

United States Submarine Veterans, Inc., Charleston Base
Minutes of Business Meeting
13 February 2025

Opening Ceremonies:

- The February 2025 Base Meeting was called to order by Vice Commander Tom Lawson with a quorum of three officers and a total of 49 members. The meeting started at 1900 with the sound of the diving alarm. Base Commander Mike Ciesielko was not present this evening.
- The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Vice Commander Tom Lawson and recited by the members in attendance.
- The Invocation and the Tolling of the Boats lost during the month of February was given by Base Chaplain Nick Nichols.
- Submarines lost during the month of February:
 - **USS BARBEL (SS-316)** February 4, 1945 – 4th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 81 souls
 - **USS SHARK 1 (SS-174)** February 11, 1942 – 1st War Patrol Lost with all hands – 59 souls
 - **USS AMBERJACK (SS-219)** February 16, 1943 – 3rd War Patrol Lost with all hands – 72 souls
 - **USS GRAYBACK (SS-208)** February 27, 1944 – 10th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 80 souls
 - **USS TROUT (SS-202)** February 29, 1944 – 11th War Patrol Lost with all hands – 81 souls
 - **5 Boats and 373 Men Lost**
 - **H.L. HUNLEY** February 17, 1864 Lost with all hands – 8 souls
- The Creed of USSVI was read by Vice Commander Tom Lawson.
- Vice Commander Tom Lawson welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

Introductions of New Attendees:

- We had 33 guests including ADM Ishee in the meeting tonight because of the SE Regional Conference being held here in North Charleston. Rather than have each one introduce themselves, Vice Commander Tom Lawson had the guests stand to be recognized.

Guest Speakers:

- **USSVI National Junior Vice Commander – Tom Williams:**
 - Introduced himself – QMC – Qualified on USS James Monroe SSBN622 – Also served aboard three SSNs.
 - National is going to use the original website. After billing USSVI about \$200k over the last eight years, the group working on the new website has decided that it is too complicated.
 - Tom spoke about the USSVI National Membership Drive. They have some younger faces on the board with new ideas including social media. Tom is asking all base commanders to download (from the old website) the USSVI Public Relations Media and Recruiting Guide.
 - The National Commander has set a goal by 2030 for USSVI to have 15k members. It will take about 500 new members each year, plus an additional member for each Eternal Patrol membership loss.
 - On the website is a form that can be used for public relations.
 - Tom spoke about the Monetary Incentive Program, which provides funds to the Base if membership is increased by a certain percentage.
 - Tom promoted upcoming conventions Orlando, FL and Corpus Christi, TX.
- **USSVI National Treasurer – John Sidlovsky (SID):**
 - Qualified on USS Spadefish SSN668 - 1982
 - SID spoke more about the Monetary Incentive Program and reviewed the numbers a bit more as to how it affects the Bases.
 - SID talked about RUST Insurance and that the move from WA to CT caused USSVI to have double the cost for insurance.
 - The insurance cost for base events will now be commensurate with the size of the base.
 - We just had a Dues Increase just like everyone having to raise prices due to the cost of doing business.
 - SID encouraged members to be part of K4K.

Guest Speakers: (Cont'd)

- **SE Regional Director – Ken Nichols:**
 - Ken was offered a chance to speak, but declined.
- **SE District 3 Commander – Steve Wambley:**
 - Thanked Charleston Base for hosting the SER Conference, noting the work involved.
 - Talked about a sea story that went wrong, but he is looking forward to The After Battery so that he can remedy the tale.
- **SE District 2 Commander – Wayne Phillips:**
 - Thanked Charleston Base and especially Dave Harvey for the work involved.
 - Is looking forward to attending another SER Conference next year.

Old Business:

- **None**

New Business:

- Rodney McKanna asked if we had enough money to purchase a new microphone system. He was encouraged to bring it up at the BOD Meeting next month.

Secretary – Gordon Long:

- The Minutes from the January Base Meeting were emailed to all Base members. The Minutes have been published on the Base Website for download. The Minutes were approved as presented.

Treasurer – Ricky Collins:

- The Treasurer's Report for January was published and promulgated on the website. There were no revisions. The report was approved as presented.

Chaplain – Nick Nichols:

- Highlighted boat of the month:
 - AMBERJACK SS-219 was lost on Feb 16, 1943 with the loss of 72 officers and men on her 3rd war patrol. Her last report said she was forced down on the 13th by two destroyers, and that she had recovered an enemy aviator prisoner from the water. While off the coast of Rabaul, she was attacked by a Japanese patrol plane, attacked by a torpedo boat and then depth charged by a subchaser. One additional man was killed earlier. On Saturday we will conduct a memorial bell tolling at the hotel.

