



**American Legion**  
**Department of Wisconsin**  
**8<sup>th</sup> District Spring Conference**

**Spring 2017 Conference Minutes April 08, 2017**  
**Post 226, Manawa, WI**

1. District Commander Jim Young called the meeting to order at 0900 hours. The colors were posted and all present rendered a hand salute. Chaplain Theama gave an opening prayer. Commander Young read Resolution 228 and the POW/MIA flag was placed on the empty chair. The First Vice Commander led the Legionnaires in the Pledge of Allegiance and the recitation of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion.
2. Commander Young declared the meeting open and called for the roll call of officers. Adjutant Herminath called the roll. There were 63 Legionnaires from present.
3. Commander Young called for the reading of the minutes. Adjutant Herminath said the 2016 Fall DEC and Fall Conference minutes were on the website and 15 copies had been passed out prior to this meeting for perusal. He asked that the minutes be accepted. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes. The motion passed.
4. Commander Young then introduced the guests.
5. Commander Young asked Post 226 Commander Ron Roberts to welcome the attendees. Manawa Mayor John Smith then welcomed the Legionnaires to Manawa and thanked them for their service.
6. Commander Young asked the 8<sup>th</sup> District SAL Commander to speak. He informed the attendees of SAL activities and encouraged them to support the activities of their SAL Detachments.
7. Laurel Clewel spoke about her qualifications for Department Commander. She stressed the importance of growing the American Legion, to continue our membership drives. We need to be knowledgeable about our programs and our four pillars to reach out to veterans and convince them of the value of joining our ranks.
8. Several candidates spoke about their qualifications for Department Sergeant-at-Arms.
9. Commander Young then introduced Frank Kostka from the 11<sup>th</sup> District who spoke about his qualifications for the office of Department Commander. He spoke about his dedication to membership and his achievements in that area.

He also spoke about spending the Department's money wisely and stressed his efforts in this area.

10. Julie Muhle then spoke about the Wisconsin American Legion College. She described the curriculum and why it is important. She spoke about the Post Officer's Manual and how they focus on this manual in the basic course. They focus on the CPR, the VA&R and C&Y reports in the basic course. The Intermediate Course focuses on Post operations. The Basic Course will be available at the on Saturday, June 20 and the Intermediate Course on Sunday, June 21 from 0900-1700 at Oconto. Legionnaires can sign up on the Department website [wilegion.org](http://wilegion.org). The courses were offered in Appleton a few weeks ago and 32 Legionnaires signed up for the Basic Course and 40 Legionnaires signed up for the Intermediate Course. The College also provides valuable information on how to talk with potential members about joining the American Legion. The first Advanced Course was held at this past Mid-Winter Conference. This course touches more on the values of the American Legion.

11. District Officer Reports:

- a. Commander Young gave a short prepared speech about the status of the 8<sup>th</sup> District and reported on his activities during the past six months.
- b. 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander Fregien spoke about his activities during the past six months.
- c. 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander Balz spoke about her activities during the past six months.
- d. Commander Young read a letter received from 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander Jaeger announcing his resignation and inability to attend the 2017 Spring Conference due to personal issues.
- e. Finance Officer Jensen gave a report on the status of 8<sup>th</sup> District finances. He asked the Sergeant-at-Arms to pass the container for the Shell Fund which collected a total of \$150. A motion was made to accept the finance report. The motion was seconded and passed.
- f. The Adjutant requested that all Counties and Posts inform the Department and 8<sup>th</sup> District of all officer election results, including non-change reports, for 2017-18. He thanked the Legionnaires for their support to the website during the past year, particularly their timely updates to post and personnel information changes.
- g. Chaplain Theama reported on his activities during the past six months.
- h. Historian Pope reported on his activities during the past six months.
- i. Judge Advocate Gorst spoke about her activities during the past six months. She has been involved in getting the word out on DVA benefits for women at our Department Conferences and Conventions. She invited Legionnaires with questions on their post constitutions and bylaws to send them to her and she would help rewrite (not draft) changes and updates to these documents.
- j. Commander Young thanked Sergeant-at-Arms Sonnentag for his work during the past six months.

- k. Sergeant-at-Arms Klotzbuecher reported on his activities during the past six months.

12. County Commander Reports

- a. The Marathon County Commander had to resign due to health reasons and Adjutant Balz gave the report. She reported on Post activities.
- b. The Portage County report was given by the Commander of the Plover Post as County Commander Dave Vandre had recently passed away.
- c. The Shawano-Menomonee County report was given by Commander Richard Marien.
- d. Waupaca County Commander Willis Pope reported on Post activities
- e. Waushara County Commander Wickersheim reported on Post activities.
- f. Wood County Commander Krofta reported on Post activities.

13. Commander Young introduced Retired Wisconsin National Guard Colonel Joseph M. McGrath who spoke about his 2004-2005 deployment to Afghanistan. Col. McGrath was part of a 12-man cadre of Wisconsin National Guard representatives assigned to the 76<sup>th</sup> Combat Brigade out of Indiana. He served as the S-3 operations officer of a composite command composed of soldiers from various countries along with Afghan National Army units. Their area of operations was the Eastern Region of Afghanistan near a Forward Operating Base at Gardez.

