanks to Maggie for all your support, it really was appreciated, and to Nick or your day-to-day guidance, and to my four vice commanders for your support and all of you on the achievements the Department has enjoyed over the last year.

It has been a great honor to serve with you. We started the year off with the at attendance Boys State, while the numbers were down, the graduation was fantastic! Baseball was starting up and going well, and along with that, so was ladies fast pitch softball. In fact, Ladies fast pitch softball went so well that you, as the DEC, voted to recognize it as a program, thank you!

During the summer we also attended the Darlington Raceway where we unfurled a hundred-foot flag. We did that with the Legion family. Throughout the year, we worked hard to unite our Legion family in several ways, with several events. One of the events was the participation of all at the Fall Conference, there we had our Legionnaires, the SAL and Legion Riders and of course, our Auxiliary. There was some great training available, and you made this possible.

I had the opportunity, as I am sure most of you did, to participate in Christmas parades that included our Legion family. In fact in the parades, you could quickly and easily pick out your fellow Legion family, most all of them were carrying or waving our United States flag. When you go to a parade and you look out there and see our Legion family and you see how patriotic people are, it really makes you proud to be part of that family.

We have had several membership drives and revitalizations. We recently had a joint family revitalization drive shared with the Auxiliary at Post 142.

The National Commander's visit, while short, was very impactful, as he addressed the joint session of the South Carolina Legislature, for those of you that attended, thank you very much, I appreciate that support.

As many of you know, the Department has been working with Fort Jackson to bring back the Reconnect project. The Reconnect project is where we all have a chance to spend the day with our military and see some of their training and graduation and enjoy a meal with them. I hope you have signed up. If you have not, I would appreciate it if you would give it some serious consideration. That reconnect project was put together for you, you and your posts, to have time to spend with our future military leaders, to have time to see what our military goes through as far as training. So you can still get signed up, but you really need to do that today.

Then On May 21st, we will have Legion night with the Fireflies at Segra Park. There will be a Legion tent and our Legion Riders as well as our Honor team will be on the field to present the colors. You don't want to miss this. Last year for Legion night at Segra park we had over 200 Legionnaires there. I say Legionnaires, I mean family, as well. Hopefully this year, we'll surpass that, but this is a great time to get together, watch a game, have a little camaraderie and hopefully recruit some membership.

Now, I'm going to tell you about a project that I have been working on, it started last September with Commander Southworth. He and I went to a VEAC. This event is where you could go and file a claim, you could see about an appeal, and it was even possible for you to walk out with a rating. That took place at that event. Basically at this event, if you needed to file a claim with the VA, if you had questions about VA appeals or benefits to which you may be entitled, if you had questions about VA healthcare, etc, all this information is called the Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC). Like I said, I first attended the event, it was a three-day event that was held at post 10 in Wilmington, NC. We've not held an event like this, it hasn't happened in South Carolina.

The Adjutant and I have been working on it and since that event, we have gone and met with the VA Affairs Secretary, which is Will Grimsley, he's our Secretary for the VA Affairs, and we've also met with the Regional VA, to talk about how we can do this.

So we're still working that but then another VEAC event was just held in Cary, NC, where a representative from the SC VA Affairs was present, the SC VA Affairs Secretary sent a representative to that event. He was there, along with 1st Vice Commander, Jarvis, and me. The amount of information and support that was available to our veterans is tremendous.

The VEAC was created by a fellow Legion member named Cajun Comeau, who worked for the VA Regional Office in Raleigh-Durham, he started it. He now works for the Veterans Experience Office under the US Department of Veterans Affairs. His boss, a Mr. Jim Wartski, Executive Director for the

Veterans Experience Office under the US Department of Veterans Affairs, was present and also promoting the event. Along with those distinguished individuals, you also had the NC Director of Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, which is equivalent to our Secretary, here in South Carolina, Mr. Terry Westbrook, was also present.

North Carolina has been putting these Veteran Experience Center (VEAC) events together since 2014 and many of our veterans have been going to them. And with that, I'll tell you, last September, Wayne and I saw veterans from South Carolina, we saw veterans from Georgia. In fact I talked with one couple that had flew there from Texas, ok. because they saw the advertisement on the VA system, and they had flown from Texas to get their appeal processed. There were, we have them in a ledger, there was an accounting where four million dollars was awarded to veterans because of that one event. We have all this in the books, the Adjutant has a copy of that.

But my question is, even with this one in Cary, why do we have our veterans from South Carolina going to another state? Why hasn't this been done? Why can't we do this here? I talked with the Adjutant, like I said, we've met with the Secretary, we've met with the Regional Office, so it's a process that we're trying to work. But I will tell you, the only way it's going to happen, it takes a lot of manpower to put one of these things together. It takes a lot of cooperation with, hopefully, the city. In Cary, NC, Cary allowed The American Legion to have their community center. Their community center looks like a huge, gigantic gym. And then their IT made it possible so that they could have over 25 connections as far as their computers. Because the Regional Office will send down Graders, they sent down 25 Graders so they can grade that right there and you can walk out with your percentage. But it takes, not The American Legion, but DAV, VFW, you name it, a lot of veteran organizations came together to make it happen, because it takes a lot of volunteers.

The Executive Director for Veterans Experience Officer under the US Department of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Jim Wartski, stated that that they are currently working with six other states that will be doing something similarly to this and that he would be happy to help us establish ours. I have his information; 1st Vice Commander Jarvis has his information. We can make this happen, we can take care of our veterans right here in South Carolina, but it will take all of us to make it so. Again, thank you for your support, and let's keep moving forward, for God and Country. (applause).

I appreciate that. I did forget one thing though, the Baseball Hall of Fame, I have been approached by the Director, Legree Oswald, and he would like to establish a Baseball Hall of Fame. In other words, he'd like a wall, within the Department to put a couple of plaques up there so that when they come in there, they see the Baseball Hall of Fame. He's basically wanting to spend or allocate \$150.00/\$200.00.

Dept Adj Diener: No, that's your project, he hasn't given us money for that.

Dept Cmdr Price: So, in any case, Baseball Hall of Fame, something to think about, it's something that would look good. We should certainly, I think, recognize, the Baseball because our Americanism comes from there, a lot of it comes from there. So when we talk about the contributions of baseball, American Legion baseball and what they do for us as an organization, putting out a little space on the wall to recognize some of their great supporters, I think, is very adequate.

Ok, thank you for your donations, we have collected \$152.00, and we have \$215.00 that's been turned in, giving us \$367.00 that is awesome (for the Veterans and Children Foundation). So now, I'm going to turn it back over to the Adjutant so he can kind of give you an idea of what we've got to do here.

Dept Adj Diener: And this is real quick. As I sent out the email message, following this, we're going to take a break here, because we do have a hearing to conduct, ok. The hearing was scheduled to start at 12:00 but I figure you all need a little bit of a break, ok, but I don't want to take too much of a break, want to start at 12:15?

Dept Cmdr Price: Yes.

Dept Adj Diener: So when we adjourn here, we'll officially start the hearing at 12:15, so if you need to go use the facilities and all that, just be back here ready to go at 12:15.

Department Comamnder Price called on Chaplain Mullinax for the invocation and he closed the meeting.

For God and Country,

Nick I. Diener
Department Adjutant

ND/mm