

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
DETACHMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS
DETACHMENT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
September 18, 2021 – Bedford, MA

The First meeting of the 2021-2022 Detachment Executive Committee was called to order Saturday, September 18, 2021, at the Anthony-Hunt-Hamilton Post #221 in Bedford, Massachusetts.

Commander Gene Theroux (124) called the meeting to order at 10:14AM with a salute to the Colors, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by DVC Justin Foley (185), invocation and Preamble to the Constitution by Adjutant William Murphy (297).

Commander Theroux welcomed all to the Bedford post for the first official meeting of the year and looked forward to the productive events of the day.

Commander called on Adjutant Murphy for the Roll Call of Officers...

COMMANDER – Gene Theroux (124) – Present

VICE COMMANDER – James Blake (315) – Present

VICE COMMANDER – Justin Foley (185) – Present

VICE COMMANDER – Jason Kelley (40) – Present

ADJUTANT – William Murphy (297) – Present

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT – Brian O’Hearne (273) – Absent

FINANCE OFFICER – Mark McCue (443) – Excused – family commitment

CHAPLAIN – William Sheehan (22) – Excused – Dept Exec. Comm. Meeting

HISTORIAN – Eric Volk (124) – Present

SGT AT ARMS – Brian Willette (236) – Excused

ASSISTANT SGT AT ARMS – Josh Willette (236) – Excused

ASSISTANT SGT AT ARMS – Zach Willette (236) – Excused
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN – William Murphy (297) – Present
ALT. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN – William Sheehan (22) – Excused
JUDGE ADVOCATE – Jesse Limanek (414) – Excused
PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER – Clifford Smith (106) – Excused – sqd. Event
DEPT ADVISOR (CHAIRMAN) – William Chisholm – Excused – Dept Exec Comm
DEPT ADVISOR – Raymond Samko – Excused – Dept. Exec. Comm
DEPT ADVISOR – Drew Pajak – Present
PAST DETACHMENT COMMANDERS – William Murphy, David Johnson
IMMEDIATE PAST DET, CMDR – Ernest LaBerge (224) – Present via phone
DISTRICTS – 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10

After Roll Call a quorum was declared.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

FINANCE –

Per Finance Officer McCue, as transfer of books not completely completed, a finance report is not yet available.

AMERICANISM – Chairman Ernie Laberge

- On 8/17/21 I received word from the Department Chairperson Sandra Kee that she was going to be holding most meetings on Zoom or Teams in an effort to have more chairman attend the meetings. At this time no schedule of meetings has been sent out to committee members.
- On 8/18/21 I received word from Current Sons National Americanism Commission Chairman Don Hall Jr. that most awards will now be decided by the National Organization and that only the Scrapbook and History Book judging's will be handled by the commission.
- JR Hall also let me know at this time that he was moving on to a different position and would no longer be the Chairman of the National Americanism Commission. No other information was given at this time.

- As an FYI my time on the National Americanism Commission is completed as of the National Convention.
- At this time, I have not received anything new from the new chairman or members of the National Americanism Commission to report on.

COMMUNITY SERVICE – Chairman Gene Theroux

The 2021-2022 program year is well underway. It's a good time to remind the squadrons that community service is at the very heart of The American Legion's core beliefs and an integral part of the Preamble to the Constitution of the Legion, the Sons of The American Legion, and of the Auxiliary, "**...to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community state and nation...**"

The American Legion recognizes that the community is an important part of our American way of life and in many communities the Legion Post takes a leadership role in community betterment.

Many Americanism programs start at the community level, engaging youth in such programs as American Legion Baseball, Scouting, and flag education.

Squadrons are reminded of the need to work on awards throughout the year. The George "Al White" award is a monthly award which Squadrons are eligible for consideration. However, all submissions must go through the Post and be endorsed by the Post Adjutant and the Post Commander.

There has not been an announcement of the scheduled Department Community Service Committee meetings as of this date. There have been three George "Al" White submissions received by the Department Community Service chairman since the Department Convention. What has been received is one each submission for the months of June, July, and August 2021. A second reminder for squadrons to work on community service awards throughout the year.

