OPENING CEREMONY:

The meeting was opened per ritual by Commandant Ron Kirstatter at 1000. The Mission Statement of the Marine Corps League was read.

ROLL CALL OF OFFICERS AND DETACHMENTS:

Department officers in attendance included:
  Commandant Ron Kirstatter
  Sr. Vice Commandant Randy Barnes
  Jr. Vice Commandant Bill Miller
  Judge Advocate Barbara Brammer
  Jr. Past Commandant Joe Barbee
  Chaplain Guy Mitchell
  Adjutant/Paymaster LuAnn Miller
  Sergeant-at-Arms Larry Heard
  Sergeant-at-Arms Lamar Scott

District Vice Commandants in attendance included:
  District 2 - Frank Corrick
  District 4 - Craig “Doc” McNabb
  District 5 - Jim Daughtry
  District 6 - Randy Barnes
  District 7 - Joe Barbee
  District 8 - Tim McClelland
  District 10 - Al Yates

Detachments in attendance included:
  Detachment 647 - L/Cpl Squire “Skip” Wells
  Detachment 783 - Unicoi
  Detachment 970 - Middle Georgia
  Detachment 1020 - “Jake” Puryear
  Detachment 1040 - PFC George Eiland
  Detachment 1083 - Joseph Schmittou
  Detachment 1196 - Maj. Stephen W. Pless
  Detachment 1260 - Maj. Lawrence Des Jardines
  Detachment 1312 - Aubrey Gilbert
  Detachment 1325 - Sgt. Clyde Thomason MOH
  Detachment 1326 - West Chatham
  Detachment 1339 - Henry County Leathernecks
  Detachment 1373 - Central Georgia
  Detachment 1402 - Columbus
  Detachment 1424 - Byron
APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

Commandant Kirstatter noted that the minutes from the December 5, 2015, business meeting are available and will be posted on the website.

CORRESPONDENCE:

The Department Paymaster sent out a notice to all Detachments advising them of the $20 convention support contribution required from each Detachment for the 2016 Department Convention.

The Southeast Division Conference is scheduled for March 25, 2016, in Augusta, Georgia, and will include a performance by the Parris Island Marine Band at the Lady Antebellum Theater. The performance is free and open to the public. The Host Detachment, Lt.Col. Jimmie Dyess Detachment #921, is requesting ads for the Conference Program Book.

The Mid-Winter National Conference is scheduled for March 3-5, 2016, in Falls Church, Virginia. National Headquarters requested an up-to-date list of Detachment meeting times and place as they are working on a locator page for the National website. Bernard Bledsoe asked if Detachments will be able to update the page themselves, and Commandant Kirstatter indicated he believes they will. Michael Clark reminded Detachments that all changes should be submitted through the Department.

The Alabama Department Convention is scheduled for June 10-12, 2016, and is being hosted by the P.L. Wilson Detachment. The Grits Bowl is up for grabs and the deadline for submitting new members is March 31, 2016. Roscoe Foster asked if the Thomaston Marines could join the League as members at large. Commandant Kirstatter said they could, but it would not affect our membership totals. Bernard Bledsoe suggested they join local Detachments and then transfer when the group is ready to charter. Jr. Vice Commandant Bill Miller noted that National does not always send out Member at Large lists when publishing quarterly rosters. Adjutant/Paymaster LuAnn Miller confirmed that all Dues Transmittal that could be processed have been processed. When corresponding with National about unprocessed Dues Transmittals, Commandant Kirstatter requested that the Department Commandant and Department Paymaster be copied on correspondence. Bernard Bledsoe also suggested that backup documentation be provided to National.

Jim Dunn, COO of Veterans Support Group, Inc., sent a letter regarding this veterans’ service organization that assists with housing, medical care, counseling, and other assistance.

REPORT OF PAYMASTER:

The Paymaster’s report was read and accepted pending audit.

REPORT OF MEMBERS SICKNESS OR IN DISTRESS:

Michael Clark reported that Al Meade is in a nursing home. Tim McClelland reported a member in his Detachment has a lung infection. John Newport reported that Jim Hammond, a 92-year-old Korean veteran is in hospice for rehab. Roscoe Foster reported three members in his Detachment are not doing well, Roy Williams had a knee transplant, and Chad Long had a back operation. Gary Burkes reported Clarence Davis, a Korean veteran, has dementia. Levi McKenna had back surgery. Chaplain Guy Mitchell reported four fallen Marines. He also discussed the issue at National with the delay in Notices of Death. Please forward all Notices of Death to the Department Chaplain and make sure that it is completely filled out, including date of death, membership number, and next of kin. Ed Barbee noted that Chandler Beasley should be on the list of fallen Marines; Chaplain Mitchell will review.
REPORT OF OFFICERS:

Commandant: The National and Southeast Division Paymasters have been aggressively reviewing the IRS filing status for the Southeast Division. Two Department are in pretty good shape, and Georgia is one of them. The newest Detachments are the priority focus because of the two-year period allowed for incorporation. Make sure you stay on top of these filings. Georgia state corporation filings are due April 1, and copies of your Detachment’s filing should be sent to the Department Paymaster. IRS 990 filings are due later, and copies of these filings should also be sent to the Department Paymaster.