Col. McGrath gave a brief overview of Islamic culture and religion. He spoke about the differences between Sunni and Shia Islam and how confusing the politics and infighting between the sects can be, even for those living in the region.

The Col. spoke about the early days at Gardez and how they overcame the remote and primitive conditions there to construct a large and effective Forward Operating Base. He talked about the challenging geography and weather conditions they encountered. He also described the combat and humanitarian missions carried out while he was stationed there. The missions, both combat and humanitarian, were carried out by joint forces and required a great deal of planning and reconnaissance to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the international and local Afghan National Army forces involved. The humanitarian operations carried out from Gardez included the provision of medical and veterinary assistance. They also distributed foreign donations of shoes, clothing, educational material and sporting equipment, especially for the children, to help win the hearts and minds of the local populace. Col. McGrath stressed that the humanitarian missions were very rewarding to him. He said that many local people who had been displaced by the fighting had very little food and clothing, and he often saw children standing barefoot in the snow.

Col. McGrath also spoke about the training provided to the Afghan National Army during his deployment. From a total of 5 Afghan National Army soldiers stationed at Gardez when he arrived, there were 12-15,000 trained troops there when he rotated out a year later. Much work went into training Afghan National Army officers and men in the Military Decision Making Process. This made them much more effective in planning and

carrying out military operations. Col. McGrath said the Afghans were happy to receive the above training and our troops enjoyed a good rapport with their military counterparts. He was particularly laudatory of the Afghan Army interpreters that he worked with. He stressed that these men were essential to the success of our mission in Afghanistan and served us with courage and dedication equal to our own soldiers.

Finally, Col McGrath said he was in favor of immigration, to include people of other religions and cultures, to the United States if the goal is to strengthen the country. However, he opposes the immigration of those who refuse to accept our laws and who are not loyal to the United States. To him, the Afghani translators who served with and supported our troops in combat proved their loyalty and should be allowed, with proper vetting, to immigrate to this country.

14. District Committee Chairman Reports:

- a. Americanism Jerry Krofta  
He reported on the Department award nominations to be turned in prior to the Department Convention. He recently launched a Facebook for Post 9 that includes information on several Legion Americanism programs.
- b. Badger Legionnaire/Public Relations No report
- c. Camp American Legion Jim Reigel  
He read the resume of the new Camp Commander taking over this summer.
- d. Children and Youth Ron Fregien  
He summarized the recent report of the Department Children & Youth Committee and stressed the importance of the annual Post C&Y reports.
- e. Convention Activity Arien Herminath  
He read the highlights of the last Convention Active Committee.
- f. Finance No report
- g. Fund Raising Rick Klotzbuecher  
He encouraged everyone to fill out sweepstakes tickets prior to the Department Convention.
- h. Homeless Vets Dan Rindt  
He summarized recent Department efforts on behalf of homeless vets.
- i. Hospital Gary Mader  
He reported on recent activities at the Veterans Home at King
- j. King Day Pilgrimage Jean Balz  
Jim gave an overview of the day's agenda.
- k. Legion Riders Ray McSherry  
The route of this year's Run for Pride was discussed along with the Wreaths across America program. He added that the 8<sup>th</sup> District Riders would offer a \$1,000 scholarship to a Badger Boy or Badger Girl from the district.
- l. Legislative Kathy Gorst  
She asked how many Post and County Commander had been contacted and encouraged to nominate a candidate for Legislator of the Year. Just a few had been contacted and she said someone had dropped the ball. She summarized the activity of the last Legislative Committee.
- m. Policy and Resolutions Kathy Gorst

She gave a summary of activity at the last Policy and Resolutions Committee. One resolution under consideration will mandate that contestants in Legion programs respect the flag, the pledge and national anthem to be eligible to participate. There is another resolution under consideration promoting veteran consideration in hiring practices.

n. Membership Jean Balz

She summarized the activity of the last Membership Committee.

o. POW/MIA Jim Young

He summarized the report of the recent POW/MIA Committee meeting.

p. National Security Jim Young

He summarized the activity of the last National Security Committee meeting.

r. Religious Emphasis Tom Theama

He mentioned that during his past two years as 8<sup>th</sup> District Chaplain he has received very few death or illness notices from the Posts and Counties. One evident reason is not many Posts and Counties attend 8<sup>th</sup> District Conferences. He stressed that our membership is not giving him the support that he needs to do his job properly. He added that we do not give our ill and deceased comrades the respect they deserve if we do not provide moral and spiritual support to them and their families in time of need.

s. VA&R Dan Rindt

He summarized the past report of the VA&R Committee. He stressed the adverse effect of PTSD on the employability of many veterans.