The Community Service Awards information is available on the Department webpage, [Department Programs](#) page - then select the specific award under Community Service.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH – Chairman Jason Foley

The children & youth committee has not had a scheduled call or meeting since convention. And there is not one scheduled with the department committee as of today's date (9/16/21) I will be reaching out to DVC key Department C&Y Committee Chair to see when our next meeting will be. I will also be getting on a zoom call or phone conference with National when they have their next call

BOY SCOUTS – Chairman Jay Scheder (No Report Received)

Commander Theroux encouraged more squadrons to support local Boy Scout troops.

COMMANDER'S PROJECT – Chairman Mark McCue

I am honored to have been selected by our Detachment Commander Gene Theroux to work with squadrons this year to make the Commander's Charitable Project a success. Commander Theroux has chosen The American Legion Veteran and Children's Foundation as his charity.

The American Legion Veterans & Children's Foundation delivers needed aid for military and veteran parents who face unexpected financial hardships that threaten the stability of their homes. One-time Temporary Financial Assistance grants are used to cover housing, utilities, food and other basic needs for families with minor children at home. The American Legion Veterans & Children's Foundation also trains the organization's army of accredited service officers who at any one time are continuously working more than 750,000 benefits claims for disabled veterans and their families, free of charge.

We are asking every Squadron to dedicate a weekend between September- 2021 and May-2022 as the "Commanders Project Weekend", and on this weekend hold an event or events to raise money to help support our veterans and their families through The American Legion Veterans and Children's Foundation. All squadrons that participate in this year's project will be recognized for their efforts at our Detachment Convention in Marlborough this June. The Squadron that makes the largest donation to the Commander's Project will be recognized and awarded the very prestigious Commander's Award, a travelling perpetual award that can be displayed at their Post during the 2022-2023 membership year and have their squadrons name and number engraved alongside the previous award recipients.

Actions taken to date:

1. Produced a solicitation letter explaining the project accompanied by a donation form.
2. Sent by United States Postal Service a copy of solicitation letter and donation form to every squadron.
3. Developed a Commander's Project page on our web site.

Planned future actions:

1. Develop a package to assist detachment officers in promoting the project during squadron visitations.

Further promote the project through email, newsletter article and social media.

BOYS STATE – Chairman William Murphy

The 76th Session of the American Legion Massachusetts Boys State program was held on June 12-28 at Stonehill Collage in Easton, Massachusetts. Given the pandemic, attendance was smaller than previous years but very well received by delegates who became engaged immediately. The final total for 2021 was 153 delegates, several of those sponsored by Sons of The American Legion squadrons as well a 2 by the Detachment of Massachusetts. The first that we sponsored was from Gardner High School in honor of the election of Michael Nicholson (a member of Squadron 129 as well as a Boys State Counselor) as Mayor of Gardner. The second was sponsored in honor of Robert Johnson of Groton, who passed away in 2019. Bob was the primary advocate for the reactivation of Squadron 55 as well as several years as the Department Oratorical Committee. Unfortunately, the Groton-Dunstable High School could not find another nominee, but a student was sponsored from Gardner High School.

This year was also a first. 4 Boys Staters from Massachusetts attended American Legion Boys Nation in Washington, DC, as 14 states did not have a program so a lottery was held to fill the open seats so 100 boys would still attend the program. Both of our 2 alternate choices had special roles. One was elected President Pro-Temp of the Senate and received a \$1000 scholarship from National Commander Clint Bolt, and the other was selected by lottery to be one of the 2 wreath layers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

Next years session will be held again at Stonehill College from June 11-17, 2020.

My next report will give highlights from an upcoming meeting as I will be representing Massachusetts at the Boys' State Directors conference in Indianapolis in 2 weeks.

POW/MIA – Chairman Ray Samko (Excused)

PDC Laberge reported that this year's ceremony unfortunately was cancelled at the Chester P. Tuttle Post 279 in Auburn due to unforeseen circumstances completing the construction of the new building. Next year's ceremony is scheduled to take place at the Holyoke War Memorial, and the following year a possible location on the South Shore. He also encouraged squadrons to promote the POW/MIA Remembrance table campaign at local businesses.

