The American Legion – Department of California
1601 7th Street, Sanger, CA 93657
(P) 559-875-8387 (F) 559-272-5157
Virtual DEC

DEC October 27, 2026, 6:00 p.m. Minutes

Janice Somers
Department Commander
Michael Smith
Department Adjutant (I)

Called to order at 6:05pm by: Department Commander, Janice Somers

Advancement of Colors by: Department Sgt at Arms, Michael Smith

Invocation by: Department Assistant Chaplain, Dr. Jack Evanilla

Pow/MIA by: Department Sgt at Arms, Michael Smith

Pledge of Allegiance led by: Area 4 Vice Commander, Dave Fuller

Preamble led by: Area 5 Vice Commander, Vic Martin

Roll call by: Department Adjutant (I), Michael Smith

Quorum declared by: Department Commander, Janice Somers

Introduction of Distinguished guests: Not conducted

Agenda adopted – Changes to agenda: Commander Somers No distinguished guest introduction until in person meeting, moving Commission and Committee ratifications and Committee and Commissions report after finance report. Motion made by Commander Somers entertained motion to accept changes to Agenda. Motion made by District 3 Commander Marj Goosey, second made by District 21 Commander Al Mendoza. Commander Somers asked for discussion. No discussion. Agenda adopted unanimously.

Reports

FINANCE

Current balance for all accounts is $2,292,028.00

Working on closing 2025-2026 fiscal year. Unable to reconcile due to bank reconciliations have been forced. There is $46,000 in uncleared transactions going from 2022 to 2025. Researching printed checks why they weren't sent out, if they were replaced. Most are membership income to Posts and Squadrons and DEC payments due to Vice Commanders. Only one large bill come in recently for $2000 for Worker Comp premium. The policy renews November 17, up $250 from last year, likely due to a claim against it. Normally if no claims, insurance stays the same. CPA is filing extension to complete reconciliation to make sure 2025-2026 books are clean. No questions. Comment made from District 21 Commander Al Mendoza commended Finance Officer for working at Sanger, commented on budget not being passed at last convention with a $250,000 deficit that has not been reconciled. No budget to date. As Finance Chair has not held a meeting due to this. Commander Somers clarified many issues stemmed from being able to change names with Secretary of State which has now been approved and now we can move forward with gaining access to all accounts. We will be meeting with Rusanne Anthony, Larry VanKuren and you on Sunday, November 1, 2026 at 3pm and you will call a Finance meeting after. Comment made from Jr Past Commander Brambila in his opinion a bottle neck exists at Department. Asked if there is any help that is needed. Finance Officer responded no help is needed. Working on getting office in order. District 21 Commander made further comment regarding if money exists to pay bills. District 12 First Vice Commander Pete Saminego made point of order. If funds are allocated for these purposes and the way the money is being spent, shouldn't that take a vote of the blue caps. Why are we spending money. Commander Somers clarified only bills are being paid. Nothing extra. Not sponsoring other events. Money exists to pay bills and salaries. District 20 Commander

Steve Ramirez pointed out if we do appreciate the work of Ms. Anthony let her do her job. Keep voices down and civil. We will get to the end result.

APPROVAL OF MINTUES FROM OCTOBER 2, 2026 DEC

Correction of Area 1 Vice Commander Phil Cazella to Area 2 Vice Commander noted by District 1 Commander Kennedy Cooper. No further additions/corrections were made. Minutes were accepted with corrections.

COMMANDERS REPORT

Makenna and Carolina have been a big help to us. They will be invited to convention. Please thank them. For the last month they have helped. Thanked Larry Maggio, Rusanne Anthony, Chris Yates and Mike Smith for helping with transition. Larry Maggio and I went to Sanger Police Department on Thursday and filed charges against Sam Flores and Veronica Crystal Rangel. Will keep you posted on developments.

COMMISSION'S AND COMMITTEE'S

Ratification of changes for Committee's:

Artificial Intelligence ratify Phil Cazella as member, remove Janet Wilson as Chair, ratify Phil Cazella as Chair. Commander asked if all could be ratified. Parliamentarian Devries recommended can try.

District 21 Commander Al Mendoza motioned to approve changes. Second made by District 2 Commander Zachariah Van Cleave. Vote passed.

Convention Committee remove David Brambilla as TA and ratify James Higuera as TA.

District 4 Commander Ryan Bellflower made motion. Seconded by PDC David Brambila. Vote passed unanimously.

