**DISTRICT 7 CONVENTION**

May 20, 2023 – 9:00 a.m.

Spicer American Legion Post 545

After opening ceremonies, the morning session of the 2023 District 7 Convention was called to order by District 7 Commander Karen Welander. Following opening remarks by Commander Welander, Roll Call was taken by Adjutant Carol Jackson. There were 27 members present and the Commander was advised a quorum was present.

The following special committees were appointed:

**RESOLUTIONS –** Dean Knutson, Don Brehmer, Hal Meyer

**FINANCIAL –** Don Dufner, Cal VanHorn, Garylee Davenport

**TIME & PLACE –** Dave Ecker, Carl Wilson, Sandy Wersal (Auxiliary)

**CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS –** No volunteers. These will be reviewed as a group after lunch

In the absence of the Spicer Post Commander Bill Doty, Chip Manson brought welcoming remarks from

the Spicer Post.

Jim Stock, SAL Squadron Commander, brought greetings. He reported that Marietta has started a SAL Squad. Bellingham expressed interest but they have not met yet and they have no members.

Cdr Welander read a letter from Mike Maxa reminding us that any resolutions need to be sent to the Department Adjutant as soon as possible after our convention. The American Legion works with DAV and the Elks for the Fall deer hunt and the Spring turkey hunt (both held at Camp Ripley) and the rolling Veterans exhibit. Fund 85 is a grant program that awards money to those in financial need. It is not necessary to be a Legion member. It is unique to Minnesota. There is a four-page fillable application on-line. They promise a fast turnaround. The American Legion Foundation serves as the umbrella for funding all programs.

Committee reports were distributed to each post present.

Cdr Karen explained about the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) grant program.

Jan Ekert, District Membership Director, gave an updated membership report. It has been added as an addendum to the printed Committee Reports. June 29 is the packet pickup date. The distribution schedule will be announced at a later date. She noted that 14 posts made or exceeded goal by May 17, 2023.

We are ahead of schedule due to lack of guest speakers so a short recess was called while the special committees met.

Convention reconvened and the Time & Place Committee reported the Mid-Winter Conference will be January 20, 2024 at the New London Post 537. February 3 was designated as a snow date if needed. May 18, 2024 in Morris is tentatively set as the 2024 District Convention.

Victor Gades introduced himself as a candidate for the Department Vice Commander for Districts 2 & 7 for 2023-2024.

Cdr Karen explained that the two Districts take turns serving as Department Vice Commander. (Ryan Hill, Department Vice Commander for 2022-2023, was from District 2) and in 2023-2024 the Department Vice Commander for Districts 2 & 7 will be selected from District 7.

Paul Hassing, candidate for Department Commander year 2023-2024, is running unopposed.

Chuck Stone, candidate for Department Vice Commander for Districts 1 & 3 year 2023-2024, is currently unopposed.

One contested position: Dean Knutson, Joe Tappainer, and Randy Olson are all running for Department Chaplain year 2023-2024.

Christopher Anderson, candidate for Department Historian year 2023-2024, is currently unopposed.

Brad Pagel, candidate for Department Sergeant-at-Arms year 2023-2024, is currently unopposed.

Chip Manson presented the District 7 Historical Membership Numbers Report. He used Post membership numbers from 2016 to 2023 and then projected membership totals into years 2030, 2037 and 2040. If the current trend continues, many of our Posts will be closed by 2040. The Minnesota VA website lists the number of veterans per county. No names or addresses are available but would serve as a reminder that there are veterans out there. We just need to find a way to bring them into the American Legion.

Dean Knutson introduced himself as a candidate for Department Chaplain year 2023-2024.

Victor Gades added to his printed Legionville Committee Report with more info on bus safety. Recently there was a Michigan young man on a school bus who recognized the bus driver appeared to have become unconscious. He was able to stop the bus, saving the passengers from injury, and call for help. Schools need school patrols at school drop-off points. Camporee this Fall is from Sept 7 to 10. The SAL will NOT run it this so they will definitely need help. They are trying to get two representatives from each District to work those days.

Cdr Karen asked if they would consider a camp week for Autistic children or other children with sensory issues where parents would be able to stay with their children.

Financial Audit attached. No discrepancies noted. Motion made and seconded to accept report as written. Motion passed.

Chip Manson is the District 7 Scouting Chair and also serves on the Department Scouting Committee. Dom Claseman, Olivia, was the District 7 Eagle Scout of the Year. He placed 3rd in the Department. Jackson Kramer, Minnesota Department Eagle Scout of the Year, did not win National but he was encouraged to apply again next year (if he was still eligible). Department Scouts Committee increased the scholarship amount to $2000 (Fund 56 Boy Scout Scholarship Fund) starting next year. Fund 81 is the Boy Scout Councils Assistance Fund. This year they awarded $1000 grants to five Minnesota Boy Scout Councils.

Garylee Davenport reported on the Legacy Scholarship Fund run which will begin at North Branch on August 26. The Legacy run has changed this year and will only cover the north half of the state (south half of the state

will be next year) over a four-day period. They will start in North Branch. The Aug 27 overnight stop will be in Walker, Aug 28 overnight will be in Thief Rivers Falls, Aug 29 overnight will be in Moorhead and the ending party will be Aug 30 in Spicer. Checks for contributions must read American Legion Foundation & note Fund 84 in the comments section. Gambling funds can be used. This last year eight Minnesota students got scholarships from the Legacy Fund. Since 9/11 the children of veteran’s who are 50% or more disabled are eligible for 4 years up to $8000. If the veteran died on active duty this increases to $20,000.

John Weiss, candidate for SAL Detachment Commander 2023-2024, introduced himself and spoke about SAL programs.