SCHOLARSHIP – Chairman Mark McCue

The 2021 recipients of the \$1000.00 Detachment Scholarship awards are as follows.

Joe Gonsalves Squadron 106 - The Clifford Smith Scholarship

Joseph Grow Squadron 78 - The John Smolinsky Scholarship

Anthony Pasquarosa Squadron 440 - The Brian O'Hearne Scholarship

All have received their awards.

The 2022 scholarship program is just getting started.

Actions taken to date:

1. The new paperwork and application for 2022 have been drawn up and posted to the web site.

Planned future actions:

1. Overhaul current scholarship page on web site.
2. E mail 2022 scholarship information and application to entire detachment contact list.

CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION – Chairman Clifford Smith (Excused)

Commander Theroux reported that Massachusetts was the winner of the award for the highest per-capita donation for the Eastern Region at national convention. Adjutant Murphy reported the final total for 2021 donations was \$317,191.00, of that \$5445 was from Massachusetts, or \$1.15 per member!

MEMBERSHIP – Chairman Justin Foley

The 2021-2022 membership year is almost at the end of the first quarter. There is a total of 644 members who have renewed their dues from 45 of 132 active squadrons who have remitted dues either through the Department or through MyLegion.org. The first 2021-2022 National target date of 15 September for 10% membership. The Detachment with only 34% of the squadrons having submitted dues, the Detachment is at 11.53% membership for 2021-2022 membership. The National organization has sent out the 1st reminder notice to those members who have not paid their 2021-2022 dues and those reminders should be arriving in the next few days. Among the 45 squadrons who have submitted membership, a few of them have already exceeded 100% membership for the 2021 - 2022 Year. This is simply awesome! On behalf of the Detachment membership team, I'd like to congratulate the following Squadrons for meeting or exceeding 100% membership thus far; United Forces Squadron 351 (Holyoke) at 105.88%, West Boylston Squadron 204 at 115.38%, Morrisette Squadron 294 at 101.04% with 127 members – this is leading by example! Department Senior Vice Commander Sally Nay has distributed a spreadsheet identifying the active and inactive squadrons (squadrons associated to a Post with a dormant SAL charter). The objective is to activate these inactive charters by having at least one eligible individual to become a member of that squadron and to promote being a “Proud Possessor of a Priceless Heritage.”. Of those 644 paid members, 65 of them are “dual-members”. Detachment Commander Theroux recommends that a “dual-member” of a Post/Squadron be assigned as the Legion advisor to the squadron – The Sons of The American Legion is a program of The American Legion and having a “dual-member” who can attend both the Legion and Sons meeting will help to ensure effective communication and help to better serve our Veterans and programs of The American Legion in the community. The next national target date is 14 October 2021 with a goal of 25% membership. The Detachment membership theme is “Massachusetts – Where it all began on April 19, 1775”. Detachment commander Theroux believes that if we build off our rich history from where our liberty and freedom as citizens began from the battles of Lexington and Concord, and to carry that proud and rich legacy forward to Recruit, Retain, and to Reinstate fellow comrades to be Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage. The Detachment membership team is continuing to work 2020-2021 membership as the membership team works the 2021-2022 membership. The Detachment of Massachusetts is currently ranked 38th nationally in membership at 88.90% goal and 621 members short of meeting the 100% goal for 2020- 2021. Remember, Membership is Everyone’s Responsibility and is the lifeblood of our American Legion family.

Commander Theroux presented 3 certificates to members of the Bedford Squadron with 25 years continuous membership.

LEGISLATIVE – Jim Blake – Chairman

S. 544: Buddy Check Week Act of 2021

Bill Status: Referred to Veterans Affairs Committee 6/23/21

Committee Staff sent out emails indicating they wish to bring it soon which will allow it to move to the Senate Floor for a vote without going through a committee mark. Legislative staff is communicating with HVAC staff to express the Bill [S. 544] to ensure it is included in a 9/22/2021 HVAC Suicide Prevention Hearing.

