



**AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY, UNIT 291**  
**215 15<sup>TH</sup> STREET, NEWPORT BEACH, CA 92663**  
**GENERAL MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** May 21, 2025      **Time:** 6:00pm

- ❖ **CALL TO ORDER – Silence your cell phones**
- ❖ **Posting of the Colors**
- ❖ **Placement of POW/MIA Cover-** Sharon Morgan, Chaplain Presented by Mary Ann Leonard
- ❖ **Chaplain's Prayer -** Sharon Morgan, Chaplain – Presented by Mary Ann Leonard
- ❖ **Pledge of Allegiance -** Janz Simmons, Sgt-at-Arms
- ❖ **Music-** Mary Ann Leonard, Music Chair – Song selection is *You're a Grand Old Flag*
- ❖ **Preamble of the Constitution of the ALA –** see Projector screen
- ❖ **Roll Call of Officers -** Cynthia Minucci Neal, Secretary

P	President Mary Beth Martin	E	Chaplain Sharon Morgan	P	Executive Committee Jan Woolford
P	1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President Dana Johnston	P	Historian Sue Lindsay	P	Executive Committee Bobbi Renaghan
P	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President Bonnie Robertson	P	Sergeant at Arms Janz Simmons	P	Executive Committee Janice Flanagan
P	Secretary Cynthia Minucci Neal	P	Asst. Sergeant at Arms Stacy Eickhoff	P	Executive Committee Mary Ann Leonard
E	Treasurer Laura Farr	P	Jr. Past President Cindy Edes	P	Executive Committee Peggy Bengry

P=Present E=Excused A=Absent Quorum = 19

❖ **Officer Substitutions - None**

❖ **Special Guests**

- A visit from a 1980's member gave the history of the 1980's.
- Cindy Edes, ALA National Good Deed Award – Introduced Blake Hartfelder who received a National Good Deed Award.
- Caroline Miller, Girls State – Introduced the Girls State alternates and gave a brief background on each alternate.
- Dana Johnston, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President - Initiation of New Members was held. Motion was made to accept the candidates into Unit 291. Motion was 2<sup>nd</sup>, and motion carried.

❖ **Nomination/Election Committee – Cindy Edes, Chairman**

- Opened the floor for nominations for Secretary – Leslie Dinkel was nominated and accepted the nomination via email. The following nominations for each office was voted on by membership. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and motion carried on each candidate.
  - The 2025-2026 Unit 291 Auxiliary officers.
    - Cynthia Minucci Neal, President
    - Bobbi Renaghan, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President
    - Bonnie Robertson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President
    - Leslie Dinkel, Secretary
    - Laura Farr, Treasurer

- Mary Ann Leonard, Chaplain
  - Mary Beth Martin, Historian
  - Stacy Eickhoff, Sergeant at Arms
  - Becky Cooper, Assistant Sergeant at Arms
  - Peggy Bengry, Executive Committee
  - Janet du Monceau de Bergendal, Executive Committee
  - Janice Flanagan, Executive Committee
  - Dana Johnston, Executive Committee
  - Jan Woolford, Executive Committee
- ❖ Department (CA) convention is in June. Read the list of delegates for the convention. Motion to accept the delegates. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and motion carried. Read the list of alternate delegates for convention. Motion to accept the alternate delegates for convention. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, motion carried.
- ❖ **Approval of Minutes** –Minutes for the General Monthly Membership Meeting held on April 16, 2025. Motion was made to waive the reading of the minutes. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, motion carried. There were no corrections to the minutes. The minutes stand approved as written.
- ❖ **This month Dimes for Times** – Poppy for Poppy Program

## REPORTS

### ❖ **President – Mary Beth Martin**

- District Report Awards – We had 4 District awards for yearly reports: 3<sup>rd</sup> place - Historian, 1<sup>st</sup> place - Constitution & Bylaws, 1<sup>st</sup> place – Juniors Activities, 1<sup>st</sup> place Past President Parley, essay winners, Scholarship Awards – 1<sup>st</sup> scholarship awarded came to our Executive Board meeting and have to other scholarship to give out in the week ahead at Santiago Community College and Santa Ana College. The 4<sup>th</sup> will be given out at a later date.
- Created a video “What I have learned this past 20 months” – Unfortunately, we had technical problems.

### ❖ **1<sup>st</sup> Vice President / Membership – Dana Johnston**

- Update on Membership – Membership to date: 1,972 members
- **Membership Motion**
  - **Rational:** We are a service organization. We join to support our veterans, military, their families and the community. We have members that do not support the Auxiliary by volunteering. We believe the access card should be for the members who volunteer. Volunteering includes attending meetings, coming to events hosted by the Auxiliary, and volunteering in our programs: including but not limited to Front Door Access, Troop Shipping, Children & Youth, Salute to Service, and being on the Board or a Chairmanship or one of the committees. The American Legion Yacht Club requires volunteer hours. We are suggesting ten (10) Auxiliary hours per year. The hours need to be accumulated in the prior year. New members will be given a 1 year grace period.

