

2023 Media & Communications Commission Fall Meetings

October 9, 2023, 9 a.m.

Chairman David F. Wallace (VA) – Call to Order / Salute to Colors at 9 a.m.

Member Frank Ward (SC) – Invocation

Member Everett Shepard III (CT) – Pledge of Allegiance

Director Jeff Stoffer – Roll Call

Those present:

Commission: Richard A. Baxter (NE), John Buckwalter (MO), Frank L. Cooley (WV), Albert Coughlin (IL), C. Jacob Greeling (AR), Edward Lewis (FL), Michael W. Moses Sr. (KY), Robert L. Reynolds (TN), Charles K. Robbins (NJ), Thomasena Sanderlin (GA), Richard A. Schloendorn Sr. (PA), Everett Shepard (CT), David Wallace (VA), Frank C. Ward (SC), David O. Warnken (KS)

Council: David Brambila Sr. (CA), Michael Kerr (OK), Holly Lewis (OH), Ron L. Patterson (IN), Hayden D. Woods (OK)

Other guests who identified: SAL National PMCC Chairman Kevin Chaplin (VA), Council member Amado C. Salinas II (CA), Commission Member John Lenotte (MA), Liaison Committee member Steve W. Aguirre (AZ)

Chairman David F. Wallace delivered opening remarks. He encouraged members to take information about Be The One and TAL program back to their departments.

Jim Elliott and Ryan Elliott of the James G. Elliott Company delivered an advertising update.

- Jim announced that Dennis Connaughton, who often came to M&C meetings, has retired.
- He gave an overview of the Elliott Company. The company has represented 600 media properties. Elliott Company has been with the Legion for 20 years.
- He showed a video introducing the four members of the sales team that works on the Legion's account.
- Ryan spoke about the bright spots. Digital is slowing down due to a variety of reasons, among them are due to increased privacy concerns. They're seeing a bit of a return to print with a ½ percent growth.

The Legion magazine continues to exceed goals and are set to meet 7 million of ad revenue.

- There are **15 new advertisers** including pharmaceutical companies whose buy additional ad pages due to the disclosures.
- Digital advertising is about to meet and exceed goal.
- Working with marketing division to sign **Consumer Cellular – total buy of \$150,000** for the fourth quarter.

Gave a reader snapshot.

- Our readers' age have gone up. Reader demographic of political and community engagement his very high. This shows and active and special group and how involved Legionnaires are.
- Membership is key. The more membership increases, the more ad numbers improve.

Magazine continues to be the #1 most read magazine in American among 200 magazines.

Greg Hull, Lindenmeyr Center talked about his parent company, Central National Gottesman. The company has seen tremendous growth in the last 10 years.

- He explained the paper producers/suppliers. Talked about how the coated ground market has shrunk.
- He highlighted North American producers and explained how some producers are "swing" producers which means they can go back and forth between types of products. He prefers a supplier that focuses on one thing.
- Greg then went through super calendar producers, which includes our current paper supplier, Port Hawkesbury. With the switch to Port Hawkesbury, the Legion saves \$70,000 per month.

-----Break-----

Chairman David Wallace read the resolution for the James G. Elliott contract. This extends our relationship with the company and also includes the Elliott Company's work on initiatives for the Marketing Division.

Everett Shepard (CT) made a motion to approve the James G. Elliott Contract. Second by C. Jacob Greeling (AR), all in favor, motion carried.

Director Jeff Stoffer gave his operations report highlighting several of the ongoing initiatives.

- Revenue out performed budget. Magazine is net positive.
- There are 17 new advertisers, 14 in the magazine. Advertisers are seeing fewer opportunities to reach Legion demographic

Digital conversion –

- Dispatch went digital with no complaints. This increased engagement.
- Working with LSC to explore print on demand options. This is to print only what's needed and hold less inventory.

He spoke about a three-day strategic planning workshop he attended last week with Legion leadership.

- There will be more emphasis in the Legion placed on strategic planning.
- Media & Communications does this this already. Our next division strategic planning date will be December 15.

He will continue to ramp up promotion of veterans benefits.

- Appeals team secured \$195 million in benefits.
- Dept. Service Officers helped veterans obtain \$16.3 billion dollars, up from \$14.8 billion the previous year.
- Legion Service Officers are far and above all other accredited groups.

He showed video on the claims process, held at the Geiger Operations Center with staff member Tony Cross and Commander Seehafer.

Working on impact metrics with other divisions. Quantify and report numbers on VCF, TFA, Legacy and Samsung scholarships, NEF, OCW, oratorical, baseball.

Jeff Stoffer and **Henry Howard** both spoke about VA Buddy Check week – October 16 – 22.