S. 1040: VA Access for WWII Veterans bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care to include veterans of World War 2.

Bill Status: awaiting scheduling for a vote on the Senate Floor

H.R. 3967: Honoring our PACT Act 2021. Bill will put toxic-exposed veterans into Priority Group 6 for obtaining VA health care services. The VA would be required to provide specialized medical exams & opinions for certain veterans with toxic exposure disability claims.

Bill status: Reported out 14-11 of HVA committee. Out to full House.

H.R. 1836: Guard & Reserve GI Bill Parity Act 2021

Bill Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Economic.

Being held up on the cost of the Bill.

Troops to Teachers Reauthorization

Bill Status: Current language in Senate NDAA authorization, sent to House Armed Services Committee demanding Troops to Teachers reauthorization in NDAA.

CONVENTION – Chairman Smith (Excused)

Commander Theroux reported the Detachment receive the award for the highest donation in the eastern region for the Legacy Scholarship fund. It was also noted the changes of the dates for the convention to 24 & 25, 2022. Be sure to contact the Convention Committee early when the notice of rooms becomes available.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS – Chairman Clifford Smith (Excused)

Adjutant Murphy reported the Detachment has submitted its formal application for National Commander Michael Fox to visit for the Detachment Convention.

PARTNERSHIP FOR KIDS – Chairman Clifford Smith (Excused)

ANEC Sheehan reported the Detachment has confirmed a scheduled date of March 26, 2022, as the date reserved with Union Lanes in Holbrook for the 11th Annual Partnership for Kids Bowling Tournament. It was brought to our attention this date may be the same as a scheduled date for a legion Appreciation Day. This will be reviewed and a update presented at the next meeting.

MEDIA/COMMUNICATIONS – Chairman Mark McCue (Excused)

Vice Chairman Theroux reported for the website...There have been a significant number of updates to the SALMASS.ORG website in the last few weeks. Updates accomplished included the following pages: Detachment Officers, Executive Committee, Committee Chairman, Detachment Membership Information, Commander's Project, and others.

The SALMASS.ORG website is a Phase V system which fully supports the delegation of providing privileges to those who are program managers such as "Americanism". A

program manager can be provided permissions to maintain a specific page to keep content current on programs they're designated by the Detachment to be responsible for. I have previously recommended and encouraged that we begin to use our designated program managers to begin maintaining content on the SALMASS.ORG website. This will provide several benefits such as **mentoring, depth and continuity** we work the programs. Most importantly, it provides further committee chairmen to update their content independently of the website administrator.

We have begun using content managers and will continue to encourage other program chairmen to participate. I'd be more than happy to provide training to those who ask.

We've begun distributing to the program managers organizational email accounts from the SALMASS.ORG domain accompanied with credentials and a link to the Help documentation at Legionsites.com.

I will be looking to acquire portrait photos of Detachment Officers, Committee Chairs, and others for the website.

And for social media...

The Detachment Facebook Page has had numerous posts published since the Detachment Convention. Most recent posts include events from the 49th National Convention of The Sons of The American Legion. Among the Facebook Posts from the National Convention were a recorded video of the presentation of Isaiah French receiving the Marvin P. Nay Veterans Employment and Education Outstanding Contributor Award, and of the Detachment being presented CWF Certificate of Recognition for achieving and exceeding the \$ 1.00 per-capita in the Detachment, and the National Sons of The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund Donation award for achieving the highest donation for the Eastern Region for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund during the 2020-2021 year. Other posts included sharing of information from the National organization, promoting American Legion programs, and to promote membership.

Past Detachment Commander Mark McCue and I continue to collaborate, and we work well together. We both serve on the National Public and Media Communications Commission together.

We would like to remind squadrons that they are encouraged to send us material suitable for publishing to the Detachment Facebook page. If photos are provided, we request identifying information such as, "Who, What, Where and When" and a descriptive narrative so that we may fully describe the event or the achievement(s).