Senior Vice Commandant: No Report

Junior Vice Commandant: Department membership is currently 1,336, which is down by 24 since last year. Make sure renewals are processed timely and look ahead for people that are coming due. Don’t wait until they are delinquent. Over the past year, 13 Detachments gained membership, 15 Detachments lost members, and 2 Detachments remained the same. For the Burkhardt Award, Detachment #1311 is currently in the lead with a gain of 24 members. The Detachment in second place had a gain of 14 members. Commandant Kirstatter noted that Detachments must be in good standing to be eligible for the Burkhardt Award. Last year the Department learned about a group of Marines in Blue Ridge, Georgia, who want to form a Detachment. Some of the group submitted applications as members at large, and it has been difficult to obtain their membership numbers. Bernard Bledsoe noted that members at large come in as associate members until their DD-214’s can be verified.

Judge Advocate: Currently there are no pending Chapter 9 activities. A set of Bylaws was received from Detachment #1373, and they have been approved. If your Detachment has chosen to use National or Department Bylaws instead of implementing Detachment Bylaws, please send an email to the Department Judge Advocate confirming which Bylaws are being used. It was noted that the Vietnam Veterans pin cannot be worn on the MODD vest. A Bylaw amendment is required to change this. Hal Gosnell asked if any amendments have been submitted, and Judge Advocate Brammer noted that none were received. Commandant Kirstatter noted that the Bylaws require that amendments must be submitted by February 15 for consideration at the Department Convention. There are some discrepancies between the Bylaws and the critical events chart which are administrative changes. Bernard Bledsoe suggested that changes to the critical events list be provided to Detachments for review in advance of the Department Convention.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

2016 Department Convention Committee: A volunteer sheet is available for convention workers. Scott Egan will be in attendance with the Ships Store. 2016 Department Convention T-shirts and coins will be available, raffle items will be offered, there will be a 50/50 drawing, and MODD merchandise will be available. As of the staff meeting, 14 members and 6 guest have registered for the convention, 19 have registered for the banquet, and we have sold 12 coins, 9 T-shirts, 5 full-page ads, 2 half-page ads, and 1 quarter-page ad. An agenda is being prepared which will include a possible golf outing Friday morning, the Commandants’ Council Friday evening, the business meeting Saturday morning, the MODD growl Saturday afternoon, and the banquet Saturday evening. The guest speaker is Dr. Richard Jaddick, a Naval surgeon, Bronze Star recipient, and author of the book, On Call in Hell. He will be introduced by a Master Chief who served with him. Jim Daughtry moved to pay the lodging and banquet charges (estimated $250) for the Master Chief who will introduce Dr. Jaddick. Doc McNabb seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Bernhard Bledsoe moved we invite the National Commandant and pay the costs for lodging for Friday and Saturday nights and all meals for the National Commandant and his wife. Bill Miller second the motion, and it was approved. Bernhard Bledsoe said he would speak with his Detachment about covering the costs for Past National Commandant John Kovalcik.
UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Gunnery Sergeant Ernesto Juarez and Sergeant Leo Bresinio from the Shepherds Men presented information about the Shared Military Initiative, which is a 12-week rehabilitation process for veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The program accepts 10 to 12 people at a time. Members of their group will be running from Boston to Atlanta, 22 kilometers per day, to raise money and awareness. The Shepherds Men is a 501(c)(3) organization with every penny going directly to providing services; there are no administrative costs. For the 40-50 individuals that successfully completed the program, the suicide rate is zero. Russ Vermillion spoke highly of their work. Mike Foran noted that his Detachment supports their organization. The Shepherds Men will be making a presentation at the Mid-Winter Conference. Their goal this year is to raise $1,000,000. John Newport noted that his Detachment just approved a $1,000 donation. Jim Daughtry made a motion to donate $1,000 to the Shepherds Men. The motion was seconded by Michael Clark and was unanimously approved.

Jim Lindenmeyer of the Cherokee County Homeless Veterans Program reported that they found over 100 homeless veterans in their county over the last year. This year they want to count every county they can to identify homeless veterans. They need veterans to reach these veterans. Mr. Lindenmeyer requested that each person go back to their Detachment and get a list of names and emails of those willing to go out looking for these veterans.

