



Department Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 7, 2024



The Department Executive Committee meeting was held on December 7, 2024, at South Carolina American Legion Department Headquarters.

Dept Cmdr Bruce Donegan	
Dept Adjutant Michael Strauss	
NEC Jim Hawk	D-13 Cmdr Rick Gibson
Alt NEC Phillips	D-14 Cmdr Terry Weeks
Imm PDC Jim Kvam	D-15 Cmdr Richard Dorman
Dept 1st Vice Cmdr Jim Rabon	D-16 Cmdr Jim Defrehn
Dept 2 nd Vice Cmdr Jack Lonergan	D-17 Cmdr Jerome Childs
Dept 3 rd Vice Cmdr Russ Cantrell	D-18 Cmdr Larry Pouncy
Dept 4 th Vice Cmdr Patricia Dandy	D-19 Cmdr Charlie Strickland
D-1 Cmdr Darlene Walton	D-20 Cmdr Harold Donnelly
D-3 Cmdr Brad Kennedy	Department Chaplain Clarence Shuford
D-4 Cmdr Lou Morse	Dept Sgt-at-Arms Kevin Joy
D-5 Cmdr Bonita Wells	PDC Mickey Taylor
D-6 Cmdr Bill Simpson	PDC John Britt
D-7 Cmdr John Galloway	PDC Bob Scherer
D-8 Cmdr Harry Malpass	PDC Jarvis
D-9 Cmdr John Comins	
D-10 Cmdr Wayne Hipp	
D-11 Cmdr Peter St. Onge	
D-12 Cmdr A.L. Hough-Everage	

Absent

Dept J/A Cody Mitchell
D-2 Cmdr Dana Richardson

Also Present:

Dept Exec. Director M. May
Post 207 Cmdr Mark Dorsey

Department Commander, Bruce Donegan, opened the meeting and called on Chaplain Shuford for the invocation. Commander Donegan read Resolution 288, led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Preamble to The American Legion and called on Adjutant Strauss to call for the roll.

Adjutant Strauss called the roll and stated that a quorum was present.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: I just want to congratulate and welcome Brad Kennedy, newly elected District 3 Commander, Thank you. (applause) Welcome Bonita too, I know you've had a long road, and that. Good to see you again, ma'm. (applause) Tell you what we're going to do.

The minutes have been published in the booklet format, and if there's no corrections, I'll accept a motion to accept so we don't have to read them today.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Motion to accept.

D-6 Cmdr Simpson: Second.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Motion's been made and seconded. All in favor? Opposed? Carried.

At this time, I'd like to have a motion to go into Executive Session for the Adjutant to read a statement regarding Post 186 and the situation that we have with SAL membership.

D-6 Cmdr Simpson: I make the motion.

D-9 Cmdr Comins: Second.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: The motion's been made by Bill Simpson and seconded by John Comins, all in favor? All opposed? Carried.

Dept Adj Strauss: We'll let you know when we're going to resume, if you could just step out real quick, please?

**EXECUTIVE SESSION BEGINS
EXECUTIVE SESSION ENDS**

Dept Adj Strauss: Our finance Chairman, Tom Yarborough was not feeling too good the other day, he was not sure if he was going to be able to make it. So he asked me to kind of be prepared to present the budgets on his behalf because of.... but Cecil Phillips from that committee is here and he's kind of been with us. But just to kind of verify, the committee's kind of gone through these pretty hard here so....We have the?

Dept Exec May: Everybody has all that.

Dept Adj Strauss: So, we'll just kind of go over the profit & loss which is the 1st thing on here on the thing. You can kind of see that our CD's have been doing very well.

Exec Dir May: That's the Balance Sheet.

The Balance Sheet, the one that's titled Balance Sheet at the top. The Balance Sheet, you know, it's going pretty good.

We'll get into the Profit & Loss, which is the next page. The Profit & Loss, it's very similar to the year before, things with food and fuel has kind of gone up. Some of our travels to National, they're costs have gone up for tickets and registration and stuff like that, to cover that cost. So the trips to National have been a little bit more expensive.

Our income from membership is kind of down, I don't expect that that's going to get any better in December so to kind of see, and that's from January to November, so that incorporates two different commanders there. But that shows you that you know.... membership is our life blood. And, you know, when we're.... when we're doing very good on certain things, the Rifle

Raffle, you know, we got that early this year, and hopefully that's going to help our income. Just kind of keep in mind that the rifle raffle, we can't accept that revenue for the '25 drawing until '25, you know. So just kind of let your posts know that. You know, when they're out selling them right now, but that we just can't take that revenue because anything we deposit in '24 and we need it to be on '25 so we can't accept that until January 1st. After January 1st, please go ahead feel free to start sending those tickets in. Under the budget, we also, there's a Legion College on there. I don't want that to be confused with the....South Carolina's been studying having an American Legion College itself. Other individual states have an American Legion College. We've added money to the Commander and Adjutant's discretionary fund for a SC Legion College, you'll see that on page two of the Profit & Loss.

Exec Dir May: No, no, that's in the budget.

Dept Adj Strauss: That's in the budget, I'm sorry, never mind about that on the Profit & Loss. But that's....

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I have a question, Mike. Why wouldn't we have that as a separate line item, the amount that we asked for, that was approved instead of under the commanders? Because if...when the new commander comes in, if he doesn't want to have that, the college, that's his prerogative to have whatever he wants. So we should have it, I feel, as a separate line item, got or the College, the SC Legion College.

NEC Hawk: We're still in the '24 budget right?

Dept Adj Strauss: Right now we're talking about the Profit & Loss, so we'll get into the actual...we're going to go over the General Fund, I kind of got ahead of myself on that, I apologize. That was kind of my bad, I apologize for that, she kind of nudged me and told me I was getting off track.

Dept Adj Strauss: Is there any questions about the Profit & Loss? Everybody's had kind of opportunity to look at it? If you remember a couple years ago, actually I'll get into that in the budget too. If there's no further questions about the Profit & Loss....

PDC Taylor: We're talking about the '24 budget, did you send out the '25 budget early enough for the DEC to get a chance to browse it before they got here.

PDC Scherer: (inaudible).

Dept Adj Strauss: Yes, I sent it out in an email. Alright, I'm going to move on from the Profit & Loss, you can always, at the end of all this, if you need to go back to that, you can let me know and I'll try to answer everything about the Profit & Loss.

We'll kind of get into the budgets now. The first one on the agenda is the SAL, is that what you have?

No, excuse me, excuse me, excuse me. Ok. The General Operating (Budget), you can kind of see the numbers from year to year there.

PDC Jarvis: Please put us on the page that you're reading from.

Dept Adj Strauss: Alright, so at the top of the thing that I'm talking about, it says 2025 General Operating Budget, this is a proposed budget that we're going to be voting on.

Exec Dir May: It's highlighted in yellow, keep going.

Dept Adj Strauss: 2025 General Operating Budget. For those new to the committee, the General Budget is the American Legion's Department of SC General Operations budget. This is our budget that we basically do day to day operations from. The first portion, the first paragraph of it, basically is our income this year. And you can kind of see that the... with the USAA, we project that to be down a lot, USAA is kind of phasing out. They're keeping their support of the Headquarters in National but they're kind of weeding out the Departments and their cut of the money. That money came down this year and we expect it's going to be phased out eventually, so we've lowered that. Our interest is doing very well, and our CDs are doing very well, that's giving us some good income and we're pretty happy about that. Our membership, you know, has been down. Our Rifle Raffle was down slightly but it wasn't dramatic. So maybe that was a little bit because we got the tickets out late last year. So we're hoping that we go them out at the convention (fall conference) and you know, that we have over 10,000 tickets out now, so we're happy about that, we're hoping that hopefully that will pick back up. But, you know, please tell people about the Rifle Raffle. There's still, we still get a lot of posts that even call here and have never heard of the Rifle Raffle so make sure that you're mentioning that at your District Meetings.

Emblem Sales Royalties is looking pretty good, we've been doing good on our Emblem Sales Royalty and that's from you, We get a cut of everything's that bought at the Emblem Sales.

For the expenses, Legion College, we had \$800.00 for that, we've raised that up to \$1700.00. We only get one person to go to that but there is a possibility that we can send two. Those candidates should be not be wearing a white hat, generally, but they can. But you kind of want an up and coming prospect to possibly go to Legon College.