Membership ratify Manny Vital as TA.
District 18 Sam Cafiero made motion. Seconded by Area 4 Vice Commander David Fuller. Vote passed unanimously.

Ratification of changes for Commission's:

Americanism ratify John Aldridge as TA. Motion made by District 21 Al Mendoza. Seconded by District 30 Commander Kenneth Gregory. Vote passed unanimously.

American Legion Baseball, administrative change to Sheldon Scarber to Kyle Scarber. No motion needed.

Boys and Girls State remove Frank Flores as Area 4 Commissioner. Ratify Cesar DeLeon as Area 4 Commissioner. Motion made by District 18 Sam Cafiero. Seconded by District 21 Commander Al Mendoza. Vote passed unanimously.

District 1 Commander Kennedy Copper motioned to:

FINANCE
REMOVE BARBARA JUNG LOWW AS AREA 3 COMMISSIONER
RATIFY CHRIS WENZINGER AREA 3 COMMISSIONER
RATIFY STEVE TRAVALI AS TA

INTERNAL AFFAIRS
REMOVE JOHN ALDRIDGE AS TA
RATIFY ERIC MEASLES AS TA

MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS
RATIFY JD BENNETT AS TA

ORATORICAL
REMOVE GIL SOTO AS AREA 4 COMMISSIONER
RATIFY KATHY CASH AS AREA 4 COMMISSIONER

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT
RATIFY JEFF JEWEL AS TA

WAYS & MEANS (p10)
REMOVE CHRIS HOFFMAN AS AREA 3 COMMISSIONER
RATIFY CORY WATTENBARGER AS AREA 3 COMMISSIONER

Seconded by District 21 Commander Al Mendoza. Voice vote conducted. Unable to determine outcome of vote. Roll call vote conducted. Motion passed 29 yes. 4 no. Motion passed.

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Parliamentarian asked if changes to D.E.C. Operating Rules could be shared. Technical issues with Adjutant computer. Commander moved to Membership report until issues were resolved. Parliamentarian report was not addressed due to unforeseen circumstance.

COMMITTEES AND COMMISSION REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP

Membership Director Brambilla congratulated all for making quota of 55% last Friday (October 23, 2026). Exceed and were at 61%. Next milestone is Veterans Day and need to make 65%. 2nd Quarter of fiscal year District are to have a revitalization done between October 1 and December 1. We have 3 or 4 that have done it. Make sure to get them done by deadline. Will continue to monitor and call. Will rely on membership and membership team. Need to work membership every day. Recruit and maintain. Having a meeting with 1st Vice Commanders on 3rd Wednesday of each month at 1800 hours. Have had 2 meetings already. Last meeting was about 50% in attendance. Congratulations to Area 6 who is in first place. National sent out reminders for renewal on October 3, 2026. Should be hitting mailboxes by next week. This should help out. Area 5 Caucus presentation of donation. History of how we got there. April 26 DEC approved American Income Life to offer free benefit. Approved 3 mailings. The mailing was protected and addresses never went

to America Life. American Income life donated $26,831. Commander Somers has two checks that total that amount.

Membership Director Brambilla motioned that $26,831 be designated funds towards membership. Area 5 Vice Commander Vic Martin seconded. Parliamentarian advised there may be issues with money going to Membership. Judge Advocate advised the money belongs to the Department right now and discussing allocating it. Not an outflow but an allocation. Believes falls under the 4-hour notice before we can review and vote on it. It has been brought forward. It should be circulated and should come up at up at the next DEC for vote. Discussion was held. Roll call vote was held. 24 no. 7 yes. 4 abstain. Motion failed.

WAYS AND MEANS

Chair Chuck Camarato. Budget for VSO program for the Department is $640,000 for the year. Ways and means tasked with $75,000. Roughly 10% of the $640,000. Majority of that funding comes from per capita.

All money raised by the fundraisers goes to the VSO Program to offset the costs. Let the members in your areas where the money goes. We have two fundraisers this year. Sweepstakes and the 69 Camaro, all of the raised money goes to the VSO Program and nothing else.

Couple of programs in line. What are you doing for everyone else.

Fall sweepstakes. Remind members through email or meetings. Support the sweepstakes. Send in what you can.