**Motion:** The Executive Board moves we require 10 hours of Auxiliary Unit 291 volunteer time per calendar year (January 1 to December 31) in order to maintain access card privileges. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and motion carried.

❖ **2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President / Fundraising - Bonnie Robertson**

- April 27, 2025 Quartermania everyone had a great time.

❖ **Secretary – Cynthia Minucci Neal**

- Read the correspondence received.

❖ **Treasurer – Laura Farr - via zoom**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> review of the fiscal year 2025-2026 proposed budget.

**Motion** The Executive Board moves to accept the 2025 – 2026 fiscal budget. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and motion carried.

❖ **Chaplain – Sharon Morgan – Presented by Mary Ann Leonard**

- Draping of the Charter ceremony was performed for the ten (10) members who passed over the last year.

❖ **Historian – Susan Lindsey – Updated the members on the Auxiliary events since our last General Membership meeting.**

❖ **Parliamentarian – Peggy Bengry – No Report**

❖ **Executive Committee – Bobbi Renaghan, Jan Woolford, Janice Flanagan, Mary Ann Leonard, & Peggy Bengry – No Report**

❖ **Junior Past President – Cindy Edes**

- **Bob Woolford Golf Tournament Santa Ana Elks Lodge** **Suggested Donation: \$156.20**
  - **INFORMATION:** Bob Woolford a Post 291 Legionnaire, was a great support of our Auxiliary and always volunteered with Jan for many of our events. The Santa Ana Elks (which Bob was a member) is holding their 3<sup>rd</sup> annual golf tournament on June 7 and has been renamed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Bob Woolford Golf Tournament. Tee sponsorship is \$156.20.

**Motion:** The Executive Board moves we sponsor a Tee for \$156.20 in honor of Bob. The placard should read, American Legion Auxiliary Newport Harbor Unit 291. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and motion carried.

**STANDING COMMITTEES**

❖ **Americanism – Carol Markel – Presented by Mary Beth Martin**

- We had three (3) Americanism Essay contest winners at the District level, and they will go on to the Department.

❖ **Auxiliary Emergency Fund – Jan Woolford – No Report**

❖ **Chair Covers – Janz Simmons – No Report**

❖ **Children and Youth** – Bea Foster

- Stuffing 75 backpacks filled with notebook, pencil box and school supplies. July 16<sup>th</sup>
- Update on April 27, 2025 Month of Military Child party on Base
- Military Baby Shower in August accepting new baby items for the baby shower.
- Asked for storage of Children & Youth supplies.

❖ **Community Donations – Christine Beilby, Heidi Sergeant & Phyllis Helt – Presented by Heidi Maturino**

**1. Battalion 22**

**Suggested Donation: \$1,000**

BATTALION 22 is a support group for veterans with the overarching goal of reducing suicide rates among our ranks. We are addressing this issue in unique ways and we're having great success. Our weekly meetings allow prior service members of all branches, backgrounds and lifestyles to share their thoughts and experiences with a sympathetic peer group without fear of being put on a watch list. There are no mandatory reporters, just veterans supporting veterans in a very private and intimate setting. Mat founded this group after his brother's suicide. They recently celebrated their first year anniversary & were featured at the February Coffee Talk at Am Legion Post 291.

RATIONAL: Our goals for 2025 are ambitious we're seeking funding to support these efforts. Awareness Campaign at Huntington Beach July 4 Parade -This year we want to enter a vehicle draped in banners and have teams of veterans walking along & will be applying to have a booth at the 3 day fair that is also happening in HB over July.

**MOTION:** Committee Donation moves to donate \$1,000 to Battalion 22 to support their July 4 parade goals of entering a vehicle in the parade with Veterans walking next to it & booth to bring awareness to this group and to Veteran Suicide. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Motion carried

**2. Freedom Dogs**

**Suggested Donation: \$1,050**

Freedom Dogs is a non-profit devoted to serving wounded members of the military who are being treated for PTSD, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and/or other physical impairments. They train dogs in Oceanside and are looking for a location in Long Beach to be closer to the VA. These dogs provide emotional and physical support to support our military. They provide custom-trained dogs pairing a dog & a trainer team with a warrior during rehabilitation to assist with recovery or as a partner for life.