Let's see here, car expenditures, so there is not a line item for the car, but the Finance Committee is recommending that we budget, not budget, but use an offset, very similar to what happened with Commander Jarvis's car last year when it got traded in. Trade in the Adjutant's vehicle, and use, I'm trying to think of that word, but use money basically that's left over from the budget instead of putting it in the budget and blowing up the numbers. So an additional \$45,000.00 would be kind of slated for a new vehicle.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: A gap.

Dept Adj Strauss; Right, so that's not showing in the budget so...is that right wording that I'm using in there. Kind of the leftover money?

PDC Jarvis: Surplus.

Dept Adj Strauss: Surplus, thank you, that's the word I was kind of... sometimes you get a brain freeze up here. Instead of putting that into the budget, I just want to let you know that by approving this here today, we're going to add that vehicle and that we'll pay probably cash for that and probably will not finance that. That's exactly what we did with the Commander's car. The money's there to do that.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: How many miles are on the vehicle now?

Dept Adj Strauss: 137,000, and it's a 2019.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Michael, just out of curiosity, there's a flat number here, so I don't know what the cost is. Are you doing like a monthly, or budgeting out a monthly, like, extra \$200.00 that's going into a surplus fund, so you don't hit that issue at the end?

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: Like each month. Put money in the surplus fund.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: That's exactly right. So you don't have that problem.

Dept Adj Strauss: We have a policy called the "Department Reserve Fund Policy", so basically the finance committee kind of manages that fund, and then there's other money. So you have the "Reserve Fund" money and then you have....

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: So that car money can be taken out of the Reserve? That Reserve can be used for anything.

Dept Adj Strauss: No, the Reserve Fund has to be voted on by this body,

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I understand, but it can be used for anything.

Dept Adj Strauss: Other money is probably where it would be becoming from. Because we have some money that's not in the Reserve Fund. The Reserve Fund is pretty strict on what you can use it for.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Right, but we knew this is going to be an expense, you're saying it all the time.

Dept Adj Strauss: Right, but it's not coming out of the Reserve Fund.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Right, why not just put in there, and then you have it, as an accrual?

Dept Adj Strauss: Would you like to make that info a motion? That's a suggestion but would you like to make that into a motion?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: It would make life easier, I think, even for the finance people. Yeh, I'd like to make a motion that we set aside additional funds for the car expenditure, each month.

Dept Adj Strauss: We've got the money, so, I mean we really don't need to save it up, is what I'm saying.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I know we're not saving it. But this way....

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: It doesn't fit the bottom line of the budget (inaudible).

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: My brother's saying it all for me, (laughter). It's just easier, it's there, you don't have to go into the Reserve, and it's already been approved.

Dept Adj Strauss: I don't follow the....

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Difference? You don't see the difference between being able to take it out of Reserve and already having the money?

Dept Adj Strauss; Let's not use the word Reserve, because the Reserve Fund's different than General....

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Accrued. Keep it the way it is. We'll just take it out of the General Fund.

Dept Adj Strauss: General Fund.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Out of the General Fund, just do it at the end out of the General Fund.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: Can't you have a line item in the General Operating Budget for that's for future automobile purchases and add to that line item. So that.....

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: \$100.00 a month or \$200.00 a month, just so, you know, it's there. And we know it's for auto expense.

PDC Taylor: What fund are you going to write the check out of to pay for the car?

Dept Adj Strauss: And how much is it? That's what we need to know.

Exec Dir May: The General Fund.

Dept Adj Strauss: We're suggesting up to \$45,000.00.

PDC Taylor: And are you taking that out of the General Fund?

Exec Dir May: Yes, it would be.

Dept Adj Strauss: Yes.

PDC Taylor: So any Reserve money that you have left in the budget, would be approved by the Executive Board and rolled back into the General Fund for you to write the check.

Exec Dir May: He's got a motion on the floor.

Dept Adj Strauss: He's got to restate the motion because it's not clear, then we'll get into discussion.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Do you want to re-state your motion? Or are you going to not have that motion?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I make a motion that we set a line item to have monies set aside monthly so it would be cumulative, I guess, amount for auto expenses, separate.

Exec Dir May: Auto Purchase?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: For purchase of the automobile.

Dept Adj Strauss: We don't have a second on that, so no discussion.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Will there be a second on that motion, so we can go on with discussion?

Dept Adj Strauss: No second.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: No second.

Dept Adj Strauss: Call somebody.

PDC Taylor: The only thing that would make sense to me, if you're going to write the check from the general fund, the leftover money gets rolled over, so it allows you to write a check for what you need. That saves paperwork.

Exec Dir May: I'm sorry, I was busy talking with the Adjutant, can you please re-state that?

PDC Taylor: If you're going to write a check out of the general fund for the automobile, and you don't want to go through getting it all approved and this and that and the other, gets rolled over into the general fund, to allow you to write the check.

Dept Adj Strauss: That's exactly correct, yes.

Exec Dir May: So, two years ago, when we bought the Commander's car, it ended up being under car expenses. Because we bought a car, it had to go somewhere. You can't just not have it show up. It's got to show as an expense somewhere.

PDC Taylor: But if you don't want to take it out of the Reserve Fund...

Exec Dir May: No, it came out of the general fund. It was a car expense out of the general fund.

PDC Taylor: The car expense was on the budget.

Alt NEC Phillips: One thing about the Reserve Fund, The Reserve Fund is mainly made up of CD's, is that not correct, Mr. Adjutant?

Dept Adj Strauss: Correct, and the savings account.

Alt NEC Phillips: And when you break those CD's, if you're going to take some of that money out, then you're probably going to have to cash in some of those CD's. So, you really want to be careful of that. Don't try to make a lot of motions to take money out of the Reserve Fund because you're going to lose money (inaudible). You take that money as it comes during the year, but you can use the general fund when you make that purchase.

Dept Adj Strauss: Do you want to make a motion? Can you state the motion, just for the motion just for the record?

PDC Jarvis: We take it out of the end of the year fund every year and then we put it under the expense for the car, it's a one time deal, it's a moot point.

Exec Dir May: Yes.

PDC Taylor: That's what I said, you don't want to mess with anything, you want to take excess money out of the 2024 budget, put in 2025, put in the car and drive it down the road.

Dept Adj Strauss: What I'm saying is, I'd just like for somebody to state that in a motion, that way....

PDC Taylor: I'll put it in a motion for you. Mickey Taylor, Past Nec'man, PDC, I'd like to make a motion that the excess money in the 2024 budget be rolled over into the 2025 budget and be used and earmarked, for a new car.

Dept Adj Strauss: Do you have a specific amount that you can just.... up to \$45,000.00?

Alt NEC Phillips: Up to \$45,000.00.

PDC Scherer: I second that.

PDC Taylor: Between us two Rock Hill boys, we'll get it done. (laughter).

PDC Scherer: And Maggie's right, you put under car expenses, that's where it should go.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Yes, Mickey?

PDC Taylor: Go ahead, I've got something else to say, but it's not on that topic.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Ok, Motion has been made and seconded, any further discussion? All in favor of the motion, state aye, opposed, none? Carried.

PDC Taylor: While we're on finance, I'd like to know, when we move CD's around from one bank to another bank, are all those transactions brought to the Executive Board? Because it's their job to approve those?

Dept Adj Strauss: I can answer that, Commander. In the past, that was a part of the way they did it? At the convention, a couple of years ago, we passed a thing called the Reserve Fund Policy.

Because we knew we were going to have fiscal management things coming because we have the mortgage paid off so we were going to have a lot more money to be moving around. So this new policy that was voted on allows the finance committee, everything with the Reserve Fund and moving the CD's around, goes through the finance committee. So the finance committee basically manages that fund, so like if a CD comes due, I'll like, for instance, we have one coming up this month, in a couple weeks. So I emailed the particulars about that CD and....

PDC Taylor: Then we're changing a whole a lot of things when we do that. Because all committees, if I'm not mistaken, unless that's changed, are recommendation committees. It has to be approved by Executive Board.

Dept Adj Strauss: But it was approved by the body, at the convention, that...