18. District Program Director Reports:

a. Americanism and Government Testing Arien Herminath

Arien spoke about the 50-question test offered online in April of this year. The test awards \$11,400 in scholarship money to 45 high school students and is an important program that deserves to be promoted.

b. Badger Boys State Jean Balz

She reported on last year's activities and encouraged all Posts to support this year's program.

c. Baseball Dan Rindt

He spoke about the activities of the recent Baseball Committee.

d. Blood Doner No Report

e. County Youth Government Arien Herminath

He reported on the 2017 Shawano County and Waupaca County programs held in April of this year.

f. Oratorical Jerry Krofta

He asked for candidates for this year's program. The 8<sup>th</sup> District offers scholarship money for the top three contestants each year.

g. Shooting Sports Jim Young

He summarized the report given by the Shooting Sports Committee.

19. Commander Young introduced Department Commander Don Schaefer who addressed the conference. He spoke about recent activities at Department, including the visits of senior officers from National. He stressed the fact that we as Legionnaires do so much and have to get the word out to promote the recruitment of new members and the revitalization of our Posts. Department

Commander Schaefer said he spoke with the VA about alternative therapies for veterans that do not involve opioid medications. He is also working with the VA about the promotion of jobs for veterans. He spoke about Camp American Legion and how we should work with other organizations who want to provide financial support to such programs. He also promoted the Law Enforcement Career Academy, a new program, that has received outside financial support. Commander Schaefer lauded the excellent turn out at the recent Mid-Winter Conference. He spoke about the efforts of the American Legion in Washington where we continue to be active politically in support of veterans' issues. While we don't endorse individual candidates, wear our caps at political rallies, we do have an agenda and are political on behalf of veterans' rights and issues. Finally, he spoke out in support of the Legacy Scholarship Fund and encouraged everyone to support this fine program.

20. Old Business:

- a. Commander Young asked that all posts get in their CPR, Children and Youth and VA&R reports in by 01 June.
- b. He asked that all Posts and Counties submit their election reports, including reports indicating no change in officers, to the 8<sup>th</sup> District and Department as soon as possible.

21. New business:

- a. Legionnaires Bill Kuehl, Dave Jensen, and Jean Balz volunteered to serve as Ballot Clerks. 8<sup>th</sup> District Sergeant-at-Arms Julian Sonnentag volunteered to serve as an Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms at the Department Convention.
- b. Commander Young asked for volunteers to attend standing committee meetings at the Department Convention. Legionnaire Krofta volunteered to attend the Americanism meeting; Legionnaire Fregien volunteered to attend the C&Y meeting; Legionnaire Pope volunteered to attend the Finance meeting; Legionnaire Gorst volunteered to attend the Legislative meeting; Legionnaire Porter volunteered to attend the Membership meeting; Legionnaire Reigel volunteered to attend the National Security meeting; Legionnaire Marien volunteered to attend the Resolutions meeting; and Legionnaire Rindt volunteered to attend the Veterans Affairs meeting.
- c. Legionnaires Gorst and Reigel volunteered to serve as 8<sup>th</sup> District Delegates at the upcoming National Convention in Reno, Nevada. We did not have a volunteer to serve as Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms at National.
- d. Commander Young then called for nominations for 8<sup>th</sup> District Officers. Ron Fregien was elected Commander; Jean Balz was elected 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander; Bob Bohr was elected 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander; Woody Wickersham was elected 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander; David Jensen was elected Finance Officer; Jim Young was elected 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant-at-Arms; Russ Wohlrabe was elected 2<sup>nd</sup> Sergeant-at-Arms; Will Pope was elected Historian; Kathy Gorst was elected Judge Advocate; and Pastor Tom Theama was elected Chaplain.
- e. Commander Young reported that an informal bid had been received from Post 139 for the 2017 8<sup>th</sup> District Fall Conference. He encouraged Post 139 to submit a formal written bid as soon as possible. Commander Young then

reported that an informal bid had been received from Post 226 for the 2018 8<sup>th</sup> District Spring Conference. He also encouraged Post 226 to submit a formal written bid as soon as possible. There were no other bids for upcoming 8<sup>th</sup> District Conferences submitted.

f. A discussion on the scheduling of the 8<sup>th</sup> District Spring Conference ensued. A motion was made and seconded to have Judge Advocate Gorst amend the 8<sup>th</sup> District Bylaws to enable the 8<sup>th</sup> District Commander to set the date of the 8<sup>th</sup> District Spring Conference at his discretion. Currently, the date is determined in relation to the date of the spring Department DEC meeting.

g. A motion was made and seconded for the 8<sup>th</sup> District to sponsor two holes at the Department Golf Outing. The motion passed.

h. Todd Braun, 6<sup>th</sup> District Commander, spoke about his qualifications for Department Vice Commander. He also spoke in favor of the 6<sup>th</sup> District Candidate for Department Sergeant-at-Arms.

22. Chaplain Tom Theama led the membership in memorial service. He called the County Commanders forward and had them read the names of the Legionnaires who passed away during the past year. Chaplain Theama asked for a moment of silence for our departed comrades and gave a closing prayer.

23. There being no further business to come before the conference, Commander Young closed the meeting per protocol and declared the 2017 8<sup>th</sup> District Spring Conference adjourned at 1430 hours.

Respectfully submitted,  
Arien Herminath  
8<sup>th</sup> District Adjutant