



American Legion Department of Wisconsin
8th District 2021 Spring Conference held on 15 May at
Post 63 – Clintonville

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 1st Vice Commander read POW/MIA Resolution 228 and the POW/MIA banner was placed on the empty chair by the Sergeant at Arms. The 2nd Vice Commander led the Legionnaires in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Commander Balz 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. The attendees were welcomed by Waupaca County Commander Mark Melton, Post 63 Commander Dan Rindt, and Acting Clintonville Mayor Mike Hankins.
3. Commander Balz introduced the guests.
4. Department of Wisconsin Commander Wischer was invited to the podium. He spoke about his activities traveling around the state and highlighted several exciting initiatives that led to the recruitment of new members in the American Legion. He encouraged all posts to submit a Consolidated Post Report as the 8th District reporting percentage to date was very low with only nine Posts having submitted a CPR to date. He emphasized the fact that the information included in this report is extremely valuable to the American Legion and forms the basis of our reports to Congress. Commander Wischer thanked the Legionnaires for their support during his term in office and said he looked forward to seeing them at the upcoming Department Convention in July.
5. The Adjutant took a roll call of district and county officers. Vice Commander Lauman, Sergeant at Arms Ebert, and Shawano County Commander Marien were excused. All other District Officers and County Commander were present. He then took a verbal roll call of Legionnaires in attendance. A total of 45 Legionnaires from the 8th District representing 16 posts were present.
6. Department of Wisconsin Vice Commander Lauby, responsible for the 8th District, was invited to the podium. He spoke about the need for volunteers to work at the Road America race at Elkart Lake and at several tractor pulls around the state sponsored by the American Legion. He also encouraged the posts to submit their CPR reports.
7. Two Department Vice Commanders running for Department Commander and three District Commanders running for Department Vice Commander were invited to the podium to speak about their qualifications for office.

8. Post 63 Commander Dan Rindt presented a check for \$300 to the fund to elect Dan Seehafer National Commander.
9. Commander Balz announced the winner of the main raffle held by Post 63.
10. She then invited Sons of the American Legion Department Vice Commander Watley to the podium. He gave an overview of SAL activities and mentioned that 8th District SAL membership was over 100%. He stressed that the website Legion.org would be of great benefit to the SAL. He also stressed that all Squadrons in the 8th District should submit CPR information and Officer Update Reports every year. Vice Commander Watley spoke about the ALF program, which replaced the Josh Dog program, and asked for Legion support for this SAL initiative.
11. Commander Balz asked the attendees to rise and join her in a moment of silence in memory of Past Department Commander Jim Reigle.
12. Commander Balz asked for a reading of the minutes. Adjutant Herminath said the minutes from the 2020 Spring 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.
13. 8th District Finance Officer Fregien gave a finance report. He also asked that the shell be passed around for donations to the Shell Fund. A motion was made and seconded to accept the report. The motion was passed.
14. A motion was made and seconded for the 8th District to donate \$1,000 to the campaign of Dan Seehafer for National Commander. The motion passed.
15. The Chaplain said a dinner prayer and the conference was adjourned for lunch.
16. The conference resumed at 1300.
17. Department Adjutant Nathan Gear spoke about his activities during the past ten months. He focused on several main points of interest to the Department. First, he encouraged all posts to submit their CPR reports. CPR reports are the basis of our telling the American Legion story to veterans to build membership, to approach corporations for support, and to build the American Legion of Wisconsin Foundation. He added that the County Commanders would be given reports on last year's CPR submissions by their Posts. Last year's reports were not up to standard, and he wanted to improve the reporting process this year. Second, American Legion merchandising. National has had a brand, a trademark, for years and the Departments were getting more active in promoting Legion merchandise. He then spoke about several initiatives to promote our brand at national and local sporting events to reach out to veterans. This effort requires our support at the department and even post level. Here in Wisconsin, we support four Wisconsin Tractor Pull Association events around the state to reach out to veterans. He also passed out various Legion program and Camp American Legion brochures. Third, our Camp American Legion Director resigned and moved on to a new job. The search for a new Director is ongoing. He asked for questions and was asked about lack of a plan for the new 8th District sponsored cabin at Camp. The 8th District has been waiting for approval from Department to raise funds for the replacement of their current cabin which is 102 years old. Adjutant Gear said he would take the hit on this and encouraged District 8 to contact him directly on this issue. He added that veterans were encouraged to support use the rental cabins at camp. The cabins can be rented

individually for vacations without signing up for the use of all camp facilities. Fourth, partnerships are very important to our effort to support veterans. The said there were 32 groups here in Wisconsin that support veterans. While the American Legion has by far the most programs in this area, there are many other groups doing similar work for veterans. We should consider assisting these other groups when they are short of help and perhaps gain a dual member in the process. Last, he introduced his sister, an employee of the Department of Public Instruction, who works to support youth programs in Wisconsin. She spoke of her ability to serve as a conduit for Legion youth program initiatives in Wisconsin schools and youth groups.

18. 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 Zachowitz: Reported recent activities.
- c. 2nd Vice Commander Klapperich: Reported recent activities.
- d. 3rd Vice Commander: Open
- e. Finance Officer Fregien: Encouraged posts to pay their 8th District dues in a timely manner.
- f. Adjutant Herminath: Reminded Posts to send 2021-2022 election results.
- g. Judge Advocate Gorst: Reported on her recent activities.
- h. Chaplain Melton: Reported on his recent activities.
- i. Sergeant at Arms Young: Reported on his recent activities.
- j. Sergeant at Arms Elter: Excused

19. 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.