PDC Taylor: I'm taking about if you move one now. So you have obsoleted the Executive Board from doing their job as the ruling body between the conventions.

Dept Adj Strauss: Just to clarify that, so if we want to make a withdrawal from those funds, that would go to the Executive Committee. We're talking about the day-to-day management of it, the finance, like if they're going to renew a CD or something, that's what the finance.... but if we were going to take a withdrawal and like, use that for something else? That has to come through the (Executive) Board, per the policy. And for the Reserve Fund, that's what we're talking about, the Reserve Fund would be...have to come to this body, have a two-thirds, to be spent?

Exec Dir May: Mickey, are you talking about the money that was just taken out of the general fund and moved to a CD?

PDC Taylor: Was that money being moved, was that approved by the Executive Board?

Dept Adj Strauss: No, it was approved by the finance committee.

PDC Taylor: Do they have that authority?

Dept Adj Strauss: Yes.

PDC Taylor: So, that has changed.

Dept Adj Strauss: That has changed, a couple years ago, that changed, it might have been last year or the year before, but it's been within the last two years.

Exec Dir May: That Reserve Fund Policy, is up for a vote at this meeting.

Dept Adj Strauss: A change to that, a change is up for a vote.

D-1 Cmdr Walton: I had a question, the last time I think we met. There was a comment made about one of our buildings was not being rented? Is there any change on that or are they all completely rented out now, or what?

Dept Adj Strauss: Well, the church, just to kind of update you, they did kind of leave us. They broke their lease with us, we've kind of done some renovations down there, and they're just about to be wrapped up and I do expect that we're going to be working to renew, to try to get a tenant there as soon as possible.

D-1 Cmdr Walton: Ok,,thank you, I was just curious.

Dept Adj Strauss: We were having some issues getting the gas back on, the tenant left and turned off the gas and we had to get the building reinspected and when we went and got it reinspected, it was a nightmare to...because the gas company was making us do all these different changes.

Exec Dir May: It's been vacant now for six months.

D-1 Cmdr Walton: I was going to say, it's been a long time.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: Did you hire a contractor to do all that?

Dept Adj Strauss: We did, we had to hire contractors.

Exec Dir May: That was for heating and air.

Dept Adj Stauss: Yes, and gas.

Vice Cmdr Rabon: We didn't hire a contractor to do anything else in the building?

Exec Dir May: No.

Dept Adj Strauss: Me and Bruce did some of the painting.

Imm PDC Kvam: Paint by number, from Bruce? (laughter).

Dept Adj Strauss: Any other questions?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Any other questions about this particular item? No? Ok.

Exec Dir May: Yes, Jim Defrehn: You had a question about the Discretionary fund?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Yeh, why is SC Legion College is under Commander's project, as opposed to putting it under a separate line item. So, like, you get a Commander, that's not a college guy, and it's locked in there with their money. So have SC Legion College set up as a separate line item.

And put that in, I think it was \$4,000.00 that was approved?

Dept Adj Strauss: Correct.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Ok, So I'd like to make a motion to have the SC Legion College expenditures set up as a separate line item for \$4,000.00. That's my motion.

Vice Cmdr Rabon: I second that motion.

Dept Commander Donegan: Any other discussion on that issue? Commander Hawk?

NEC Hawk: There's nothing in the '24 budget about it. But in the '25 budget, we've got to distinguish between the two, is that National Legion College or our Legion College.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: That's for sending our people to go to National. The \$4,000.00 is for our own SC Legion College.

NEC Hawk: Confusion about Colleges.

Dept Adj Strauss: When it says Legion College, it's for individuals going to the National Legion College. So, just to clarify that also, the Legion College, per the finance committee, was put under Commander and Adjutant's.....

Exec Dir May: South Carolina Legion College.

Dept Adj Strauss: So when I'm talking about the SC Legion College, that was under Commander and Adjutant's expenses. So if we were to approve this motion, I just want to let you know that that Commander and Adjutant's expense would go down. I don't know if the \$4,000.00 is the accurate number without looking, off the top of my head.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Yes, it was.

Dept Adj Strauss; Ok, if it is, then that would reduce the Commander and Adjutant's expenses.

Exec Dir May: Ok, you said it was under Commander's Discretionary Funds the other day when Jim Defrehn called about it.

Dept Adj Strauss: It's right here, under Commander and Adjutants.

Exec Dir May: You told Jim Defrehn it was Commander's Discretionary fund. You'd better tell him.

Dept Adj Strauss; I just said it.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I understand you had said Discretionary. You're telling me now that it's under the Commander's project?

Dept Adj Strauss: Commander and Adjutant's expenses, you can see it went up by \$2,000.00? You see that? On page two on the general operating budget. It will go back down to \$4,000.00. And I think we're going to talk about adding \$4,000.00 to SC American Legion College. So it would bump that back down and add \$4,000.00 to a new line item, is that clear to everybody?
Good?

PDC Jarvis: So if it adds \$4,000.00 to the new line item? What is the number now for the Commander and Adjutant's Expenses and what is the number for the Commander's Discretionary?

Dept Adj Strauss: \$4,000.00 and \$4,000.00 would be the new numbers.

Exec Dir May: \$3,000.00 for Discretionary, that didn't change.

Dept Adj Strauss: That was the number that was recommended.

D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: Is that enough?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Yeh, the way that most colleges, and I've gone to a lot of Departments, the Department's going to pay for the study halls ok, that they have the meetings in. The individuals that go to the college are going to pay their own expenses as far as room and food.

The \$4,000.00 pays for two or three conference rooms and then you get materials, paperwork and stuff like that. So, we're keeping it minimal to the Department are going to pay their own expense, their own room and....

D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: The rooms will take up \$4,000.00 for a weekend.

PDC Scherer: I call for a vote.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Any other discussion?

Imm PDC Kvam: I have actually a recommendation, I don't think in the Commander's Discretionary Fund, between that and the Commander and Adj expenses, \$4,000.00 is enough.

Dept Adj Strauss: Which one is not enough?

Imm PDC Kvam: Discretionary. I think it needs to go \$4,000.00.

D-20 Cmdr Donnelly: So, what is the Commander's Project?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: That's the VCF.

Imm PDC Kvam: With the travel I had last year, and I've talked with Commander Scherer and Commander Jarvis, that Discretionary Fund sometimes, I don't think \$3,000.00 is enough because you never know what's going to happen. And the vice commanders, I'm sure, will go along with it. That \$4,000.00 it doesn't take long to suck it up with the way the hotels all of a sudden are starting to increase. I make a recommendation, that within that motion, that we actually raise that up.

Dept Adj Strauss: This would be a new motion, here, so. The other one's been.....

Exec Dir May: That hasn't been voted on yet.

Dept Adj Strauss: Oh, we're still...ok?

Imm PDC Kvam: We're talking about it and we're moving money back and forth.

Dept Adj Strauss; You want to ask them to.....update his motion?

Imm PDC Kvam: Commander Defrehn, Can you amend your motion to increase the Commander's Discretionary Fund to \$4,000.00?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn; Yes, I can amend that the expenditures be that the SC Legion College be a separate line item of \$4,000.00, and to increase the Commander and Expense to \$4,000.00.

Exec Dir May: Discretionary Fund:

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Discretionary Fund to \$4,000.00.

Dept Adj Stauss: I'm going to restate the motion just so it will be clear to everybody, because it was a little bit back and forth. So the motion has been made to add \$4,000.00 to the SC American Legion College as a new line item. The Commander's discretionary Fund will be increased from \$3,000.00 to \$4,000.00. And the Commander and Adjutant's expenses will go from \$6,000.00 to \$4,000.00.

D-1 Cmdr Walton: That makes sense.

Vice Commander Rabon: I second.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: All in favor? Opposed? Carried.

Dept Adj Strauss: Ok, now we're going to need one for the entire General Operating Budget.

D-19 Commander Strickland: Now we need to go back and vote on that motion, that we just changed if I'm correct.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: We approved the amendment that approved the motion, too.

Dept Adj Strauss: It ain't going to hurt to do one more.

D-19 Cmdr Strickland: Basically, what I'm saying is we had a motion on the floor and then we had an amendment on the floor.

NEC Hawk: Did he rescind the original motion? And then came up with new motion? If he rescinded the original motion, that's gone. And the amendment to the motion is what he just voted on?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Yes.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: I've got another question about the budget.

