



American Legion Department of Wisconsin
8th District 2020 Spring Conference
Post 263 – New London

1. Commander Jean Balz called the meeting to order at 0900 hours. The colors being in place, all present rendered a hand salute. The Chaplain gave an opening prayer. The POW/MIA flag was placed on the empty chair by the Sergeant at Arms and Resolution 228 was read by Commander Balz. The 2nd Vice Commander led the Legionnaires in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. The Commander then led the attendees in the recitation of the Preamble to the Constitution of the American Legion.
2. Commander Balz declared the meeting regularly convened and invited the Waupaca County Commander to the podium to welcome the attendees.
3. Commander Balz introduced the guests.
4. She then invited Sons of the American Legion Department Vice Commander Watley to the podium. He expressed his appreciation for the Auxiliary members being in attendance to hear his report. He reported that the Josh Dog program had been shut down because the founder of the program retired and retained the trademark. The Sons are now looking into a new program based on the distribution of Deployment Kits. All Josh Dog donations made to date that have not been expended will be rolled over to the new Deployment Kit account. The new program will be run by the Department of Wisconsin for the Department of Wisconsin. He then gave an overview of SAL activities. SAL national dues have been raised and this will impact all levels of the organization. SAL is also looking into starting up a National PUFL program. He added that Squadrons are now able to do online renewals. Finally, he said the recently passed LEGION Act authorizes the relatives of new Legion members to join the SAL.
5. The Adjutant took a roll call of district and county officers. All officers were either present or excused. He then took a verbal roll call of Legionnaires in attendance. A total of 40 Legionnaires representing 20 posts were present.
6. Adjutant Herminath said the minutes from the 2019 Fall Conference had been posted on the 8th District website for perusal. He asked that they be accepted. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as posted on the website. The motion passed.
7. 8th District Finance Officer Fregien gave a finance report. He had hard copies of the finance report available for perusal. He also gave a report on the Shell Fund. A motion was made and seconded to accept the report. The motion was passed.

8. District Officer Reports:

- a. Commander Balz: Reported on her recent activities. She spoke about her work on membership and congratulated the 8th District posts for their effort in this area.
- b. 1st Vice Commander Melton: Reported on his recent activities.
- c. 2nd Vice Commander Zachowitz: Reported on his recent activities.
- d. 3rd Vice Commander Laumann: Excused
- e. Finance Officer Fregien: Encouraged posts to pay their 8th District dues in a timely manner.
- f. Adjutant Herminath: Reminded Posts to send 2020-2021 election results.
- g. Judge Advocate Gorst:
- h. Chaplain Harn: Absent
- i. Sergeant at Arms Young:
- j. Sergeant at Arms Elter:

9. County Commander Reports:

- a. Marathon County Commander Syring: Reported on post activities.
- b. Portage County Commander Miller: Reported on post activities.
- c. Shawano County Commander Marien: Reported on post activities.
- d. Waupaca County Commander Melton: Reported on post activities.
- e. Waushara County Commander Miller: Reported on post activities.
- f. Wood County Commander Krofta: Reported on post activities.

10. Department Adjutant Comments:

Department Adjutant Nathan Gear thanked the 8th District for inviting him to speak today. He said this was his background area as he comes from Waushara County and has worked in various communities of the 8th District. He is finishing up his military career at the University of Wisconsin teaching in the ROTC reserve component program. Adjutant Gear spoke about his passion for service to veterans and how he plans to continue this service as Department Adjutant. His goal is to get out of the office and reach out to the younger veterans. This means utilizing media tools like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok to reach the next generation of leaders. Time studies demonstrate that we have eight seconds to capture the attention of the today's young people. We have to present ourselves as a professional organization that these young veterans want to be a part of. There is no one way to reach out to the next generation and, while we have to utilize different means we must remember that this is one team, one fight. We have to recruit the next generation of veterans and then train, mentor and guide them to carry on our tradition of service. We have to convince them of the value of our service to the community, state and nation. The next generation of veterans is there, they are just looking for a way to participate. One thing we can do is approach them a number of times. When we invite them to a meeting and they don't show up, invite them again. Membership drives are ninety-nine percent rejection, get used to it. As a recruiter, be happy and thankful for the one veteran who decides to join and demonstrates a passion to serve. Adjutant Gear added that he joined the American Legion earlier this year. He added that he would probably have joined much earlier if someone had asked him. He finished up by giving a brief summary of ongoing activities

at Department. Camp American Legion has been closed due to Covid, but Department has used this time to review its long-term plans for the facility. Adjutant Gear spoke briefly about the American Legion Foundation and how the Department needs the long-term financial stability that the Foundation could provide. The Department website, wilegion.org, was recently updated and his vision is to eventually include information on every District. He wants a new media position at Department to serve our organization down to the Post level. Adjutant Gear then spoke about Engage 22 on August 15-16, Commander Wischer's theme this year to promote suicide awareness. He and Past Department Reigel then spoke about how this program could be promoted locally to raise interest in American Legion activities on behalf of veterans. Past Department Reigel also commented on the activities of the Foundation and how we are forming partnerships with businesses and outside organizations to promote American Legion programs and activities. Adjutant Gear said he had cards for the above media platforms available to hand out. These cards contain all the contact information necessary for Posts to utilize these platforms to reach out to veterans. He then took a group video to post online as part of his program to utilize media platforms to promote American Legion programs and activities.