I would encourage Squadrons to submit photographs and narratives of their activities.

DEPARTMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Advisor Drew Pajak

The Department Advisory Committee in conjunction with the Detachment Finance Committee has worked to bring the Detachment inline with the Department, that all expense requests (WITH REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION) must be filed quarterly. This includes mileage requests for squadron events, postage, etc. Every expense must have supportive documentation.

A motion was made by Adjutant Murphy and seconded by Vice Commander Foley to accept these committee reports as ones in progress with the exception of any items that may require votes under new business. Motion CARRIED.

OFFICERS REPORTS:

COMMANDER: Gene Theroux (124)

I was both honored and humbled to be installed as the Detachment Commander on June 5, 2021, at the Detachment Convention. It's been a busy summer thus far with a lot of events scheduled in the next couple of weeks.

- I attended Legion Day at Stonehill College on Sunday, June 13, 2021. I had an opportunity to speak that evening to the attendees of the 2021 American Legion Boys State and The American Legion Auxiliary Girls State programs.

- On Saturday, June 20, 2021, I traveled to Quincy to attend the opening day of the Department of Massachusetts American Legion Baseball tournament.
- On Tuesday, June 22, 2021, I was on the Eastern Regional monthly call and provided the Detachment of Massachusetts update.
- On June 24, 2021, the first issue of the Minuteman newsletter was published. Previously, the Detachment newsletter was known as the Locomotive in Honor and memory of Past Detachment Commander Marvin Nay. The Minuteman contained articles highlighting events from the Detachment Convention.
- I attended the Detachment Transition Meeting held on July 10, 2021, at the Cherry Valley Post 443. During the meeting, I briefed and outlined the 2022 Detachment goals with emphasis on team building, continuity, depth, and developing our younger members into leadership positions.
- During the month of July and early August, I managed numerous projects in the city of Westfield for the restoration and conservation of numerous war monuments such as the General William Shepard bronze sculpture, the Grand Army of the Republic Lyon Post 41 Civil War zinc sculpture, bronze plaques at the 104th Infantry Regiment at Apremont Park, bronze plaques at Parker Memorial Park, and the Civil War monument at Park Square in downtown Westfield. The work was done over four weeks at a value of \$ 56,000.
- On Tuesday, July 27, 2021, I was on the Eastern Regional monthly call and provided the Detachment of Massachusetts update.
- I traveled to the Malden Post 69 to accomplish the installation of the Malden Squadron 69 officers and commander on Saturday, August 1st, 2021. The mayor of Malden, Gary Christenson is eligible for membership, and I worked on him to be a member of the Sons, his father is a Vietnam combat veteran (I followed up with him, but to my knowledge, he is not a member as of yet (I was going to pay his per capita)). Later in the day, I spoke with OC about the September 18th Detachment Executive Committee meeting and coordinating on having
- On Saturday, August 21, 2021, I traveled to the Vernon Hill Post 435 to attend the Department POW/MIA meeting.
- On August 24th, the Westfield Post 124 American Legion Baseball teams (The Squadron sponsors two team, Junior and Senior teams) held its end of season party. Each player was presented American Legion Baseball participation certificates and each member of the coaching staff was presented an American Legion Certificate of Appreciation for their volunteerism and helping to shape the young men in a core program of The American Legion Americanism program.
- I participated in a 104th Fighter Wing back to school event held at Barnes Air National Guard Base on Wednesday evening, August 25, 2021. I was there to provide information on Scholarship opportunities from The American Legion Family.