NEC Hawk: If he didn't rescind that motion than we're doing what he's talking about. We had two different entities here and we had to vote on them.

Vice Commander Lonergan I have another question with the budget. First of all, we voted on it didn't we?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Yes.

Dept Adj Strauss: We're back in the discussion phase of the General Operating Budget, just so everyone's clear on this.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: When we talked about, you brought up gas expenses being a little more expensive right now. I notice that whenever we make trips to Indianapolis, or trips to Washington, DC, and there's three or less people in the vehicle, vs the Commander's car. The Commander's car gets far more mileage per gallon than the Department van. So if we're trying to save money, why do we keep on using the vehicle that burns more gas to go on these trips? I think four would be a little cramped in the Commander's car, but I think three or less, I mean, I rode in the back seat to Indianapolis. I could ride in the back seat of the car and I'm pretty tall,

and he was in front and he's pretty tall. I think we need to make changes like that in our procedures and the way we do our daily business to save money from this budget going on. I've got a second thing about mileage. PDC Walt Richardson at the August meet and greet for The American Legion Riders, approached me, pulled me aside and started talking to me about concerns. And one of his concerns is when the Adjutant was hired, he signed a contract. And in that contract it said he could use the Department vehicle if he traveled for official business and drive to and from home if he lived within 30 miles of SC. If he lived outside of 30 miles, he had to pay for his own gas. I thought concerning. Commander Richardson was the head of that committee that made that hire so he told me about that, and he said, "I don't think it's happening that way. So I pulled the credit card expenses from May, and there's a lot of purchases of gas in May in the Adjutant's hometown and on his way to and from work. Are they expenses to pay for gas to get to and from work or are we buying our own gas to get to and from work?"

Dept Adj Strauss: Are you directing that question to me?

Vice Commander Lonergan: Yes, sir.

Dept Adj Strauss: Ok, so, May, so I, there is the.....the agreement says that I do purchase gas for myself. Now, May is a very busy month for The American Legion. So I mean, we have the Department Convention, we have a lot of things that I do during the day, like pick up awards and trophies and you know, if there's Legion events, you know, we can get into particulars. But if there is Legion, if we're doing business on behalf of the Legion, I am permitted to use the gas card for that. I know that I just got the December one, and it was less than \$100.00. But me going back and forth to North Augusta is going to be a lot more than \$90.00 to fill up for a month. I mean so, it depends on which month. I mean, there's certain, at this time of year I'm paying a lot more for the gas out of my own pocket because there's not a lot of events going on in November and December. Now, May, June and July it's wide open. We're going back and forth to Indianapolis, I mean, there's a lot of, I mean, we can break out the calendar and go over certain things. But generally between here and North Augusta, there's very few Exxon's, just to let you know we kind of use Exxon and Mobil and there's really Exit 39 and Exit 33, and North Augusta are the only places you can get gas. So If I go somewhere in May, I generally will fill up as I'm going to a Legion event. So, to answer the question since it was kind of brought out without looking at the exact month, with details, there are some days that I can use the card and some days that I can't use the card, so that's how it works. It's on my honor system, so.

D-4 Cmdr Morse: Mike, If I could address the part about using the card to go to like, (inaudible). The Commander and I went to New Orleans together, with luggage, especially when you're going there for a week.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: That's different, you're talking about ten days. I'm talking about two nights in Indianapolis.

D-4 Cmdr Morse: But still with your luggage, sometimes it does get cramped. These cars are not meant (inaudible).

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: I understand what you're saying, I understand National Convention. But when you're going for two nights and you have a business suit bag, and a carry bag, We could

have gotten those bags in a smaller vehicle. It just feels, I'm not saying clear cut, but I think we need to use better.....

D-4 Cmdr Morse: Discretion.

Vice Commander Lonergan: Better discretion when we do things, if we can fit in the smaller vehicle that gets better gas mileage, then we should take the smaller vehicle, that's all I'm saying.

D-5 Cmdr Wells: Can I make a suggestion? That you guys work that out on your own. That's not a DEC meeting from what I'm hearing.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: Actually it is, it's a transparency thing. Everything that's on our level, needs to be.....

D-5 Cmdr Wells: Maybe it's a transparency thing that can be learned about, but it's something that you guys need to mull over for each individual trip and the luggage or whatever you need or you have somebody that you don't agree with and you can go by three or somebody needs to go in another vehicle or something. So, that's not necessarily a decision that we should have to make. But you should be thinking about.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: You're right, and I'm not bringing it up for that reason. I was bringing it up because people need to understand that these are things that go on and you need to know about it, That's all I'm saying . Whether or not we take two or three vehicles, that's a trip by trip decision.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: We're not voting on it or anything, he's just bringing it out.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan I'm just bringing it out.

D-5 Cmdr Wells: So that we can get out of here, and I do have something to do this afternoon, can we table it?

Dept Adj Strauss: It's just a comment.

D-1 Cmdr Walton: It's just a general comment.

Vice Cmdr Rabon:: When we talk about when Mike was hired and driving within a 30-mile radius, is there any requirement that a Department vehicle not be used to drive back and forth to North Augusta? It should be a closer distance to be able to use that vehicle.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: The agreement said he is supposed to pay for the gas to go back and forth to work.

Dept Adj Strauss: No, but, just to clarify that once again, that's not necessarily so. I mean, the agreement said that If I had moved within 30 miles of the Department Headquarters, which we've had Adjutant's in the past, I'm just going to say this. We had an Adjutant from Saluda, we had an Adjutant from Spartanburg, we had an Adjutant from Johnston.

Exec Dir May: Who was in Spartanburg?

Dept Adj Strauss: Long before you.

Exec Dir May: Did they have cars? (laughter).

Dept Adj Strauss: I don't know, I'm just saying, it was added to me. But, they said if I move within 30 miles, the Department would pay for my gas entirely. If I lived outside the 30 miles it would come out of my pocket, like if I'm just going back and forth, and I'm expected to pay for my own gas. Ok, so that's the clarification of that, unless I'm on Legion business.

D-7 Cmdr Galloway: Do you do that?

Dept Adj Strauss: Yes.

D-7 Cmdr Galloway: Alright.

Dept Commander Donegan: It was brought up and hopefully it got clarified. Anybody else? Ok, we'll move on. Thank you so much. Anymore on the budget? We have to vote on the whole budget now, this is on the General Operating Budget. **Do I hear a motion to accept the 2025 General Operating Budget?**

D-16 Defrehn: I make a motion to accept the 2025 General Operating Budget.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Do I hear a second?

D-6 Cmdr Simpson: Second.

PDC Jarvis: What was the motion?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: To accept the 2025 General Operating Budget.

PDC Jarvis: With the modifications.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: With the modifications.

PDC Jarvis: With the modifications, say it.

Exec Dir May: He did say it.

D-6 Cmdr: Simpson: Second.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Any other discussion? Yes sir, Mr. Hawk?

NEC Hawk: Does that include the SAL, Americanism,?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: That's separate.

NEC Hawk: We didn't discuss the year end budget for '24, nobody said anything about closing out '24.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: All in favor of approving the General Operating Budget, opposed? Carried.

Dept Adj Strauss: Ok, American Legion Riders proposed budget.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Should be self – explanatory.

Imm PDC Kvam: I make a motion that we accept the American Legion Riders 2025 proposed, as printed.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: I have a motion, do I hear a second?

D-1 Cmdr Walton: I second.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Second? Ok. Any further discussion? Call for a vote, all in favor, opposed? Carried.

The next one is the Americanism 2025 proposed budget.

Dept Adj Strauss: I'll make a couple comments about this one. We've had a great deal of discussion about the Americanism budget this year. The contest expenses for Baseball went way up. National passed a policy about getting 18 year old background checks. Anybody who's 18 years old and higher has to get a background check. That means that anybody that's 18 that's playing ball, has to get a background check because of child sexual predators out there. So that was a blank thing and there was a lot of discussion if we were going to pass it onto the kids or if we were going to accept is a Department this year. They're going to look at again next year but this year they decided that the Department's going to absorb the cost of that background check, so the contest expenses went way up. So, that's one of the big things that you see on there.