69 Camaro. Tried to come up with a program for District. Districts will get $1500 to top, $1000 to second, and $500 to third, that go out and raise funds. Sent out flyers to every District. Each district has its own QR code and it is tracked. Promote it in your District. This will determine who came in what place. Will award the Checkered flag to be presented at the Spring DEC. You will see other prizes coming out, but they do not target your District QR code. Die cast model or inflatable pumpkin. They do not target the District QR code.

CKB trust fund grant. $10,000 grant to each applicant who apply. At present only 2 Posts have asked for packet. Last year 3 Posts and Department were received the 10k grant. Simple process. Trust left by wealthy veteran. 2 main points. One, whatever post or other entity that applies, taxes done and legitimate bank statement. Applicants will be vetted by trust. Second, must be a bonified program conducted at the Post. For example, my Post runs bicycle program. 2 bikes per month to Navy Elementary school as part of their award program. That is the program my Post uses to write it up. Can not be a pass through program. Can not receive the money and in turn give it to Toys for Tots. Will not allow a third party program. Grants will be awarded in December.

Questions held for presentation to ALRDOC Director for award from Veterans and Children Foundation.

Commander Somers recognized ALRDOC Program for reaching Diamond Level of donation to the Veterans and Children's Foundation. $100,100+ in donations. Plaque was received at Department Headquarters. Director Wenzinger made note of Legacy Run Chair Rochelle Bilett-Smith being on call and credited her for work in reaching this level. Commander thanked Chair Bilett-Smith for work on Legacy Run.

No questions were asked of Ways and Means Chair Camarato.

AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL COMMISSION

Chair Dave Fuller this year baseball is looking very exciting. November 1, 2025, kicks off our fundraising for baseball. Fund raising event at Winston Cigar Club in San Juan Capistrano this Sunday (November 1, 2026); Rum and cigars. Decembers 1 is deadline for anyone who wants to host 2027 State Baseball tournament. Application is on the website that explains what you need. December 4-6, the Baseball Commission meets to train and will decide on 2027 State Tournament location. Meeting will be held online for those who want to watch. February 2027 the Commission will hold three online trainings, for coaches, on different dates, with 2 back up dates.

FACILITIES

Report submitted by John Hudson and presented by NEC Chris Yates:

It is my recommendation that the Legacy Campaign as it relates to the headquarters renovation be cancelled and the project abandon. The Department Headquarters in Sanger is an unstainable property. On the basis of the forensic audit of expenditures associated with the building by the Department Finance Officer Rusanne Anthony, other than the $689,000 purchase price it appears, based on her research, that we have expended at least an additional $400,000 with Lanco Construction in 2024 for renovation. An additional $110,000 to make the building a safe working environment. This brings our total expenditures to approximately $1,199,000. I believe there may be at least an additional expense of $120,000 to cover any problems that may occur with the facility before we divest it. Additionally a review of the property inspection that was done by All Pro Inspection on April 8, 2015 and was prior to the purchase of the building, noted a large number of deficiency to be corrected, of which the vast majority of that number are yet to be done. We have deferred maintenance on the property basically due to poor facility management, and a lack of follow up on its status. All this indicates the Department does not have the desire or the ability to manage a facility they own.

The current status of the building is best described as functional obsolescence and refers to a reduction in the usefulness of a property due to factors within it, but also its location. It occurs when the building experienced a relative loss of utility due to cost of occupancy, and market conditions that do not warrant additional funding to restore functional usefulness. Functional obsolescence of the building is incurable because the cost to cure the obsolescence exceeds the value benefit of the improvement.

I further recommend, that the goal of the Legacy campaign should be redirected to relocate the Department Headquarters to a leased facility of approximately 2,000 to 3,000 square feet in a city or town that best serves the membership of the department. Furthermore the property in Sanger should be listed and sold as is, with no further expenditures. Unfortunately I believe that the Department will encounter a significant loss in the sale, and possibly expose the Department to a large unpaid balance that would need to be covered for existing loan balances and unpaid expenditures.

District 1 Commander Kennedy asked if would be better if money raised for the Sanger (HQ) building was put toward a new building. Question was unable to be answered due to author of report not present. Commander Somers asked for the question to be presented at the November 17, 2026, DEC meeting.

PDC Van Kuran asked if the company that received money have we investigated the bills, given that a past employee has been brought up on legal charges and they were involved in the remodel of the building. Commander Somers said no but will be looking into this.

PDC Brambila clarified report submitted by John Hudson is his personal opinion, not a recommendation from the committee. Commander Somers responded this is a report, not a recommendation. Facilities should be on November 17, 2026, DEC with a report.

