



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

### **Fall 2021 Conference Minutes – October 16 2021** **Post 263 – New London, WI**

1. Commander Zachowitz called the meeting to order at 0900 hours. The colors being in place, all present rendered a hand salute. The Acting 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 Zachowitz. The 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander led the Legionnaires in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander then led the attendees in the recitation of the Preamble to the Constitution of the American Legion.
2. Commander Zachowitz declared the meeting regularly convened and invited the Waupaca County Commander to the podium to welcome the attendees. The Post 263 Commander and Mayor Mark Herter also welcomed the Legionnaires to New London.
3. Commander Zachowitz introduced the guests and asked if anyone would like to address the Legionnaires. The SAL Detachment Commander gave a brief overview of Sons activities and encouraged the posts to utilize the SAL to help carry out their programs and activities. The Commander of the First District then spoke about his qualifications for the office of Department Vice Commander. He also spoke about Legion College courses being offered and encouraged all Legionnaires to participate.
4. Commander Zachowitz called Department Commander Greg Eirich to the podium. Commander Eirich said he would like to talk about membership. He said the Department was doing very well last year prior to Covid hitting. Nationally we were pretty much on target, but Covid put the brakes on that. He added that the 8<sup>th</sup> District was currently meeting the 55% target membership goal and ranked third at 68% among the twelve districts. He said we were going great and should look to assist the posts that are struggling. In cases where the post is not viable, we may have to make the hard decision at the District, County, and Post level to advise a post to turn its charter in. Commander Eirich encouraged the Legionnaires to work closely with their CVSO, get to know him and build a good relationship. He encouraged the Legionnaires to be imaginative and think outside the box to increase membership. We must be positive and think “I can” when it comes to our posts. Changing subjects, Commander Eirich encouraged the Legionnaires to support their 8<sup>th</sup> District Commander, to include having someone step up and fill the open 8<sup>th</sup> District Adjutant position. He stressed that the

Commander position is a big job and Commander Zachowitz needs our help to succeed. Finally, he mentioned that they just finished up with the Celebration of Freedom at Portage. He stressed that it was a great event and over 600 students born after 9-11 came in to tour the traveling memorial manned by four fire fighters. Commander Eirich said the Department planned to sponsor a World War II exhibit next year at the county fairgrounds. With only around 200,000 WW II veterans still alive, it should be a great opportunity to recognize the greatest generation. He mentioned the training opportunities that will be available at the Midwinter Conference, including American Legion College, Post Commander, and Adjutant courses. The theme for the conference will be rise and shine, we will be motivated and put a light at the end of the trouble. Commander Eirich challenged Commander Zachowitz to have everyone attend the Midwinter Conference. He then asked for questions. In response to a comment, Commander Eirich encouraged the Legionnaires to get to know the mayor of their community, invite him or her to a meeting and talk about what you are doing. Also, contact the local Chamber of Commerce and get to know your local politicians. In response to a comment, he said that Badger Boys State moved from Ripon to Eau Claire. He expected around 800 boys to attend the next program. We are welcome to attend the veteran's night and be recognized. In response to another comment, he added that the cost of the program may increase due to the move. Commander Eirich said he did not have any solid information on that at this time. The conversation then turned to Wisconsin having another candidate for National Commander. The Commander encouraged all Legionnaires to continue to learn and assume increased roles of responsibility within the American Legion. He particularly stressed the online learning opportunities available on the American Legion website. Finally, he asked Commander Zachowitz for a suitable candidate for his thumbs up award. Past Adjutant Herminath was nominated and accepted the award for his service.

5. Commander Zachowitz spoke about the importance of membership. He reviewed several initiatives taken by his post and encouraged all Legionnaires to redouble their efforts in this area. He also stressed the importance of attendance at legion meeting at post, county, and district functions.

6. The First Vice Commander took a roll call of district and county officers. All officers were either present or excused. He then took a roll call of the posts. A total of 29 Legionnaires from 14 posts and 5 guests were in attendance.

7. Finance Officer Ron Fregien gave a financial report. He also spoke about posts that had not yet paid their district dues for the coming year. Finance Officer Fregien made a motion that the 8<sup>th</sup> District help pay for a bench at King Veterans Home from the Shell Fund when we have funds available. The motion was seconded and approved. A motion was made and seconded to accept the financial report. The motion was approved. Following the shell being passed, Ron reported that 8<sup>th</sup> District raised \$132.00 for the fund which now totaled \$687.96.

