

THE AMERICAN LEGION
Joseph B. Westnedge Post 36, Kalamazoo, MI

FEBRUARY 23, 2022, MEETING MINUTES.

The February meeting was scheduled for Thursday February 17th but was postponed due to adverse winter weather. Tonight's meeting was called to order at 1900 hrs. with 11 members present.

ROLLCALL: All officers were present, except the First Vice Commander who was excused.

READING OF MINUTES: Minutes of the January 20th meeting were approved as written.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS and NEW MEMBERS: Scott Nehmer joined the American Legion at our meeting. He served in the United States Marine Corps from 1981-1985. Welcome to Post 36 and thank you for your service and your support.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Youth sports: Dave Carvell reported that our sponsorship to West Portage Little League has been paid. He also reported that we were contacted by Milwood Little League, who asked us to sponsor a team this year. The price has increased to \$475 per team, which includes our name on the shirts and cap, a banner on the field, and our logo on their web page. After discussion, Don Harrison made a motion that we sponsor a Millwood little league team using money from the Lotto fund. Seconded by Dave Carvell and approved by vote.

Adjutant Gillespie reported on a Kalamazoo area youth organization called Beat the Odds, who shoveled senior citizen driveways during snowstorms. Their mission is to "develop youth to reach their full potential through education, emotional learning, community engagement, and athletics." Don Harrison and Cordell Gardner had also heard of them. Don will try to find out more about them.

House Committee: Report by Don Gillespie.

1. Fire update – The ballroom will be complete by March. The Kitchen is expected to be ~June.
2. St. Patrick Day party/potluck is planned for Thursday March 17, which is our meeting night.
3. The Marine Corps League reported the Battle Creek VA is still closed to volunteers working in the facility due to Covid protocols.
4. The MCL will use the Slack application to notify us of upcoming "unclaimed" veteran funerals at Ft. Custer, so we can attend their funerals and honor these veterans who pass without known family members. These notifications will typically only come a day or two before the funeral.

SAL Committee: Nothing reported. The Charter application should be at National, awaiting approval.

Search Committee: Report by Cordell Gardner and Don Harrison. Cordell and Don reported on various buildings throughout the Kalamazoo area that they think may be available.

Finance Officer's Report: Finance Officer Dave Carvell reported on our operating, lotto, and money market funds. He also reported that the \$235 dues were paid to the 3rd District, and our PO Box dues were paid through January 2023. Dave was finally able to contact the Commander of the Mayfield Kentucky American Legion post which was destroyed by a tornado. They had tried using GoFundMe for their fundraising, but it takes 10 or more % of the raised funds as operating expenses and was cumbersome, so they had cancelled it. Fortunately, they are receiving many donations. We gave the entire approved \$400 to the Mayfield post because the other post did not need assistance. The financial report was approved subject to audit. Motion by Don Harrison, second by Mike Sinclair.

Commander Saur will confirm our tax-exempt status and tax form 990 are up to date when he completes our taxes and has them verified by an accountant.

Membership: Adjutant Gillespie reported that as of 2/17/22, we are at ~94% renewed.

We have Post 225 transfer requests from William Bennett (USAF, Vietnam), Robert Koestner (USN, other conflicts), Christopher Hiscock, (USN, GWOT), Jeff Pierce (GWOT, AMVETS Post 13 Commander), and Carl Hughes, Jr. (USA, GWOT). Cordell Gardner asked about requesting that transferring members attend a meeting, so we can meet them. Currently all transferring members are given a newsletter, details about our meeting, and a coupon good for a free drink when they attend their first meeting. After discussion, we will not require transferees to attend a meeting. Motion by Don Harrison, second by Dave Carvell to approve their transfers, subject to verification of eligibility.

Americanism: Cordell Gardner presented a fundraising request from the Stones Church of Kalamazoo. Stones Church provides community assistance, youth mentoring, and other community services. We have supported their community programs in past years. After discussion, Don Harrison made a motion that we donate \$200, using money from the Lotto fund. Seconded by Jake Rickli and approved by vote.

SICK CALL, RELIEF, and EMPLOYMENT:

A Korea-era Post 36 member has a needed dental surgery which will cost \$4500. He has asked if we can help him find VA benefits or other assistance. Adjutant Gillespie will try to find out more about available assistance.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

The Chili cook-off and the Super Bowl Party were successfully held as planned. Closed.

Adjutant Gillespie reported that the Student Trooper program for 2022 was cancelled by the Michigan State Police. However, the Boys and Girls State programs are still planned. We have also been contacted by the Scouts who are reaching out to all local veterans groups, so they can coordinate projects and assist veteran organizations as part of their mission. Don suggested that we have a volunteer to coordinate and organize our Youth Projects. Commander Saur volunteered for this position.

The new Post 36 website has expenses that will need to be covered. This is tabled until Steve Caudill can give us a report.