11. District Committee Chairman Reports:

- a. Americanism/Career Academy/Fundraising: Jerry Krofta
- b. Camp American Legion: Jean Balz
- c. Children and Youth: Jean Balz
- d. Communication and Convention Activity: Arien Herminath
- e. Finance and Fundraising: Jerry Krofta
- f. Homeless Veterans: Jean Balz
- g. King Veterans Home: Jim Young
- h. King Day Pilgrimage: Jean Balz
- i. Legion Riders: Jean Balz
- j. Legislative and Resolutions: Kathy Gorst reviewed legislation currently working its way through the State Legislature.
- k. VA&R: Jean Balz
- l. National Homeland Security: Jim Young
- m. Membership: Jean Balz spoke about how she set up a mylegion.org and how she used it to promote membership in the 8th District. She then passed out awards to the 100% posts represented at the conference.
- n. MIA/POW: Jim Young
- o. Religious Emphasis: Mark Melton

12. District Program Director Reports:

- a. A&G Scholarship: Arien Herminath
- b. Badger Boys State: Mike Freier reported that the cost of the program would probably increase next year, primarily due to the increased cost of improving the food service at Ripon College.
- c. Baseball: Jean Balz spoke about American Legion baseball being cancelled this year. She emphasized that teams will not play under the program, use Legion equipment, or advertise their activities as Legion-sponsored.

- d. Boy Scouts: Ron Fregien
 - e. County Youth Government: Arien Herminath
 - f. Oratorical Program: Jerry Krofta
 - g. SAL Liaison: Arien Herminath
 - h. Law Enforcement Academy: Jerry Krofta
13. Commander Balz invited Jim Reigel, Past Department Commander, to speak about the Engage 22 program on July 17, 2020. Legionnaires are invited to register and carry out personal activities to raise awareness of veteran suicide. He also spoke about the Celebration of Freedom on 11 and 12 September at the Portage fairgrounds. They will have the 911 Mobile Exhibit along with firefighters present at the twin towers on that day. There will be bands all day along with tournaments, games and a chili cook off fund raiser. There will also be an American Legion one-hundred-year exhibit. He then spoke about the American Legion Foundation. He said the goal of 20 million dollar goal is high, but that is what is needed to fund our future activities on behalf of Wisconsin veterans, Children and Youth programs, American Legion baseball, Badger Boys State, Law Enforcement Academy, American Government Testing, County Youth Government Day, Boy Scouts, and Shooting Sports. Things we can do for the foundation include donating an IRA, a life insurance policy, write it into your will, donate credit card, Amazon, and hotel rewards points. These donations will enable us to fund our Service Office, Camp American Legion, and all the other programs listed above. We will have less membership in the future to pay for our programs and the foundation will enable us to maintain our activities at their current high level. The money would go into an endowment fund where only the interest may be used to fund the above programs. Another program is where for \$150,000 we purchase an insurance policy for a fellow Legionnaire. The policy is for \$5,000,000 which, upon his/her death, will go to the foundation. A question was asked about the funds currently in the foundation. He said that most money in the fund consists of restricted funds for specific purposes, not much for long-term funding of Legion programs.
14. Commander Balz asked for any old business. There was none.
15. Commander Balz then asked for any new business.
- a. Commander Balz said a bid was received from Marshfield Post 54 to host the 8th District Fall Conference. The date will be set once we know when the Fall DEC meeting will be held.
 - b. She added that the Rothschild Post will inaugurate their Gold Star Mothers memorial on 27 September.
 - c. In addition, the cutoff date for submission of Post Consolidated Program Reports has been extended due to the COVID virus situation. Commander Jean encouraged the Posts and Counties to submit their 2020-2021 officer update reports to the Adjutant.
 - d. She spoke about the Waupaca County-sponsored cabin 8 at Camp American Legion and confirmed that the Marshfield post also sponsors a cabin at Camp American Legion. If cabin 8 becomes an 8th District-sponsored cabin, will Marshfield be expected or obligated to sponsor it in addition to their Post 54 cabin.

- e. An extensive discussion ensued concerning costs of cabin improvements and construction at Camp American Legion along with fund raising options available to the 8th District.
 - f. A motion was made to permit Waupaca County to ask District 8 for voluntary support to raise funds for the Waupaca County-sponsored cabin 8 at Camp American Legion. Marshfield would also be permitted to ask District 8 for voluntary support from to raise funds for the Post 54-sponsored cabin at Camp American Legion. The motion was seconded. ((not actually voted on – appeared to be accepted by all))
 - g. Commander Jean said 1st Vice Commander Mark Melton had resigned and 2nd Vice Commander John Zachowitz has agreed to move up to 1st Vice Commander. 3rd Vice Commander Becky Laumann has agreed to move up to 2nd Vice Commander.
 - h. Legionnaire Adam Klapperich was nominated for the office of 3rd Vice Commander. He accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations for 3rd Vice Commander and Adam Klapperich was elected by unanimous vote.
 - i. Commander Balz was informed that \$204 was collected for the Shell Fund. A motion was made to donate the money to the recreation fund at King Veterans Home. The motion was seconded and approved.
16. Commander Balz asked if there was anything for the good of the American Legion.
17. Commander Balz called for a memorial service to honor the 8th District Legionnaires who died during the past year.
18. Finally, Commander Balz called on the 8th District Chaplain for prayer, followed by removal of the POW/MIA banner from the empty chair by the Sergeant at Arms. She then led a salute to the colors and declared the 2020 8th District Spring Conference adjourned.

Arien Herminath
Adjutant