D-4 Cmdr Morse: Michael, does that include the coaches also have to have a background check?

Dept Adj Strauss: Yes, coaches, anybody who's basically on the team.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: Anybody that has exposure to a minor.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Did we shop that number or did we run it through some of the local police departments who could offset it for us?

Dept Adj Strauss: Basically for the background check, there's a company that we use. And they all, some, like baseball, they also have to take, also take sexual harassment, or something to that affect, or training.

PDC Scherer: (Inaudible)

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Any other, any other questions? Do I hear a motion to accept the Americanism budget?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: I make a motion to accept the 2025 Americanism Budget.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Second?

D-4 Cmdr Morse: Second.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: All in favor? Opposed? Carried. The Law Cadet Academy?

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Alright, I make a motion to accept the Russell Cantrell budget for the Nathan M. Wolfe Law Cadet Academy.

Vice Cmdr Rabon: I make a second.

Dept Adj Strauss: Hold on, because of minutes, I'm going to ask you to....

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: The Nathan M. Wolfe.

Dept Adj Strauss: Thank you. Because people are very serious about the motions and stuff.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Any other discussion? Motion's been made and seconded, all in favor? Opposed? Carried. Last one folks, SAL, 2025 budget.

PDC Jarvis: Can I ask question? Has anyone counseled them on the fact that they have a negative balance?

Dept Adj Strauss: Which one?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: The SAL one.

Dept Adj Strauss: Yes, it's kind of been an ongoing issue. We had probably more debate over the SAL budget this year than we had with all the budgets. And some of that comes out them wanting to spend money out of their CD's and stuff like that. And so it's kind of gone back and forth to try to get them, because they're pretty....they do have close to a \$100,000.00 in the bank, but it's in CD's most of it, and so they kind of want to spend some of the interest that they have. Something's that's different in the SAL budget than it is from different years. We do show the checking transfer of CDs as an expense and as a interest earned, and their committee hasn't really approved taking the interest out yet, they haven't voted on that, but they asked for it to be put into the budget. So, taking the money out of the CD's hasn't been approved yet but they asked for it to be put into the budget.

PDC Jarvis: I make a motion that we don't accept that one. I mean, they're a program of the American Legion. And you can't put in a budget with a negative balance.

Imm PDC Kvam: Second that motion.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Any other discussion to not accept the budget as proposed? All in favor? Opposed? Carried. That one has not been accepted. Thank you for your patience and indulgence in that, that's always the worse part, but it's important.

Dept Adj Strauss: Next is the Reserve Fund Management Policy, it says on the top, Revision 1, everybody got that? So we have, Mickey had talked a little bit about the Reserve Fund

Policy. We basically have two policies; one is the Dues Management Policy and the other one is the Reserve Fund Management Policy. And this is a proposal revision of this Reserve Fund Policy, the stuff that's highlighted are the additions to the Reserve Fund that the finance committee's recommending these changes. But that needs your approval to make changes to the that. Any questions about the changes to the Reserve Fund Management Policy?

PDC Taylor: Commander, my question is and I still have the question. As far as committees controlling and moving money around and all that without the approval of the Executive Board. And I just, I don't understand that. Because the way everybody in this room was trained, the committees are recommendation committees. If they recommend it, it's just very simple, they tell the Commander, and the Commander tells the Adjutant that we've got on the floor and you do what you need to do. But bypassing the Executive Board, it's not a good thing. Because they should be aware of everything that's taking place, and we're not doing that.

PDC Jarvis: I think, I understand what Mickey's saying. But I think that is being covered, there are sections in here that the DEC has to approve the removal of stuff. So, I think it's above board and I think what needs to be....is happening, is actually going through the DEC. But not all facets of it has to through them.

Dept Adj Strauss: Right, on page two it, you know, it talks about withdrawals from the funds. You know, we're talking about, you know, doing CD's and stuff like that. But to do withdraws....and to do withdraws like if we're going to take something out of a CD and spend it on X, you know, you can see there that it says on page 2 under withdrawals: "withdrawn only after consultation with the Department Finance Committee,The Department Adjutant, and approval by a 2/3's majority of the DEC in response to unbudgeted emergency events. So, withdrawing and spending it, would take 2/3's of this body to spend money out of this reserve fund, does that make sense? But, I think what they were trying to do is to try to make it so you're not just being bombarded with, you know, weekly and monthly, like they are right now, decisions, like if a CD's expiring, do we want to rehash it or bring it to a financial management company? Or how do we want to manage that money, sort of speak.

PDC Taylor: I understand what you're saying, Mike. And Commander Jarvis is right, I think everything may be above board. But, you've still got to remain the Executive Board should be aware of everything that we're doing for the checks and balances of this Department. And when you've got a three man committee that can go ahead and take a vote and then say, let's move this money over here and let's move this money over here, let's roll over this CD, let's take the interest out of here. The Executive Board should be made aware of that. Do you now agree, Commander Jarvis?

PDC Jarvis: No, I don't think they need to. On the daily routine...

PDC Taylor: I'm not talking about daily routine.

PDC Jarvis: Well, that's what that is. Rolling over a CD when it comes up for expiration, that's a routine move, and we're gong to have to constantly be doing that.

PDC Taylor: We're talking seven months or ten months or a year.

D-16 Cmdr Defrehn: Mickey, if you had, let's break it all down to a post. As post commander, for years you have monies, expenditures and things like that there. I think every post, I'm not

saying every post, has a certain limit that they allow a vote on how they allow a post commander to spend X amount of dollars without vote of the post Executive Committee. Because he's not going to go out and buy cartridges and staples if he has to worry about a vote of the committee, Well, these gentlemen here, we put them in there to handle the finances, ok, and that's it. You can't be looking over their shoulders for them to make a decision.

PDC Taylor: I agree with you 100%, Jim Defrehn, and you have answered my question. Because a post won't do anything without their DEC approving it.

Dept Adj Strauss: And, to be clear, you know, on our finance, which we have not done in the past, but we started doing here recently, we started showing you all the money in all the different accounts, (balance sheets have being sent out monthly at the request of Commander Donegan).

Those of you that have been on the committee for a long time have never seen each account broke down, like we have it broke down. We have all the CD's on there, and that's telling you what's going on and where they're at, which bank that they're at, and stuff like that. I mean, there is no hiding of the money, I mean, that's where it is.

PDC Jarvis: Can you cash a CD in by yourself, on our own discretion?

Several members said no.

Vice Commander Lonergan: Let him answer it though, let him answer.

Dept Adj Strauss: The way that you, like, it expires, ok, So I may have to withdraw that CD. Like say, we have one at 4.3% and it's expiring tomorrow. Sometimes they roll over and we don't have to do anything with them. But sometimes this other CD might gain us more money, so I may have to withdraw it right then and there and move it to a CD, to be technical with you, I may have to withdraw it to move it to a new better paying version. So, but to say am I withdrawing it to put it back into the checking account? No, I cannot do that, or I cannot withdraw it purchase a car without your approval. Does that make sense to everybody?

D-4 Cmdr Morse: Michael, how many, just ballpark, how many CDs are we talking about?

Dept Adj Strauss: They're on the....when you see the other assets. Those are the Legion ones right there. All those CDs are American Legion funds.

D-4 Cmdr Morse: So anytime, if they have the discretion to be able to move them, then every time one of those CD's, five times, we'd have to be getting together to make a motion on doing that?

Dept Adj Strauss: On those and future. I mean, if we didn't have that plan in place, yes. But as of right now, I don't make that decision on my own. I consult and tell the finance committee that hey, this CD's coming up, how would you like me to handle it? Of course, they don't give you the interest rate in advance, they give it to you on the day that it's up.

Exec Dir May: Commander?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Would it be a big problem to as all these emails go out for the Adjutant to just let the DEC know in an email that such and such is being done, just so they're on aware of what's happening?

Vice Commander Lonergan: Transparency.

Exec Dir May: Yeh.

Dept Adj Strauss: I could do that.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: That's fine.

Dept Adj Strauss: I do that with the finance committee, I have no problem including it (the DEC) if that's what you want me to do.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: We'll do that, then. I can understand, yes. Well just add a couple few more names to the....any other discussion on this?

Exec Dir May: Are you going to pass it?