- I traveled to The Sons of The American Legion's 49th National Convention held on August 27-29, 2021, in Phoenix, AZ. The Detachment was recognized with receiving a certificate of appreciation for contributing more than one dollar per member for per capita. In addition, the Detachment was recognized for the highest donations in the Eastern Region. Squadron 189 member Isaiah French was the recipient of the Marvin P. Nay VE&E outstanding contributor award. Numerous photos and video were recorded of the presentation and published in both social medial sites such as the National and Detachment sites and published both in E-Legionnaire and in the Vets News.
- On Friday evening September 10, 2021, I attended the 9/11 candlelight vigil hosted by The South Hadley Falls Post 260 held at the South Hadley public library.
- On September 8, 2021, Issue 2 of the Minuteman newsletter was published, distributed via MailChimp, published to the SALMASS.ORG website and a Facebook Post to the Detachment Facebook page. The Minuteman newsletter had articles highlighting events from the 49th National Convention of The Sons of The American Legion.
- I Saturday, September 11, 2021, I attended a total of four events, the 9/11 event at the town of Southwick Fire Station, followed by participating in the town of Ludlow Day of Service hosted by the Ludlow VSO at the historic Center Street Cemetery, followed by participating in the Post 124 family Honor Guard at the Sons of Erin 9/11 ceremony, and concluding with the Vietnam Veterans Chapter 219 candlelight POW/MIA vigil at Parker Memorial Park.
- I traveled to the Dalton-LaVallee Post 224 in Easthampton on Thursday, September 16, 2021, to accomplish the installation of the squadron officers.
- I attended Military Day at the Big-E on Friday, September 17, 2021, and spent the day at the Connecticut Building along the avenue of states to assist with an American Legion family information booth and recruiting effort for The American Legion family.

I have been in almost daily contact with the National Staff Internal Affairs with updates to membership, membership renewal rates, CWF, Commission updates and other content for the national organization's website. I will then update the Detachment's website as appropriate from changes received from the National organization.

VICE COMMANDER – Jason Kelley (40)

July 18 I met up with Alan Earls of Franklin Post 75, we talked about getting more members into his squadron, which he has been trying to do, mentioned to him about dual members was not sure if he could get Legion members to be dual members. He did say the Legion was going through the process of starting an Auxiliary unit started

On July 22 I attended the District 9 meeting in Swansea. We were going speak about S.A.L. membership but never happened.

On August 23 I was talking to Sara from Duxbury through Facebook messenger about starting a Squadron there. Sara said that she would bring that up at the next Legion meeting.

I took a ride to the Wareham post but it is not open all the time. I called the Post and left a message and never got a return phone call. My plan of attack is to go to other posts that have inactive charters and see if I can get them up and running again. Not sure how accurate the report is that was Emailed to me.

That is my report

VICE COMMANDER – Justin Foley (185)

VICE COMMANDER – James Blake (315)

Vice Commander's Visitation Log:

June 13th – attended Boys State at Stonehill College

June 14th – attended Flag Retirement Ceremony at Post 315 in Dracut

July 3rd – attended the District 2 Installation of Officers at Orange Post 172

July 24th & 25th – attended the Massachusetts American Legion Baseball Tournament

July 31st – attended the Squadron Installation at Malden Post 69

August 14th – attended the Mass. American Legion Baseball All Star Game at Brandeis

September 11 – attended the District 4 American Legion meeting at Paxton Post 306

September 11 – attended 911 Ceremony in Palmer (District 3)

Sept 17th – worked the Legion Family booth at the Big E in West Springfield

ADJUTANT/NEC – William Murphy (297)

At this time I have not received access to the Detachment's membership information on MyLegion. I have contacted the Liaison's office at National Headquarters to complete this conversion.

Unfortunately was unable to attend the recent National Convention in Phoenix due to COVID. However, at that time was honored to represent the Detachment at a memorial vigil for USMC Sgt. Johanny Rosario of Lawrence recently killed in Afghanistan.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Letter of Thanks from Past National Vice Commander Gary Nelson (NJ) in appreciation for his visit to our Detachment Convention.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

Adjutant Murphy moved the Detachment Expend \$110 in full page ads at testimonials honoring Department President Cynthia Kelley and Department Commander Tony Dias. Seconded by Vice Commander Foley. Motion carried.

GOOD OF THE SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION:

With no further business to come before the meeting, Commander Theroux called for benediction and salute to colors. Meeting adjourned.

NEXT MEETING: Saturday, November 6, 2021, at 10AM at Dracut Post 315.