



**589th Engineer Battalion Association (Vietnam)
Minutes of the October 7, 2023 Business Meeting**

The 589th Engineer Battalion Association (Vietnam) business meeting, which was held in conjunction with the 2023 reunion at the Stone Castle Hotel in Branson, Missouri, was called to order on October 7, 2023, at 1200 hours by COB Perry Blanchfield, pursuant to a notice of meeting made to all members. Perry noted that a quorum was present for the conducting of business.

Agenda. A motion was made by Tim Cameron and seconded by Nick Kallas to approve the agenda as distributed to each member in attendance. Motion Carried.

Invocation. Clifton Felts gave the invocation.

Pledge of allegiance. All members stood, addressed the American Flag, and recited the pledge of allegiance.

Minutes of the September 13, 2022 meeting. A motion was made by Nick Kallas and seconded by Larry Jenkins to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2022 business meeting. Motion carried.

Welcome. Perry welcomed everyone, after which he provided a brief update on activities associated with the reunion.

Financial Report. The audit committee, consisting of members Tim Cameron, Bill Carter, and Jerry Nichols, reported that they had met as a committee and reviewed the Profit & Loss Statement, the Fund Balance Report, and the Notes to the Financial Statements provided by treasurer Bob Spencer, who was unable to attend the 2023 Reunion. Copies of the financial reports, as well as the Notes to the Financial Statements, were presented to each of the meeting participants at registration to provide them with an opportunity to review and study the documents in advance of the meeting. Committee members noted that the information in the financial statements, along with the supporting documentation included in the Notes, would provide information for members to consider during discussion on other agenda topics. After leading a general discussion on the financial condition of the Association, the Audit Committee recommended that the meeting accept the 2023 Financial Reports as printed and circulated. Such motion was made and seconded by Nick Kallas and Charles Bagley and carried by unanimous acclamation of those present.

Report on PX services. Perry Blanchfield led a discussion on PX sales and the associated cost of providing the PX services. Blanchfield referred to the Notes to the Financial Statements to help define the current economic reality in which the Association finds itself. He noted that use of the online PX is declining as members' demand for 589th products has been largely satisfied, while the cost to process financial transactions is escalating rapidly. Blanchfield went on to report that the trends of declining sales and increasing costs during the past year resulted in the Association paying \$1.45 in financial transaction fees for every \$1.00 in PX sales; a trend that is obviously unsustainable. Following a general discussion, Nick Kallas made a motion, seconded by Charles Bagley, to suspend the online PX sales of merchandise. Motion carried.

Proposed Bylaw Amendments.

- a. Consider changes to Article X, Duties of Officers, to add responsibilities to an Honor Our Fallen Coordinator. Blanchfield noted that the By-Laws do not currently establish or define the role of an Honor Our Fallen Coordinator, although such position is one of the most important assigned to a member of the Association. Specifically designating an Honor Our Fallen position and naming an individual to fill it recognizes its importance

to the organization and helps give the position the recognition it deserves. Denis Cowan has been coordinating the Honor Our Fallen activities for several years now, with his effectiveness demonstrating not only Denis' administrative skills, but the value of the experience he is able to apply as the program adapts to our changing demographics. Following a general discussion, a motion was made and seconded to add the following language to the By-Laws as part of Article X – Duties of Officers. Motion carried.

Honor Our Fallen Coordinator

The Honor Our Fallen Coordinator shall maintain the Honor Our Fallen program as an ongoing effort to recognize our fallen, recognizing that changing demographics will require continuous modifications to the annual Memorial Day remembrance. Coordination between the Association, the volunteers making the actual gravesite visits, and the families and friends of the fallen will be of utmost importance. Critical to being able to continue the program long term will be the development of a network of individuals, military organizations, and cemetery administrators willing to share our promise to those we lost.

- b. Consider elimination of the responsibilities of a VA Services Liaison. Blanchfield stated that the Association's By-Laws call for the Association to have a VA Services Liaison, with such a person charged with helping Association members become better educated on the services available from the Veterans Administration. He went on to share that the role defined in the By-Laws has proven exceedingly difficult to perform as it would require the knowledge and skills of a full-time VA staff member with experience in all aspects of the VA system to deliver. The recommendation is to delete the bylaw section and instead suggest that members deal directly with their local VA office for information and/or support. Following a general discussion, a motion was made and seconded to delete the language relative to a VA Services Liaison from Article X of the Association's By-Laws. Motion carried.
- c. Consider adding and recognizing the duties and responsibilities of a PX Coordinator. Blanchfield explained that although the position of PX coordinator had been performed by John Ryan since early in the life of the Association, the position had never been formally recognized as have other Board officer positions. In recognition of the importance of the assignment to the Association and the responsibilities surrounding it, Blanchfield recommended that the position be formalized in the By-Laws. Following a general discussion, a motion was made and seconded that the following language be added to Article X – Duties of Officers.

PX Coordinator

The PX coordinator shall be responsible for coordinating and maintaining all items for resale through the Association's PX. Such activities shall include purchasing inventory items, keeping an inventory of items in stock and available for sale, and coordinating sales.