Dept Adj Strauss: The Reserve Fund Management Policy Revision.

PDC Jarvis: I make a motion that we accept the Reserve Fund as printed with the addition the DEC members will be notified on internal movements.

D-6 Cmdr Simpson: Second.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Any other discussion? All in favor? Carried.

Exec Dir May: You can't just do that, all in favor, any nos?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: I like to sneak it in sometimes, any nos then? Ok, carried.

Ok, new business, everybody's got a copy, the deadline for our next goal is 75%, I think the 13th,

Exec Dir May: It's the 11th.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: I don't think we're going to hit it, but I've been looking at the National, it's like a roller coaster, one day we're down to 25, the next day we're up to 16, but other Departments are doing the same thing. I know we had some concerns back in the fall with the Hurricane and all that storm damage, and were behind, and we actually made it go just like that. That was because of the (inaudible) and all that stuff. And we're working on the, Chairman Dorman is working on and sending an email out to everybody and District Commander's that are below where they need to be. We're going to make, in January we're gong to Bennettsville Post and Kershaw and Lake View, but it's a team effort and we'll do it. It could be less now, but we're 139 away from, for getting that 100% for Commander Kvam for last year (2024) so that's like one member for each post in the Department, now it's at 139, maybe it will be less than that. We're working on it; I just ask for everybody's cooperation.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: I want to congratulate Commander Childs and Commander Hough. Both of those Districts last year were in the bottom five of the Department, and today they're the top two for the Department, a lot of motivation, a lot of cheerleading. I've been to both of their District meetings, they're positive meetings. Ya'll need to look at what they're doing. And get with them and try to help out your posts like they do, so I just want to add that.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Thank you.

PDC Jarvis: At the other end of the spectrum, I notice that we have two Districts under 60%, we got four days to get to 75% rate, maybe we need to be working those two districts. Somebody obviously isn't working them.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Yeh, we're aware of that too.

Vice Cmdr Dandy: District 2, Post 208, I found out this morning at 1:47 am, that the District Commander still has their membership cards. I mean, she got those cards in May.

Mbrship Chairman Dorman: I think what's been said has been good information that's been put out. But I also wanted to say that we're about 304 members behind where we were this time last year. So, you know, we need to pick up the pace and make up for those numbers. The other thing is at our last DEC meeting, which was in October, the DEC asked if the membership team to look into Post 119, that's Eastover, and Post 196, which is Myrtle Beach, because those two posts were upside down.

I spoke with Commander Pouncy, that's about....Post 265, I'm sorry, I talked with Commander Pouncy about Post 265 and he got with that Post. And they are, as a matter of fact, they are at 100% membership now.

I also spoke with Commander St. Onge about Post 119, Eastover, and they are in good standing now with 90%, so I wanted to recognize both of them for their good efforts and they really turned those posts around. And like I said, one's at 100% and the other is at 90%, so I'd like to encourage all our District Commander's to do the same with their posts. We can take some good pointers from Commander St. Onge and Commander Pouncy did, but they got in touch with those posts, they spoke to them, and they got them moving. So you did see my emails that went out, so I'm not going to cover it, but we will be working with those posts that are struggling right now. Thank you.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Your welcome, thank you.

Dept Adj Strauss: Very quickly, I'm going to add a little bit. You can see on the Big Board, on the District Commander Big Board, I put on last year's numbers to where each District Commander on the right hand column, you can kind of see where you're at. If you're in the green, you're ahead, and if you're in the red... you're...there's not anybody terribly, terribly far behind but there's, when you talk about 300, that sounds like a big number but it's not a big number, it's about two per post and we could be there. It's not unattainable, really look at those memberships in your Districts, look at those numbers. If there's a post that's got, you know, 40 something last year and there only at nine this year, let's reach out to those posts to make sure that those posts, you know, there's not something wrong, you know. I know Fountain Inn in his District here, he just took over this week, and welcome to the committee, Brad Kennedy. You know, Brad has Fountain Inn, a key cog in that post died (Past District Commander and Post Commander, Clyde Mabery), and they haven't had a transmittal in 300

days. That's something that we're going to have to do is contact the posts. If you see that they're not really where they should be, you know, if they have a very low percentage, reach out to those posts and ask them.

Exec Dir May: There's a handout.

Dept Adj Strauss: Do they have it? There's a handout called the post health status report, it tells you the last time they transmitted. If you're seeing that they haven't transmitted in over 300 days, it might be worth giving them a call and making sure that everything's ok in those posts, you know.

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: A lot of them like to hold their membership until they get a bunch. Don't do that, put them in right away.

Dept Adj Strauss: People complain to us why are they getting a renewal notice when they paid in September, you know, that type of stuff. That's definitely bad to do that. You should try to keep your members happy by doing that. At December 31st, if you haven't paid your dues, your LIT insurance kind of goes away, and you go into grace period to pay your dues or else you're delinquent.

Exec Dir May: It doesn't kind of, it goes away.

Dept Adj Strauss: Yeh, it goes away, so I mean, you have to re-apply for your insurance and stuff like that. So just remind people, you know, you want to have it paid before December 31. You know, it expires, and certain things happen to you when that happens. So it's definitely important that these posts get to at least 15 by the end of the year you know. And remind members that they have to pay their dues here, so.

Vice Commander Lonergan: You had put the renewal rate on this report?

Dept Adj Strauss: National did that. For one week they did that and they didn't do it again and I don't know why they did that. I liked it.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Constitution and Bylaws and Post changes. Bill Simpson?

Const & Bylaws Chairman Simpson: Commander, I haven't received any, we've approved the one that we had (inaudible) and our next meeting is the 17th of this month. The deadline to get them in so we can send them back to you is coming up very fast. January 6th, if you have any amendments that you want to get in, let's get them in so we can review them on the 17th.

Commander Donegan: Ok, Administrative updates, Mr. Adjutant?

Dept Adj Strauss: Administrative updates, alright. I have a few things. The LIT Legionnaire EA+ program, that's an emergency assistance program, if you hear from your members on that, you can refer them to us, and we'll help them get in touch with the LIT 1-800 # (also on dept webpage home page)

The Call to Convention is now on the website, and it's going to be in the next Connector so be looking out for the Call to Convention, of course, that's a great talking point for your District meetings to bring up the Call to Convention, because, you know, if you make a reservation

before the deadline you get a discounted rate. If you do it after the deadline, which is usually about 30 days before, then you don't get the discounted rate and then people get upset.

D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: The date?

Dept Cmdr Donegan: May 15th through the 18th.

Dept Adj Strauss: You know, he brought up the deadlines for the constitution and bylaws. We also have the deadline for awards, we don't have a lot of awards in, so kind of look at those awards everybody. Some of them are very early deadlines and some of them are a little bit later but some of those awards are coming up. So remind people you've got about 30 days for some awards.

Just the other day, somehow some of those awards became unfillable but we've fixed those. The awards forms are under the "members" link and then "Department award Forms" That's all.

Exec Dir May: Timothy Hall.

Dept Adj Strauss: Yes, we did have, during the, as you all know, maybe you don't know, but the SAL Commander that was elected and he passed away in June. **They had vacancies and the SAL has elected Timothy L. Hall from Squadron 48, as the Detachment 4th Vice, they're looking to have him confirmed by you.**

NEC Hawk: I make the motion to confirm.

PDC Jarvis: I second that.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Any Discussion? All in favor? Opposed? Carried. Good of the American Legion, yes, sir, Mr. Hawk:

NEC Hawk: Thank you Mr. Commander

Two things really came out since the last time that I addressed the Department Executive Committee on October 24, 2024, there has been some reviews/concerns concerning legislation at the National level and the upcoming new 119th Congress in January 2025.

The House passed the **Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act** and is now in the Senate for consideration. The Dole Act is a comprehensive veteran's package that includes several important provisions:

- 1) Support for home and community-based services,
- 2) Authority to award grants for mental health support to family caregivers, and
- 3) Veteran directed care. The American Legion supports this legislation.

And National Legislative Council updates will be coming out soon after the new Congress has been sworn into office.