AEROSPACE

Chair Fredrick J. Shacklett submitted electronically.

1. American Legion Aerospace Commission Chairperson Frederick J. Shacklett delivered news to Civil Air Patrol California Wing Representatives about the new CALTAP Program. This presentation took place on August 8, 2026 in Downey during the Columbia Memorial Space Center's annual "Rocket Fever" Event. An article on the event published on 8/22/2026 on calegion.org https://calegion.org/california-american-legions-new-assistance-program-for-stem-teachers-announced-at-the-annual-rocket-fever-event-held-at the-columbia-memorial-space-museum/

2. Published an article about the United States marking National Aviation Day, celebrating the transformative power of flight and honoring the pioneers who turned humanity's oldest dream into

an engine of global commerce, exploration, and defense. Article published on 8/19/2026. https://calegion.org/honoring-the-skies-national-aviation-day/

3. Published an Aerospace news article on calegion.org news page on 10/22/2026 focusing on California as the future of aerospace. https://calegion.org/california-the-future-of-aerospace/

4. Received the Brewer Aerospace Award from the Civil Air Patrol California Wing at their annual awards banquet on 10/24/2026 in Visalia, CA. A news article was published on the calegion.org news page on 10/26/2026. https://calegion.org/aerospace-commission-honored-with-prestigious-civil-air-patrol-brewer-aerospace-award/

5. The next Commission meeting date and time is 10/28/2026 at 5:30 PM via Zoom.

RESOLUTION COMMITTEE CHAIR

One resolution right now for District 25 for a Post suspension. Deferred to District 25 Commander Stacy to read Resolution. Commander Stacy read Resolution to suspend Post 466 Charter and form an Ad-hoc Committee. Motion made by District 25 Commander Stacy to suspend Post 466 Charter and form Ad-hoc Committee. Motion seconded by Area 5 Vice Commander Martin. Resolution passed unanimously by voice vote.

Resolution read by District 14 Commander Anderson, in the matter of the sale of the Post 11 Madera Post building, that the Department of California compensate District 14 for their hard work and diligence with five (5%) of the total sale price of $525,000.00 for the property at 17408 Road 26, Madera, Ca 93638 for a total of $26,250.00. District 14 Commander Anderson motioned for the Resolution. Motion seconded by PDC Jr

Past Brambila. Judge Advocate Fenton reminded DEC of Four-hour rule in deciding an allocation of money. Commander Somers questioned moving the decision of the Resolution to the next DEC. PDC Jr Past Brambilla made point of order the Resolution was made available prior to the DEC. Resolution Chair stated the Resolution was presented to the DEC at the prior DEC where changes were suggested to be made to the original Resolution, which changes were made. Commander Somers referred back to Judge Advocate Fenton, who agreed that with the information presented, he agreed the motion could move forward. Further discussion was had by members of the DEC. Commander Somers called for the vote. Roll call vote conducted. Motion passed. 18 yes. 16 no. 4 abstain.

District 2 Commander Van Cleave asked if a resolution was sent 2 weeks back and noticed it was not presented. Chair Sinclair asked which email he sent the resolution to as he had not received it. Adjutant Smith stated he received the resolution, but it was in a shared folder he could not access. Chair Sinclair requested District 2 Commander resend the resolution to him and the adjutant for inclusion on the next DEC meeting.

Alternate NEC Larry Maggio commented on previous motion. Alt NEC Maggio cited direction from National American Legion. They have a clause in our charter any moneys or assets go to Department and not to the District. Need to look at it and make sure that is what is in compliance. Since District is a branch of our charter at Department, this still goes to Department. Commander Somers stated it will be looked into.

District 1 Commander Cooper made a point of order that any DEC member can bring forth any motion to the floor as long as it is germane to the topic. Chair recognized point of order. Commander Van Cleave was asked if he was ready to present his resolution. He stated he was.

District 2 Commander Van Cleave read Resolution to place Post 260, Etna, CA on suspension to the DEC. District 2 Commander Van Cleave made motion to suspend Post 260 on suspension. Seconded by District 1 Cooper. Voice vote conducted. Passed unanimously.

Benediction conducted by District 1 Commander Cooper.

Next DEC meeting dates are November 17, 2026, January 26, 2027 and February 23, 2027

Department Commander Janice Somers declared the meeting adjourned at 2044 hours.

Adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Minutes by: Adjutant (I) Michael Smith MS