



Post 552

American Legion Meeting Minutes

16 July 2026

Meeting Called to Order: 6:02 pm

Officers Present: (Note absences)

Commander	Doug Benzel
1 st Vice	Bill Marsh
2 nd Vice	Mike Hill
Adjutant	Dave Schmidt
Finance Officer	Kent Van Horn (excused absence)
Chaplain	Bill Bartle
Service Officer	Dave Schmidt
Sergeant-At-Arms	Jim Vander Ploeg (excused absence)
Sergeant-At-Arms	SAL member Todd Hagwood (Acting)
Public Affairs Off.	Carlos Bazua
Asst. Adjutant	Bill Heard

Guests: Troop 271 leaders Guido Klap and Calvin Kuo. Scouts Marco Klap, Tor Farnes, Lachlan Frank, and Mr. Jonathan Frank. Ms. Sarah Susan, widow of American Legion member Wolfram Forster. Boys State/Girls State delegates Lillian Mirgole, Caden Clark and Derrick Borg.

Other members: Gabe Rowan, Donavon Morris, Marty Cervantez

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Scouts from Troop 271.

Commander's Remarks:

In starting his new term of office, Commander Benzel asked members to be recognized before speaking, to stay on topic, and to offer appropriate topics during the Good of the Legion segment. He outlined his goals as continued sponsorship of Troop 271 and the

Mission Bay High School Junior Coast Guard ROTC, continuing the fundraising effort, increasing Post membership, and renewing placards and badges.

Memorial for Deceased Member:

The Post observed a moment of silence for deceased member Wolfram Forster, a U.S. Army veteran who died at the age of 100 on 9 April 2026. His wife Sarah Susan described his unusual life. As a teenager in Berlin, he had been drafted into the German Army during WWII. He was captured by the U.S. Army on 10 April 1945 and later spent time in the custody of French and Russian forces—two years in all. He eventually immigrated to the U.S. and earned a medical degree, later practicing medicine at Walter Reed Hospital. He retired from the Army Medical Corps after 14 years at the rank of Full Colonel. A book about Forster's life—*Farewell Berlin*—can be purchased on Amazon.

Presentation of Troop 271/Post 552 Flag:

Scouts Marco Klap, Tor Farnes and Lachlan Frank presented a new red and white Troop 271/Post 552 flag to Commander Benzel for placement at the Post. Troop Liaison Officer Bill Heard reported that the Troop now has 38 members. 15 Scouts were awarded Merit Badges and 12 were advanced in rank this year. The Troop expects to promote one scout to Eagle rank soon. The Troop will bring a website online soon, with the address of Troop271.godaddysites.com. Meanwhile, Scouts have attended summer camp and participated in other outdoor activities.

Finance Report:

Commander Benzel reported that the Post's brokerage account had an increase of \$4,159.85 over the previous period. Bingo revenue for the June game was \$359.00, for a total of \$1,720.00 for the year thus far. Raffle income for the period totals \$627.00. Dave will ask Scarlett Winter to give an update about the P.B. welcome sign at our August meeting.

Membership:

Adjutant Dave Schmidt said the Post has received the 2027 membership forms and that members will be receiving them in the mail soon. There currently are 30 PUFLs, six other members are paid up thus far for 2027. One member transferred from Post 1000. The current total membership stands at 37 for the start of the renewal year.

Boys and Girls State:

The Post's three Boys State/Girls State delegates—Lillian Mirgoli, Caden Clark and Derrick Borg—described their experiences at the state convention, Lillian and Derrick served as Police Chiefs for their towns and Caden was a state legislator. They found delegates from other areas to be very goal-oriented and articulate. They gained different perspectives from associating with others from around the state. They learned about city and state government, ordinances, taxes and laws, legislative procedures and other important aspects of government. Lillian is interested in federal law enforcement and, as commander of her school's JNROTC unit, hopes to attend the Naval Academy. Derrick would like to be a foreign service officer and Caden intends to study political science in college.

Sons of the American Legion Update:

Mike Hill reported that SAL has new leadership. The group's summer activities include a fish fry scheduled for 4 September.

Unfinished Business:

1st Vice Bill Marsh reminded members that the Bingo game scheduled for Sunday, 19 July, will begin at 4 p.m. Trader Joe's gift cards will be the prizes. Carlos Bazua is planning to lead games between the Bingo sets, including a Family Feud game and Mexican Loteria.

New Business:

The August meeting will be held on the 4th Thursday which is August 27.

Commander Benzel is encouraging members to purchase new American Legion/Post 552 Polo shirts and T-shirts. The shirts are \$20 each and funds will go to the Post. Contact Commander Benzel to purchase the shirts. He also showed members a new American Legion table cover the Post can use at outside events.

The fish fry is planned for September 4. It will be a joint fundraiser between the TAL and SAL. Donavon will contact the Rod and Reel Club for donating fish from their two-week fishing trip that ends late August.

Good of the American Legion:

Dave Schmidt noted that a Standdown was scheduled in the Arts District at Liberty Station on July 17 at 6 a.m. and on July 18 at 5 p.m.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

/s/Signed July 31, 2026

Adjutant Dave Schmidt