- The American Legion started Buddy Checks in 2019 and now around 4,500 posts are regularly conducting Buddy Checks.
- The division produced several new resources which are included in packets and linked below:
 - Buddy Check Toolkit: <https://www.legion.org/publications/252001/buddy-check-toolkit>
 - Door hangers https://www.legion.org/documents/pdf/Buddy_Check_Door_Hanger.pdf
- VA asked the American Legion to participate in a webinar on October 16.
 - Link to VA-Legion webinar (1 PM Eastern October 16) for Buddy Check Week, October 16-20 – Find link [here](#).
- QR code to register (not required) is below.



Deputy Director Henry Howard gave updates on Be the One and the podcast.

- **Be The one** is moving from phase 1 to phase 2.
 - Waco Hoover (CA) is overseeing Be the One strategy. He is involved in other veteran organizations and is getting the Legion connected in different ways, such as the MCON in Las Vegas, which draws a younger veteran community.
 - Hoping to get into South by Southwest but should hear in the next month.
 - Legion member Keith Koster, a three-time cancer survivor, is scaling the highest peak in each state with a Be The One mission.
 - Be the One event with the Utah Jazz.
- **Tango Alpha Lima**
 - Podcast is doing great; continuing to progress. Boost due to new host Ashley Gutermuth who has a large social media following.
 - On September 1, a new Be The One podcast was launched with host Amy Forsythe.

- Had a recent Military Sexual Trama episode with 27,661 downloads. Difference was because we used a company to advertise.
- Recent episode featuring a Buffalo soldier son and grandson received 5,000 downloads without any extra advertising.
- Looking to the future – women’s history month series.

Andy Proffet and **Holly Soria** gave presentations about the Legion’s use of social media.

Andy manages the Legion’s LinkedIn along with Facebook pages for SAL, Legion baseball and Twitter (X) for SAL and baseball.

- LinkedIn has 42,000 followers, up 5,500 from last year.
- In August, a Facebook baseball post had a 114,000 reach.
- There were 40,000 impressions on a tweet on semi-final schedule.
- SAL has 11,000 followers. May look into different social media for this group.
- TAL Baseball FB - 10,000 followers
- TAL Baseball on Twitter (X) – 8,500 followers.

Holly gave a report on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube numbers.

- Legacy Run fueled big numbers on the Riders Facebook page. In August there was a 16.2 million reach. In September there was a 7.5 million reach.
- Three Legacy Run posts with over 1 million views:
 - 8/23 - McClelland Highway in West Virginia
 - 8/20 – Roanoke, Indiana
 - 8/22- Wellston, Ohio
- Instagram has almost 20,000 followers, up from 16,000. Summer youth programs boost engagement.
 - From July- August, 200,000 impressions. Some of the top performing posts are Boys Nation Reels, AL World Series posts, and Gutermuth sharing.
- YouTube has 11,000 followers who subscribe.
 - In 2023 there were 336,000 views, 3.9 million impressions.
 - Podcast at 19,000 views.
 - Honor and Remembrance videos bring in the most viewers, particularly Medal of Honor recipients.
- Helping to drive numbers is the social media marketing campaigns done **by Diesel Jack Media**.
 - Diesel Jack is looking for active, lively events at posts and departments across the country, along with members with interesting stories. Contact Legion@DieselJackMedia.com if anyone knows of such events/people.

Director Jeff Stoffer spoke about membership media.

- He holds weekly meeting with the membership team. Continually reviewing content and how it can be made better.
- Art team recorded a welcome video for new members featuring Matt Jabaut and will record more videos.

- Holds weekly meeting with the Office of Charitable Giving. Since collaboration, inquiries have tripled.

Director Jeff Stoffer spoke about digital conversion.

- Digital magazine is currently accessible behind membership wall on Mylegion.org.
- Intent to ramp up digital magazine to include videos, extra content.
- Working with LSC on print on demand go to along with digital products.
 - Example: Annual Report – We don't need to print as many and hold inventory.
 - Graphic Novel, aims to reach teen/young adult audience.

IT Deputy Director Chris Bayliss (SAL – IN) spoke about the website rewire.

- Current version of Legion.org was launched in 2016. The aim of the new website is to:
 - Upgrade infrastructure
 - Re-examine goals
 - Modernize
- Assembled a core group of M&C, Marketing and IT staff to meet regularly with vendor, American Eagle.
- Currently in the design phase. 2023 was the discovery phase, now in the design phase through December with testing/development in Jan. – Apr. 2024 with a May 2024 launch.

Chairman David Wallace (VA) gave his closing remarks.

Salute to colors and adjournment.