20. District Committee Chairman Reports:

- a. Americanism/Career Academy/Fundraising: Jerry Krofta
- b. Camp American Legion: Jim Jaeger
Jim said the proposed design of the new 8th District cabin at Camp American Legion had been changed. The design changes lowered the estimated cost of the cabin from \$165,000 to \$110,00, a savings of \$50,000. Jim asked that the money raised for cabin 8 from any source be sent to Post 263 for submission to Department. Checks should be made out to Post 263 for cabin 8 rebuild. Jim would like to hold the donations until there he has several thousand dollars on hand to avoid sending in many small donations that are hard to track at Department.
- c. Children and Youth: Jean Balz
- d. Communication and Convention Activity: Arien Herminath
- e. Finance and Fundraising: Jerry Krofta

- f. Homeless Veterans: Jim Young
- g. King Veterans Home: Jim Young
- h. King Day Pilgrimage: Jean Balz
- i. Legion Riders: Jean Balz
- j. Legislative and Resolutions: Kathy Gorst
Kathy reviewed legislation currently working its way through the State Legislature. She encouraged the Legionnaires to utilize the legislature's website to receive regular updates on the status of veteran-related legislation. Kathy reported that the Department Constitution and Bylaws are currently being rewritten. Jim Jaeger commented on several changes made to the Post 263 constitution that will be forwarded to Department for approval.
- k. VA&R: Dan Rindt
- l. National Homeland Security: Bob Bohr
- m. Membership: Jean Balz spoke about the availability of a mobile Legion app for membership. It can be used to scan and submit membership applications directly to National. She also suggested that Legionnaires offer to sit in on council meetings in their villages or cities to learn more about local needs and better integrate their posts in community activities. County Veterans Service Officers also meet with veterans attending local tech schools and colleges and Legionnaires should leave brochures for them at their local VSO offices. Finally, she reported that the 8th District achieved 95% membership last year and stands at 92.5% this year.
- n. MIA/POW: Jim Young
- o. Religious Emphasis: Mark Melton

21. District Program Director Reports:

- a. A&G Scholarship: Arien Herminath
He reported that the program was held online this year and 1,186 students from 226 schools in Wisconsin took the test. This year 207 tests were submitted by students from the 8th District. The 8th District had three winners out of the thirty-three scholarships offered. The included a senior from Amherst High School, a junior from Northland Lutheran High School, and a Sophomore from Iola-Scandinavia High School.
- b. Badger Boys State: Jean Balz
The program was not held this year due to the Covid threat.
- c. Baseball: Jean Balz
The program will be held this year with 217 teams participating.
- d. Boy Scouts: Dan Rindt
- e. County Youth Government: Arien Herminath
The program was not held this year due to the Covid threat.
- f. Oratorical Program: Bob Bohr
- g. SAL Liaison:
- h. Law Enforcement Academy: Jerry Krofta

22. Jim Jaeger of Post 263 asked to give a report. He said that his post would complete a project this summer to expand the capacity of the New London Veterans Memorial from 1,000 to 1,665 names. The foundation of the memorial was laid in 2015 with a budget of \$250,000 which they were able to raise in under three months. The monument, which is situated in a city park next to the Wolf River, will be formally turned over to the city in September.
23. Commander Balz asked for any old business. There was none.
24. Commander Balz then asked for any new business.
 - a. Commander Balz asked for volunteers to fill support positions at the upcoming Department Convention as well as the names of those Legionnaires interested in serving on a Department Standing Committee. She also asked for volunteers to serve at the upcoming National Convention as well as the names those Legionnaires interested in attending.
 - b. Commander Balz then turned to the election of officers for 2021 – 2023. The following officers were elected: Commander, John Zachowitz; 1st Vice Commander, Adam Klapperich; 3rd Vice Commander, Penny Peters; Finance Officer, Ron Fregien; Judge Advocate, Kathy Gorst; Chaplain, Mark Melton; and Sergeant at Arms, Jim Young. An Adjutant will be appointed at the Fall Conference.
25. Commander Balz reported that several 8th District posts required assistance. They included Bancroft, Dakota and Amherst. The challenges faced by these posts were discussed and plans of action formulated. Overall, 8th District officers agreed to meet with the post officers and draft letters to post members discussing options for the future of their posts. If the posts in question could not be revitalized, the consensus was to try to merge them with another posts in the area rather than disband them.
26. Commander Balz was informed that \$245 was collected for the Shell Fund which now totaled \$560.91. A motion was made to donate \$450 from the shell fund to the King recreation fund toward the purchase of a steel bench for Moses Hall. As the final cost of the bench will exceed \$1,000, it was agreed that an amount not to exceed \$1,000 will be donated from the King Pilgrimage Fund to help pay for the bench. The motion was seconded and approved.
27. New London submitted a verbal bid to host the 8th District Fall Conference.
28. Commander Balz asked if there was anything for the good of the American Legion.
29. Commander Balz called for one minute of silence to honor all 8th District Legionnaires who died during the past year.
30. 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
8th District Adjutant