The Resolutions committee reported back. They considered three resolutions.

D7-2023-1 Resolution for Department National Security & Foreign Relations Committee. Authored by the District 7 Executive Committee. Seeks to change its policy to allow attending District National Security & Foreign Relations Committee Chairs to participate in discussions and voting on the Outstanding Enlisted of the Year selection. The Resolutions Committee recommended it be amended and sent to Department. Motion made and seconded to amend and forward to Department. Motion passed.

D7-2023-2 Special Committee Be Established to Study MN Department District Boundaries & Recommendations to Realign and/or Combine Districts. Authored by the District 7 Executive Committee. Seeks to have the Department of Minnesota establish a Department Realignment Committee to study and report on potential realignment/elimination of current District boundaries. The Resolutions Committee recommended it be passed and sent to Department. Motion made and seconded to pass and forward to Department. Motion passed.

D7-2023-3 Resolution to Change/Modify District & Department of Minnesota Constitution and By-Laws. Authored by the District 7 Executive Committee. Seeks to have Minnesota Constitution and By-Laws amended to provide appropriate options that allow District and Department DECs to address serious situations faced at Posts, Districts & Department levels. The Resolutions Committee recommended it be amended and sent to Department. Motion made and seconded to amend and forward to Department. Motion passed.

11:20 Recessed for Joint Memorial Service followed by lunch.

12:45 Convention reconvened.

By-laws and Constitution changes as printed on the District 7 web site were approved.

Pins were given to those posts that contributed to the Pheasant Dinner. Litchfield and Cosmos received two pins each because they had contributed $500 to the dinner.

Jon Olson, Willmar Post 167, is on the Department Committee for the Pheasant dinners. He said that the pheasants are purchased from a place in Princeton and shipped frozen to the places having the dinners. He said the Pheasant fund is doing okay for now but he welcomes monetary donations to the fund.

Each year the District Commander has an opportunity to name an Area Vice Commander of the District. This year Rueben Nathe was chosen. He received a certificate and a monetary award.

Wanda Seidler, American Legion Auxiliary District 7 President for 2022-2023, welcomed our group.

Jan Ekert, 7th District Membership Director for 2022-2023, presented certificates to those Posts that made 100% or more of their goal.

Department of Minnesota had a special District Post of the Year program this year. Each District Commander was asked to identify three Posts to receive the awards (small, medium & large-sized posts). Receiving these awards were: Litchfield Post 104, Franklin Post 308 and Spicer Post 545. Cdr Karen stressed that different criteria was used to make the selection so it was not necessarily the largest Post or the highest percentage of goal – but what those posts were doing in their local communities to promote our American Legion pillars.

According to District 7 By-Laws the outgoing Commander, the incoming Commander, and the Adjutant are automatic delegates to the National Convention. The Adjutant indicated that she would not be going to the National Convention. We are allowed five delegates and five alternates. The top three delegate nominees will join outgoing Commander Welander and incoming Commander Ekert as delegates. The remaining will be alternate delegates. Post-Endorsed delegates are: Chip Manson, Keith Seidler, Garylee Davenport, Carl Wilson, Victor Gades, Dean Knutson, and Hal Meyer. Ballots were distributed. Dave Ecker and Cal VanHorn tallied the votes. Based on number of votes received Chip Manson, Garylee Davenport and Hal Meyer are the Delegates to the 2023 National Convention. Alternates, in descending order, are Victor Gades, Keith Seidler, Carl Wilson and Dean Knutson.

Nominations for 2023-2024 District Officers were:

Commander – Jan Ekert nominated. Nominations ceased.

Vice Commander at Large – Carl Wilson nominated. Nominations ceased.

Area A Vice Commander – Pete Flannery, Morris Post, nominated. Nominations ceased.

Area B Vice Commander – Don Brehmer, Benson Post, nominated. Nominations ceased.

Area C Vice Commander – Rueben Nathe, Litchfield Post, nominated. Nominations ceased.

Area D Vice Commander – John Jones, Echo Post, nominated. Nominations ceased.

Sergeant at Arms – Keith Seidler, Spicer Post, nominated. Nominations ceased.

Historian – Victor Gades, Prairie Post 1998, nominated. Nominations ceased.

Chaplain – Dave Ecker, Browns Valley Post, nominated. Nominations ceased.

Finance Officer – Chip Manson, Spicer Post, nominated.

Don Dufner, Watkins Post, nominated. Nominations ceased.

Ballots were distributed. Once again Dave Ecker and Cal VanHorn tallied the votes with Chip Manson declared the winner.

Jan Ekert left due to a medical issue.

The remainder of the District Officers are appointed by the incoming Commander and will be named later (due to incoming-Commander Ekert’s departure).

Bill Barbknecht, current NECman and candidate for NEC 2023-2024 & 2024-2025, spoke to our group. He stressed “Be the One” and the importance of buddy checks. Face-to-face interaction is key. There will be no dues increase this year, but he is sure it will be talked about at the National Convention. New are 3-year memberships which would lock in the membership fee for three years. $29,000 in scholarships were distributed from the Legacy Fund. The scholarships pay for the remaining tuition. A reminder about the $5000 Accidental Death from the Legion Insurance Trust (LIT) and available travel protection for $114. National Convention next year will be in New Orleans. A last-minute bill that seriously limits e-Tabs is currently being considered by the Legislature.

Dean Knutson installed the officers listed above (except incoming-Commander Ekert and any officers she selects to fill her by-appointment positions). These officers will need to be installed before they can begin their designated duties.

Following closing prayer by Dave Ecker, colors were retired in place and the 2023 District Convention was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/Carol Jackson, District 7 Adjutant