- d. Consider changes to Article XVI, Honor Our Fallen, to allow for the transfer of money (spending authority) between the HOF Fund and the Uncommitted Fund. Following a discussion on the challenges of funding the ongoing activities of the Association as well as balancing the need to fund the ongoing activities of the Honor Our Fallen Program, Nick Kallas made a motion, which was seconded by Charles Bagley and passed by a vote of the members, to revise Bylaw Article XVI – Honor Our Fallen – to read as follows:

One of the primary purposes of this Association is: "To commemorate the memory of 589th Engineer Battalion soldiers who gave their lives in the service of our country", by providing for the ongoing support of, and commitment to, the Honor Our Fallen Program.

(1) On-going financial support of the Honor Our Fallen Program shall be provided by individual contributions to the HOF program and any additional contributions or financial support the Association may specify in the future.

(2) The monies held in reserve for the Honor Our Fallen Program shall remain the assets of the 589th Association and the responsibility of the Board of Directors.

(3) As the ravages of time diminish the size of the Association and its ability to carry out the purpose defined in these By-Laws, it is envisioned that the Honor Our Fallen program will be among the last activities conducted by the Association. Therefore, the Honor Our Fallen program shall cease to exist when the Association itself is dissolved.

(4) At the time of dissolution, any monies remaining in the Honor Our Fallen Fund shall be distributed in the same manner as other assets of the Association and consistent with the requirements of the Internal Revenue Service.

- e. Change the size of the Board to 7 elected officials. A general discussion was held relative to changing the size of the board to 7 members to reflect the number of board positions defined. Following the discussion, a motion was made by Nick Kallas and seconded by Charles Bagley to amend Article XIII – Board of Directors – to state that the size of the Board shall be made up of 7 elected officers. Motion carried.

Election of Directors.

The following members have been nominated for election to the Board of Directors: Perry Blanchfield, Sterling Hester, Denis Cowand, John Ryan, Bob Spencer, Dennie Pendergrass and Sam Lamey. A motion was made to accept the slate of officers by Nick Kallas and seconded by Larry Jenkins. Motion carried.

Reallocation of funds. The need to transfer funds from the Honor Our Fallen Fund into the Unallocated Fund to support current activities of the Association was discussed and reviewed at length. The Notes to the Financial Statements were referred to for detailed information supporting such a transfer of funds. Following the discussion, a motion was made by Nick Kallas and seconded by Larry Jenkins to authorize the Treasurer to approve and account for such necessary transfers between funds. Motion carried.

Reunions.

Blanchfield reported that both he and Bob Spencer have been frustrated in their dealings with the Stone Castle while arranging the details of the 2023 Reunion. In addition to the frustrations of working with Hotel staff, there is growing concern over the increasing cost of services provided by The Stone Castle, which seems to signal a change in management philosophy towards military reunions. While 15 years ago the Stone Castle Hotel aggressively marketed itself as a home for the 589th Association and military reunions in general, that is no longer the case. As a result, the Association may benefit from exploring options other than the Stone Castle for future reunions. A general discussion was held on the timing and location of future reunions, and activities that may be of interest to reunion attendees. Cody, Wyoming; Hershey, Pennsylvania; Savannah, Georgia; Williamsburg, Virginia; and Memphis, Tennessee were suggested as potential reunion sites. At the conclusion of the discussion on future reunions, a motion was made by Tim Cameron and seconded by Nick Kallas that the Board perform due diligence on potential reunion locations select a suitable time and place for the 2024 Reunion. Motion carried.

Honor Our Fallen.

Although not in attendance, Denis Cowand, Honor Our Fallen Coordinator, sent a report detailing the recent activities of the Honor Our Fallen Program and thanking all the volunteers who took part in gravesite activities. The financial details surrounding the Program's activities were detailed in the financial reports.

The designation of Honorary Members of the 589th Engineer Battalion Association (Vietnam).

A discussion on whether the Association should change its Honorary Member criteria was held, with emphasis on creating an additional category of individual who has contributed to the goals of the Association. Following a lengthy discussion, a motion was made, seconded and carried to amend Article IV, Section 5 and add Section 6 to the By-Laws to read as follows:

- (5) The category of "Honorary Member" of the 589th Association shall be limited only to those individuals who are family members of our Fallen Brothers killed while serving in Vietnam. Honorary members shall not have voting privileges in the Association.
- (6) The category of "Dedicated Friends of the 589th Association" is a class of membership available to those who have shown staunch support and dedication to helping the Association meet its organizational goals. Examples of activities "Dedicated Friends" may be involved in are activities associated with Reunions and/or financial support. To receive the membership title of Dedicated Friend of the 589th Association, the candidate must be nominated by a 589th member during a business meeting and approved by a majority vote of those in attendance. Dedicated Members shall not have voting privileges in the Association.

Toast to our Fallen Brothers. Larry Jenkins offered the Toast to our Fallen Brothers.

Closing prayer. Clifton Felts offered the closing prayer.

Adjournment. A motion to adjourn was made by Nick Kallas and seconded by Larry Jenkins. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,


Sterling Hester, Secretary