RATIONAL: Donation supports the training team and assist our military recover with a dog during treatment or partners a dog with a veteran for life. Heidi S met the Executive Director at Long Beach VA for a full detail on the prog

**MOTION:** Committee Donations moves to donate \$1,050 to Freedom Dogs to help them provide dogs during recovery or as a partner for life. This will also help them move to the Long Beach area to establish a training facility closer to the VA. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and motion carried.

**3. The Exchange Club of Newport Beach**

**Suggested Donation: \$1,000**

The Exchange Club of Newport Beach is the oldest nonprofit. They have donated over a million dollars to Newport Beach and surrounding communities for youth programs, Americanism. Prevention of child abuse, military service member support.

Each year they sponsor an event at the Lido Theater and put on a food fest gathering and movie screening. These events have raised over \$1,000,000 over the years and helped start the largest child

abuse prevention center in the nation! The Exchange Club of Newport Harbor gives more than \$63,000 in scholarships to our students in the Newport Mesa School District each year.

For over 15 years, the members have set up 1,776 American Flags at Castaways Park on Armed Forces week each year to honor our military. Called the Field of Honor, it is an inspiring event, which attracts families from all over the county. If a member of the legions has passed they will put a yellow ribbon on it with their name and branch of service.

**Motion:** Community Donations moves to give \$1,000 to The Exchange Club of Newport Beach, to continue their effort in supporting our community and supplying our flag. Motion was made, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and motion carried.

- ❖ **Community Service – Sharon Morgan - Presented by Cynthia Minucci Neal**
  - Bags of Love held on April 30, 2025. 18 volunteers came to fill 150 hygiene bags given to local law enforcement offices for the homeless.
- ❖ Constitution & Bylaws – Janet du Monceau de Bergendal – No Report
- ❖ **Education – Barbara Melum**
  - Poppies Art Contest – spoke about the poppy art contest. Displayed the winners artwork on the projector.
- ❖ **Girls State - Caroline Miller**
  - Discussed attending the Honor Flight at LAX on May 18, 2025 welcoming the Vietnam Veterans home.
- ❖ Juniors – Stacy Eickhoff – No Report
- ❖ Leadership – Cindy Edes – No Report
- ❖ Legislative – Pia Thompson – No Report
- ❖ Music – Mary Ann Leonard – No Report
- ❖ National Security – Susan Difonzo – No Report
- ❖ **Past President Parley – Cindy Edes**
  - Announced the “Unit Member of the year” voted on by the Past Presidents. This year’s winner is Dana Johnston. Congratulations!
- ❖ **Poppies – Bobbi Renaghan**
  - Updated on the Poppies donations from the mailing that went out.
- ❖ Public Relations – Heidi Sergeant - No Report
- ❖ **Salute to Service - Jeannie Celeketic & Julie Sanborn**
  - Reviewed the Salute to Service dinner held on May 19, 2025 for high school students entering the service after graduation. Had 37 students with their family.
- ❖ **Troop Shipping – Janice Flanagan & Janet du Monceau de Bergendal**
  - May 17, 2025 Troop Shipping was successful
- ❖ **VA & R – Heidi Maturino**
  - US Vets VRC shopping trip for the food pantry at the Veterans Resource Center.
  - US Vets Helping Heroes updated on the veterans she visits.

- Coastline College VRC shopping trip to fill the food pantry at the Veterans Resource Center.
- Long Beach VA Food Pantry next week.

### **SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

#### **❖ Old Business**

- Member to Member – Cynthia Minucci Neal – No Report
- **100-year Anniversary – Cynthia Minucci Neal**
  - Saturday May 24, 2025 – Los Angeles Angels Military Appreciation Night – Final Tickets on sale. Tickets going to out to all ticket holders.
  - Saturday June 21, 2025 – Beach Clean up at 15<sup>th</sup> St. Come out and help.
  - October 18<sup>th</sup> Dinner / Dance to celebrate our 100-year Anniversary looking for volunteers.

#### **❖ New Business**

- May 28<sup>th</sup> Legion asked to come and help at the Raffle Envelope Stuffing for 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration
- ❖ The Auxiliary gave our outgoing President Mary Beth Martin, a partonic blanket and flowers.

**NEXT GENERAL MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING** – The next meeting is Wednesday July 16, 2025, in the Main Hall at 6:00pm.

**NEXT DISTRICT MEETING** – The next District meeting will be on Saturday June 7, 2025 at Unit #555 Midway City located at 14582 Beach Blvd., Midway City, CA 92665. UPDATE NOTE: After our GMM meeting, the District meeting was moved to Unit #716 Los Alamitos.

- ❖ **Closing Prayer – Sharon Morgan, Chaplain** - Presented by Mary Ann Leonard

**ADJOURNMENT – Time: 8:15pm**