I had the privilege to sit in on two conference calls concerning some National issues that the National Organization is concerned about. The **first** one dealt with the upcoming Congress and National mandates that have passed the National Convention and National Executive

Committee, and their support of. The **second** one dealt with the United Nations Council Law of the Sea Treaty. I was a panelist on this one. It deals with China and its consistent abuse of this Treaty and how it affects the United States Naval and commercial power/rights. This treaty was negotiated in 1980 and 90's, and the United States led the negotiations. President Reagan had an influence/interest in seabed mining and its adoption. This new treaty was submitted to the US Senate in 1994. And has never been voted on by the Senate.

How does this affect the United States.? This limits access to different countries' authority to do seabed mining, and only in approved areas. This effects US ships/aircraft navigation freedom and China has claimed a new territory and a new claim of all the South China Sea area. The US is at a disadvantage by not being a member of the UNCLOS governing committee. This is a National Security Council issue, and they are on top of this.

Members of the Department Executive Committee that concludes my NEC report, but I have three other things, If I may, Mr. Commander?

Thank you. As a member of this governing body, we all must be in the mindset that the good name of The American Legion must and foremost come first. We must never waiver from that thought and responsibility.

First, transparency is a big question of concern involving issues, budget and other items of concern with a lot of people sitting in this room.

Second, why haven't we hired a new employee? In the budget, monies have been approved to hire a new employee for the past four years, and really, Maggie and Mike need assistance. We've got the third employee there in the budget, so why haven't we hired an employee in that time?

So, Mr. Commander I make a motion to proceed with the process of hiring the already funded employee immediately.

PDC Scherer: I'll second that.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Any other discussion on the motion? All in favor, opposed? Carried.

NEC Hawk: Let's get the process going quickly, Mike, so we can get somebody.

The third, this might sound petty, but we've got an issue with our parking lot with Schroeder. And how he and his staff and his rental property across the street, they've taken over our parking lot. Ya'll might have seen that today. We've got a good crowd here, taking it up, just takes up our spaces without spaces without getting into the white house or the block building that we rent. And that's been an ongoing problem, but it's kind of getting under my skin a little bit. . We paid for this building and this property, Ya'll, the Legionnaires of this Department faithfully supported and paid the loan so we could have this property. They have not contributed a dime. And they're taking over

Plus, it's a hazard when trying to get out of here, they park the trucks on the side close the entrance, which is not legal because that is not their street, if I recall, and it's a hazard for us

and dance group, turning around, and there's a big truck sitting there and somebody's trying to get in.

So the second motion I'd like to have is to make a motion that this body send a letter to Schroeder Towing signed by the Department Commander and Adjutant effective at this DEC meeting, to give them a month to January 15, 2025, to remove all employee vehicles, rental property vehicles and tow trucks from our property.

D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: Second.

NEC Hawk: We've got a motion, and we've got a second.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Yes, any other discussion?

PDC Jarvis: What about adding to that, parking on the road?

NEC Hawk: Parking on the road, I'll add it.

Exec Dir May: When they pull right up to the edge, it's a safety issue, you can't see around them.

Vice Cmdr Rabon: What about the lease of the Church building? How can we handle them parking in that area?

NEC Hawk: Well, let's get to that later, I got this.

Vice Cmdr Rabon: You got that?

NEC Hawk: Yeh, because the white house, what I call the white house, has been vacant now since July, we need to get something in there too, but Mike's been bringing us up to date on that. **Right now I amend my motion to include parking on the street, add that to my motion.**

D-18 Cmdr Pouncy: Second.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: Ok, thanks. Any other discussion?

Dept Adj Strauss: I have some discussion. I, so, I just want to make it clear that... if.... what if, you know.... we have the discussion with them, about paying the rent for that, to rent the..... would that be....?

NEC Hawk: If that's a negotiable item, and we have income from it, it doesn't hinder any of our people, the white house and block building, that they're in, I would say, you negotiate that and have them park at the very bottom. The other option tell them to clean out that junk yard they got, they can move their vehicles in that.

Dept Adj Strauss: So, I just want to make that clear, if I had that authority to possibly offer that to them.

Exec Dir May: Could I just say, they park all over our grass, which just irritates the crap out of me, and they have no respect for our property and when they turn around down there in that lower lot, they drop those car parts that have been in wrecks, all over that lower lot and they never pick up their trash. I mean, Mike went out Thursday and he policed it to pick it up. That has to be done constantly because they are trashy, trashy people.

D-11 Cmdr St. Onge; I think if we start renting out spaces or spots to them, that's a slippery slope, they're going to say they're paying for it, and they can do what ever they want to it. And I think, I agree with the others, just tell them to stay off the property.

Dept Adj Strauss: You know, if we did go down that road, I think we'd be clear in our agreement where they can park.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: And not park, keep the place clean.

NEC Hawk: And pay for it,

Dept Adj Strauss: And pay for it.

D-4 Cmdr Morse: Would it be advisable subject to tow?

Exec Dir May: Commander, one of the reasons that the church, I think, and this has been a problem, is they just park right in front of that church. They have no respect at all for the church or anybody else being there.

PDC Scherer: If you do the letter, what recourse do you have if they don't follow it?

Dept Adj Strauss: So, the property line goes right down the middle of the road, and so, maybe if the worse case scenario, if they are parking on our property, we could have them towed. We could, it's private property.

PDC Jarvis: A lot of their clientele over there is law enforcement, we've got to be careful, I don't know of any other way of saying this. You don't want to get into a real pissing contest going on where they start playing that card.

Dept Adj Strauss: Yeh, it's not only the towing company, but there's also a restaurant over there and that's where a lot of law enforcement go to eat.

NEC Hawk: Going back to what Commander Jarvis said, that's not our problem, that's their problem. Our problem has been since we've been here is try and be a good neighbor. I had problems with them when I was the Adjutant, and I did the same thing with them that I'm asking you. I wrote them a letter, and said, hey, you can't do this.

Exec Dir May: Commander, they opened up that restaurant without our knowledge. Because legally, they have no parking .I don't know what they said to whoever they went to in Lexington County, but they do not have enough parking to support the people in that restaurant.

D-20 Cmdr Donnelly: Why don't we just put a committee together and look into this? Table it and put a committee together.

Dept Adj Strauss: At the last meeting, we authorized the finance committee to look at contract for that building in general.

NEC Hawk: You talking about the white house?

PDC Jarvis: We gave a motion on the floor.

Department Commander Donegan: A motion's been made and seconded. To send a letter. With all the subjects we discussed. Any other questions or comments? All in favor? Opposed? Carried.

NEC Hawk: To answer Commander Rabon, what about the white building? How do we stand on that?

Dept Adj Strauss: I was just down there this week. We may have to hire somebody to clean the place. It's got a lot of stains in the carpet, maybe vacuum. Get rid of the bugs, spiderwebs for being vacant for a little bit. But for the most part we've...there was holes in the wall, there was a lot of things. They've all been repaired now and painted.

We were kind of doing that as we had time to do it, it's just got to be cleaned up. They had a stage that had to be disassembled kind of tossed away and stuff like that. It's done now and I think it's ready to be rented.

PDC Jarvis: They put a deposit down, correct? A security deposit?

Dept Adj Strauss: Yeh, it covered the last months rent, so.

Exec Dir May: That covered July.

NEC Hawk: We talked about a lot of things here today. But as a member of the governing body, one things we've always got to remember, the good name of The American Legion, must and foremost come first. We must never waiver from that thought and responsibility.

Having said that, I'll always remember Past National Commander, E. Roy Stone, he was from South Carolina, He said, if it's not good for The American Legion, I don't want to hear about it.

That was some good words for a then, young buck like me, coming up in the Legion, I've always kept it in the back of my mind.

The decisions that we make here, as a governing body, affects how many people? Every post and every Legionnaire. But still, we have to put the Legion first. The good name, we don't want it smeared in any way, we don't want it to get trampled on in any way.

And rules and regulations must be followed. This applies to the Department Constitution and Bylaws, the Department Convention and the Department Executive Committee and this (inaudible) what we do. Do doing it by the book means just that, doing it by the book. Always follow our constitution and bylaws and keep our Department Judge Advocate notified. Post to Department, Department to Judge Advocate, involved in all matters of technical nature.

If you choose to wing it on your own, things could bite you in the rear. And you put our Department in a very difficult position. Everybody sitting in this room knows what I'm talking about, we've all been there. Maybe have all witnessed it in our post.