Commandant Kirstatter noted that, in addition to the $20 hospitality contribution, the Bylaws encourage each Detachment to provide three raffle items for the Department Convention. Additionally, the 2017 Department Convention still needs a host detachment. Frank Corrick volunteered Detachment #1083 for the 2017 Department Convention to be held in Athens, Georgia. The 2017 Host Detachment was approved. Commandant Kirstatter requested that Detachments consider hosting the 2018 Department Convention, and he will ask for bids at this year’s convention. Commandant Kirstatter reminded detachments to submit their Marine of the Year and Associate of the Year nomination to the Department Paymaster no later than April 1. Chair for the Marine of the Year Committee will be Dalton Hammock, if available, or Chuck Feaselman.

Guy Mitchell spoke about the Fallen Marine Program. Marine Corps League membership is not a requirement. Funeral homes should be notifying us, but they often don’t. This program differs from the Marine Corps graveside ceremony. The Fallen Marine Program is usually done at the funeral home as part of the memorial service, and Chaplain Mitchell provided information packets for each detachment including forms, uniform requirements, order of service, a letter to send to funeral homes, and sample scripts. The program includes presentation of a certificate to the family. Doc McNabb noted that another resource for identifying Fallen Marines is the Patriot Guard. Russ Vermillion noted that Detachment #1196 has a DOD certified honor guard that is willing to assist.

Bill Craig thanked the Department Commandant and members of the Department of Georgia for attending the renaming ceremony for Detachment #647. Lee Johnson, Detachment Adjutant, has Skip Wells challenge coins available for sale.

Mike Foran reported that HQ Marine Corps initiated a new award named after Sgt. Clyde Thomason for Special Operator of the Year. The Marine Corps Association and Foundation presents this award.
GOOD OF THE LEAGUE:

Commandant Kirstatter presented a Marine Corps League Distinguished Service Award to Guy Mitchell.

Gary Burkes provided information about a TNT fireworks fundraiser being held June 21-July 4, 2016. A class is scheduled for June 4, 2016, in Marietta. Sales are 12 hours a day with an initial delivery of $50,000 in merchandise. You pay on the back end for what has been sold, and supplies are replenished daily. Proceeds are 20% of sales. Liability insurance, full-time area support, credit card processing program, and support are provided; and there are 78 areas open.

Bernard Bledsoe talked about Modern Day Marine and Marine South. League members have been attending these events and providing assistance. This year, Marine South is April 6-7, 2016, at Camp Lejeune; and Modern Day Marine is September 27-29, 2016, in Quantico. Contact Lamar Scott for more information.

Boy Scout Coordinator Mike Foran reported that last year was a great year; however, this year was not as good. A total of 43 recognitions were presented this year, and 5 Detachments submitted reports. Please submit your Boy Scout report even if you have not made any presentations. There is a scouting page on the Department website which notifies the Boy Scout Coordinator, who then notifies the local Detachment, of upcoming Courts of Honor. Mike Foran noted that we also recognize the Girl Scout Gold Awards. Boy Scout and Girl Scout coins are available from Mike Foran. Mike read a thank you note from recipient Adam (Troop 23).

The Central Georgia Detachment contacted Commandant Kirstatter about an October air show for recruiting.

The Commandant of the Columbus Detachment contacted Commandant Kirstatter and advised that he has a contact at Fort Benning if anyone is interested in organizing a tour of Fort Benning.

Sergeant-at-Arms Larry Heard reported that 55 members are in attendance. He reminded everyone to bring their paper membership cards (not the metal Life Member card). Bernard Bledsoe said that Detachments should submit a list of members without ID cards to the Department Paymaster. Hal Gosnell asked if paper card review is required. Commandant Kirstatter confirmed that it is required at Department, Division, and National, but there is no Bylaw requirement. Members must, however, be in good standing.

Bernard Bledsoe noted that the Women's Club in LaGrange received an 1861 Springfield rifle modified into a shotgun which they are raffling for $5 per ticket. A maximum of 500 tickets will be sold.

Marine Corps League Foundation Treasurer, William Miller, reported that the Foundation is currently operating at a deficit because investments rates have declined and government employee contributions are decreasing. The Foundation administers payment of scholarships, but the Marine Corps League determines who gets those scholarships. Last year almost $80,000 in scholarships was awarded. The Foundation is asking Detachments to support the Foundation by holding one fundraiser a year with proceeds going directly to the Foundation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None
CLOSING CEREMONY:

There being no further business, the Staff Meeting was closed by ritual at 1224.

Submitted by:
LuAnn K. Miller
Adjutant/Paymaster
Department of Georgia
Marine Corps League