8. Past Adjutant Herminath said the minutes from the May 2021 Spring Conference and the two most recent Department Convention Caucus meetings in July were posted on the 8<sup>th</sup> District website for perusal. He made a motion that they be accepted. The motion was seconded to accept the minutes as posted on the website. The motion passed.

9. District Officer Reports:

- a. Commander Zachowitz:
- b. First Vice Commander Klapperich:
- c. Second Vice Commander Peeters:
- d. Third Vice Commander: Open
- e. Adjutant Herminath: Asked for approval to renew the website subscription for 2021 at a cost of approximately \$200. A motion was made and seconded to approve the expenditure of \$200 to renew the website. The motion passed.
- f. Judge Advocate Gorst: Absent
- g. Chaplain: Open
- h. Sergeant-at-Arms Young:
- i. Sergeant-at-Arms Pope:

10. County Commander Reports:

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

11. District Committee Chairman Reports:

- a. Americanism/Career Academy/Fund Raising:
- b. Camp American Legion: Several ongoing and planned projects were reviewed, including roof work and septic system upgrade. As for the 8<sup>th</sup> District cabin, around \$110,000 is needed and \$16,000 has been raised by Post 63 to date. Additional funds have been sent directly to Department, but the amount is not known. Final plans for the cabin are not yet available. No corporate funders have been identified to date.
- c. Children and Youth:
- d. Americanism.
- e. Convention Activity:
- f. Finance:
- g. Homeless Veterans:
- h. King Day Pilgrimage:

- i. Children and Youth:
  - j. Convention Activity:
  - k. Finance:
  - l. Homeless Veterans: Several veterans spoke about the current situation at Veterans Homes in Wisconsin and how various issues adversely impacted homeless veterans. Jim Young spoke about the current situation at the various halls at King Veterans Home, how the veteran resident population is at an all-time low. He added that it appears that new residents face increasing cost and healthcare requirements for admittance. One speaker, a former part-time employee at King, expressed his concern about the deteriorating safety and security situation at King Veterans Home. He cited staff shortages and a reduction in services as major problems, as well as facility and grounds maintenance shortfalls.
  - m. King Day Pilgrimage:
  - n. Legion Riders:
  - o. Membership: SAL Vice Detachment Commander Watley spoke about SAL membership issues. He encouraged the posts to advise their Squadrons to go on wisal.org and update their membership and officer information. Squadrons are also welcomed to submit event information to be posted on the SAL website. He also said Detachment would provide ALF (American Legion Family) Dogs for distribution at deployment ceremonies. This program replaces the Josh dog program. The dogs are free to posts and squadrons that request them.
  - p. MIA/POW:
  - q. Policy and Resolutions/Legislative:
  - r. Religious Emphasis:
  - s. VA&R:
  - t. National Security:
12. District Program Director Reports:
- a. A&G Scholarship: Arien Herminath gave a report on this year's on-line program.
  - b. Badger Boys State:
  - c. Boy Scouts: Several posts reported on the activities of their troops.
  - d. County Youth Government Day:
  - e. Baseball: Jim Jaeger gave a report on New London's baseball team.
  - f. Blood Donor:
  - g. Oratorical Program: Jerome Krofta encouraged the posts to organize competitions this year. The Department program is scheduled for February of 2022.
  - h. SAL Liaison:
13. Commander Zachowitz asked for a motion to approve the District and County Commander Reports, District Committee Chairman Reports and District Program Director Reports. A motion was made and seconded to accept the reports. The motion passed.
14. Commander Zachowitz asked if there was any old business. He then asked for nominations to fill the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander position. David Leder of Iola Post 14 was nominated and seconded. The nomination was approved. Commander Zachowitz asked for nominations for the position of Chaplain. Past Adjutant Arien Herminath was nominated and seconded to serve as Chaplain. The nomination was approved.

15. Commander Zachowitz asked if there was any new business. Several Legionnaires described the various training courses offered at the upcoming Mid-Winter conference. Legionnaires also reported on the next three Department Conventions in Green Bay, Wausau, and Appleton.

16. He then asked for announcements or anything for the good of the American Legion. Post 63 invited the Legionnaires present to visit the New London Veterans Memorial in Taft Park on North Water Street.

17. There being no further business to come before the meeting, Chaplain Herminath gave a closing prayer. The Sergeant-at-Arms retired the POW/MIA banner from the empty chair. Following a salute to the colors, Commander Zachowitz declared the meeting adjourned at 1430 hours.

Arien Herminath,  
Past 8<sup>th</sup> District Adjutant