In the past ten years, we've had four Department Adjutants, and that 's hard to deal with on a Department level. No consistency, continuity, and it's up to our Executive Director to have that stability, consistency and the continuity on a daily basis. You are the knowledgeable one in the Department, having seen the Department at it's best and it's worse. Thanks, Maggie.

Since we have only two employees right now, communication is a two-way street, and it's paramount that our two employees communicate better with each other as per their job descriptions state and always maintain that professionalism. They do have a hard road to carry, I've been there and done that, we've got to communicate.

Our employees, our elected officers, our Post officers, and Legionnaires must follow guidelines, directions or suggestions from the Department Commander on their suggested issues or topics or agenda items so long as it doesn't interfere/violate any established policies or mandates. This includes any rulings and/or decisions made by our Department Judge Advocate or National Judge Advocate

Also, our employees must listen to each other concerning existing policies and procedures, formats that are now in place. If changes need to be made, discuss them together and come to a functional conclusion and bring them to the DEC, to benefit the organization.

Communications remains the paramount issue in any organization, and working together as a team leads to a better work environment not only for y'all, but the Legionnaires and department as well.

Most recently, I noticed that there have been some procedural items and constitutional missteps that weren't followed that could have possibly backfired on the Department. A meeting was held by our National Vice Commander, Joe Lysaght, me and the Department Judge Advocate (by phone), with the Department Commander, Adjutant and Executive Director.

All the main topics of concern and major issues were discussed in detail and at length by everyone in an open forum, and everyone all agreed that a better job of handling this issue should have been followed and conducted. Do it by the book. That's your Constitution and Bylaws

The Adjutant's already talked about the SAL, so do we have anything else concerning Post 121?

Dept Adj Strauss: If you'd like to discuss Post 121, we could go back into Executive Session. If you're talking about the disciplinary, I don't have anything else that's different.

NEC Hawk: Fourth, and last thing. Mr. Commander is that the Department needs to reinstate the confidential investigation committee as stated in the Department Constitution, Article XI, Discipline Section 2. To handle future incidents or any issue that may warrant.

Mr. Commander, this should be a yearly ad hoc Committee within the framework of the Department Executive Committee to coincide with the current Department Commander.

Therefore, Mr. Commander, I would like to make a motion to approve a confidential investigation ad-hoc committee as outlined in Article XI, Discipline Section 2 of our Department Constitution and put in place before the next DEC meeting.

Department Commander Donegan: The motion's been made. Do I have a second?

PDC Jarvis; I second that.

Department Commander Donegan: Any discussion? All in favor? Opposed? Carried.

NEC Hawk: In closing, I thank everyone for your patience in receiving my report and comments, as well as your devotion the American Legion Department of South Carolina. Mr. Commander, that concludes my report.

Commander Dungeon: Thank you.

Dept Adj Strauss: Commander Hawk: On your motion, when you...when you said ad-hoc committee, are you saying the Commander's going to appoint the ad-hoc committee?

NEC Hawk: They'll be appointed for one year.

Dept Adj Strauss: You see, under the constitution, it says the Adjutant makes that appointment.

NEC Hawk: Under Article XI, Section two, and I read, "provided he is not the officer accused, shall establish a confidential investigation committee of 3 non -voting jurors." They would serve under the commander.

Department Commander: We've discussed that once before too, so thank you for bringing that back up. Anybody else have anything?

D-4 Cmdr Morse: Watch your emails. We talked about correspondence today. Everybody (inaudible). I've gotten numerous emails from Bruce. And I know Bruce, I know his writing, and then when you look at the details, and see where it's coming from and it's not Bruce. Now I'm getting one that's being sent around. It's coming from LouMorselegion.post126Montana. And it's got a whole thing, I'm busy right now, I'm going to be in a meeting, email me. So that way, you're going to send an email to them, and you're going to be opening up your email and your computers to their spam. So be careful. And tell your people to be careful with everything. You know how we write to each other and if it doesn't look like what you would normally see from someone, really question it

Vice Cmdr Lonergan: Alright, those of you that came to the Fall Conference, we had a guest speaker from the Big Red Barn. How many of you had been, had known about the Big Red Barn and what they do before the Fall Conference? Ok, there's a handful. So, every year, in February, this year its going to be on the first of February, I have a training session up at Lake Wateree Recreational facility. It's free for you to go, I provide lunch for everybody that attends. We bring to this training session, people like the Big Red Barn who talk about the programs for

veterans. We bring PAALS (PALMETTO ANIMAL ASSISTED LIFE SERVICE), we talk about programs they do for veterans. There's a couple of other organizations that I'm inviting out there that I've learned about through the VEAC and other places that do programs for veterans and they do them free of charge. And a lot of them are for veterans for PTSD and a lot of our veterans have PTSD. So I rent with my money, the recreation hall, at Lake Wateree Recreation area, I buy food to make lunch out my pocket so that you all can have something to eat. The training is from 9:00 in the morning until 3:00 and 4:00, depending on how many questions are asked, we have cabins reserved for Friday and Saturday night. If you'd like to spend the night in a cabin, you have to pay for that. And if you come up Friday night, I'm going to provide the dinner, and I'll provide the breakfast Saturday morning and if you stay Saturday night, I provide dinner Saturday night.

It's a great opportunity to learn about programs that are available for your veterans. Some of the programs might not deal with, the upstate might be concentrating in the Pee Dee, what am I trying to say? The Low Country, some of them might not be The Big Red Barn is in Blythewood, that's not in Beaufort's backyard. But if a person gets accepted into the Warrior Path Program, they will pay for that person to get to Blythewood for that program. So there's a lot of programs out there that our veterans don't know about that I found out about when I was in Behavioral Health Hospital, after I attempted suicide. So, let's get the word out before people get to that point, and come to this training. Free of charge, I'll have water and soft drinks. If you're spending the weekend, if you want something other than soft drinks, bring it yourself. I'm not going to do that for you. And I sent an email to everybody, send me an email and let me know if you want to come or not. I've heard from some of you.

D-1 Cmdr Walton: I just want to bring it to everybody's attention. At this time of year, this past week alone, I've had four widows call me asking what they can do to get their husband's benefits. I'm going to encourage you all, please, please tell your members if you are a veteran and you are getting benefits, of any sort, please make sure that they are taking care of signing the benefits over and filling out the form so when they decide to leave, that the widow can go ahead and get those benefits. Because there are so many out there, it's not easy, getting these phone calls when they're telling you they're used to getting those benefits and all of a sudden they're strapped for cash because their husband didn't see to it that those were sent over to them. We, as the Legion, are the ones that fought for these things for our families, to include where if something happens to the veteran, that those benefits can be turned over to their widow. I mean, we've got WWII, we've got Korean, all these older guys, plus we've got the younger guys. We don't know when that number comes up that we're going to get called home. So, please and if you have any further questions, please let me know. But like I said, it's pretty tough when you have them in destitution because nobody made sure that they'd done all the proper things. Thank you. By the way, God Bless you all and have a very, very blessed Christmas.

D-7 Cmdr Galloway: I work in a VA Office, so make sure you tell your veterans to know where their documents are. DD-214, that's the biggest problem I've seen. So that's the biggest thing, most of the widows don't know where they are. So let the veteran know to let their families know where they are, to get buried at the National cemetery what you need, things like that.

Dept Cmdr Donegan: In closing, just let me say that we've had a longer than usual meeting but we got a lot covered today, good discussion. Good discussion is good for this body or any other body. Because, if you didn't have discussion, sometimes you wonder what's going on, hey, why there isn't no controversies or conflicts and that. But you know, sometimes you have

to clear the air too. If there's any questions in somebody's mind about something, hey, what's going on and all this stuff. Well, that's why we're here, to address this stuff. So, with that, thank you all for coming. We had a full coming, we had a full house today. One committee member wasn't here because her father had passed, I believe. But everybody else was here, either on the zoom or in person. So thank you so much and have a good Holiday Season and a Happy New Year. As always, I like to say, thank you all so much for what you do for The American Legion and for all of us.

Commander Donegan called on Chaplain Shuford for the Benediction and closed the meeting with a hand salute to the flag.

For God and Country

Michael D. Strauss
Department Adjutant

MS/mm