Commander Saur reported on the State Convention to be held in Kalamazoo on June 23-26. The UPer have not responded to correspondence but we will not be hosting a UPer picnic at our Post. Jim asked if we want to sell a pin to commemorate the 2022 Convention, as a fundraiser. We will not be sponsoring a bus trip to our post, so it will be a better opportunity to make money on the sale of the pins. Traditionally, the convention pin has provided the purchaser with a bus ticket, and the opportunity to visit local participating businesses and get a BOGO 50% off or other discounts during the convention. Don Gillespie and Dave Carvell volunteered to be on the convention committee.

NEW BUSINESS:

Adjutant Gillespie reported that Dennis Lutz (who was unable to attend tonight's meeting) has agreed to be on our Americanism committee, and he suggests that we have events on Armed Forces Week (in May) and on Memorial Day. This has been discussed at the house meeting and the VFW and MCL are on board. He also suggested that next January our Post should do something to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the US and Vietnam peace treaty 1/27/1973. Commander Saur suggested that we have a "Patriotic Events" subcommittee within the Americanism Committee. Don Gillespie made a motion to form this subcommittee, seconded by Mike Sinclair, and approved. Mike and Don volunteered to be on the committee. *Please read Dennis's comments, which are attached at the end of our minutes.*

NEW BUSINESS, cont'd:

Commander Saur suggested we have a "Parade/Float Committee". Don Gillespie made a motion to form this committee, second by Cordell Gardner, approved. Cordell and Jim will be on the committee.

Commander Saur reported that the next 3rd District meeting is March 6th in Harper Creek at Post 257. We have 4-5 members who plan to attend, and carpooling details will be worked out.

Commander Saur reported that the WMU Warrior/Drew Russell Memorial Run is Sat. April 9th. Adjutant Gillespie will investigate sponsoring this event. Several members plan to participate.

Adjutant Gillespie reported that the house meeting members have discussed incorporating Zoom access to our organization meetings. It might encourage participation from home by members. It might cost around \$100 per year but can be used/shared by all organizations. Further discussion is needed.

DEPARTED MEMBERS: *A sympathy card was available for members to sign-*

Clayton Champion – Clayton served in the US Army during the Korean War. His memorial life celebration service will be held at a future date. Don Harrison suggested that we donate to Centrica Care Navigators (formerly Hospice Care of Southwest Michigan) in his honor, as suggested by his family. Seconded by Cordell Gardner and approved by vote.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE LEGION: Our next meeting is Thursday March 17th at 7pm. The next SAL meeting is Wednesday March 23rd at 7pm.

ADJURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 2016 hrs.

Members in Attendance: Jake Rickli, Woody Worden, Dave Carvell, Fran Reidy, Bob Edwards, Don Harrison, Cordell Gardner, Mike Sinclair, Stan Rop, Don Gillespie, and Commander Jim Saur.

Below is Dennis Lutz's email to our executive committee about his proposal for Americanism. Dennis was unable to attend our February meeting-

Guys,

I'd like to make a proposal, which only works if the VFW and the Legion support, for an event on Memorial Day.

Traditionally, communities have a parade on Memorial Day. Because of COVID, Kalamazoo has canceled its last two. This year (2022), I suspect (but don't know) that they will hold a parade and we (VFW and American Legion) will be invited to participate along with other organizations, bands, etc.

Where I lived prior to Michigan, after the parade, which ended near a memorial park, the VFW and the Legion held a ceremony that was simple but drew in hundreds of people.

The ceremony consisted of a Master of Ceremonies (I was thinking Peter of the Marine Corp League, I saw him do this at the event on Veterans Day) being the MC. We had a high school band play the Stars Spangle Banner (but the pipers that were used during Jim Saur's award would work as well), a speech from the VFW Commander and the American Legion Commander, get someone from the political arena (like a state rep or the Mayor), a tolling of the bell for Veterans or Soldiers who were killed in combat (one bell ring for each name) from Kalamazoo, and that would be the end of the ceremony.

We could get some local press. It would be an American thing to do (which is in our charters). Our organizations both moan about membership participation. This is an event that should be easy for participation of members (neither the Legion nor the VFW had their members assembled in ranks for the event but were in the crowd). It gives a feel-good moment. It would be a great event for the Sons of the American Legion to participate in.

To do this we need to get a committee to work on some things:

- a) Venue. Where would we hold this event.*
- b) Publicity. That should be relatively easy if the venue is where the parade ends or easy walking distance to it.*
- c) Participation. We would need some music.*
- d) Guest Speaker. We would need to invite someone political to speak (this helps both organizations and makes the PR easier)*
- e) Permissions. Whatever is needed by the city or county.*

There might be something like this already planned and happening (I am relatively new here). If so, then ignore this note.

I would be willing to work on this. It will take two or more people familiar with the landscape (I am not) and support from the organizations.

Thanks for all that you do.

Dennis