There are several shipmates and family members who have given me information which they wish to be kept confidential at this time.

- **Mike Ciesielko, Base Commander**, has the flu. He told me he was not going to be here for the meeting and I told him it was appreciated that he was not going to share.
- **Ken Curtis** called yesterday to say he had been in the VA since Sunday 9 Feb. He went home today and is completing the paperwork for Hospice care. Please keep Ken and Barbara both in your prayers. Calls and visits are appreciated. Phone: 843.906.1880
- **Roger Rader** was at the hospital in late Jan. He slipped on ice and the fall caused a fractured wrist, a broken hip and an issue with his stomach. He underwent 4 hours of surgery which went well. He is now on the 6th floor in the rehab section and is expected to be discharged to home on Friday.
- **Butch Bryar** was admitted to the VA on 6 Feb with bronchial pneumonia. He was able to go home on Monday, the 10th.
- **Jerry Stout's** PIC line and wound vac have been removed. He is having some issues with his health and asks his shipmates for their prayers.
- **Rick Wise** had chest and abdomen CT scans done 20 Jan and saw his Oncologist 22 Jan. The scans showed no sign of cancer!
- **John Lookabill** had a heart catheterization this afternoon, Feb. 13th.

- **Pat Davis** saw his doctor on Jan 17. His left lung is almost clear, but the right one that was almost 100% bad is clearing. He also noticed that he doesn't have any stamina. He will go back to see him in February for more follow up.
- **Dave Harvey** will be having neck surgery on February 26th.
- **James Graham** is having surgery on his foot on Friday afternoon. The doctor thinks one of the screws has come loose. James said he told the doc he knew he always had a screw loose.
- **Al Stoll** is in Room 3 at the skilled Nursing section at the villages at Summerville rehab center at the end of West 9th North Street. He has a very hard time hearing so phone calls are not easy for him. If visiting before or after lunch is best time.
- **Marvin Miller** is at White Oak Manor. 9285 Medical Plaza Dr. Room 117. He is answering his cell 843.873.0564. This is behind Trident.
- **Bill & Becky Roberts** are living in the Villages, him in Cottage 606 with Becky in the Greenhouse Memory Care Unit. His mailing address is: William Roberts, 201 W. 9th North Street, Unit 99, Summerville SC 29483-6715.
- **Al & Connie Dempster** are in The Bridge of Charleston Assisted Living. Mailing address is: Alan Dempster – Room 222, 2590 Elms Plantation Blvd., North Charleston, SC 29406. Apartment phone – (843) 793-1187.
- Complete/update your page 2 if you have not done so.

Webmaster – Nick Nichols:

- If you change your number or drop your home line, please contact either Larry, Nick or the COB so that we can make the necessary changes locally and with National.
- Until told differently, continue to use the website of <https://ussubvets.org>

Social Media – Lewis Leal:

- Nothing reported.

Membership – Nick Nichols for Larry Knutson

- **Base Standings** [those with more than 200 members]: Charleston is #3 in USSVI membership.
 - Groton 1182 - 2) Hampton Roads 286 - 3) Charleston 255 - 4) Bremerton 238

National Awards – Bob Browning

- Not present.

Scholarship – Tom Lawson III

- Nothing reported.

Fleet Reserve Association – Ken Hutchison

- Old Fashioned Navy Breakfast at the FRA will be held on 12 April. The date has changed from March to April.

Election Coordinator – Ken Hutchison

- In May, we will be hold elections for Base Commander and Treasurer. Nominations are needed now for discussion in April. Any candidates, please advise.

Recreation – Johnny Brown

- We have had a lot of activities during the last three months.
- Our next recreation event will be in the June timeframe with a BBQ or a game night at the Riverdogs.

NNPTC Liaison – Anthony Mazza

- NNPTC will be sponsoring the Submarine Birthday Ball on April 5, 2025. The location will be at Trident Tech on Rivers Ave. It is a large venue and there were 500 tickets available, but the tickets are selling fast.
- You can Google “Charleston Sub Ball” and it will take you to the website for ticket purchases.
- The “Charleston Tuxedo” or Vest uniform are acceptable for this event.

Comptroller – Rick Wise

- Rick reviewed the 4th Quarter Budget Report that was placed on each table.
- We exceeded the budget for the float maintenance due to the extent of work that had to be done.
- We also exceeded our Recreation budget with the cost of the Christmas party. It was, after all, a really good party.
- We still have a \$1,160 surplus.
- Please return copies of the report to Rick.

Nuclear Power School Awards – Phil Nunnally

- The next graduation ceremony will be held tomorrow, February 14.

Newsletter – Phil Nunnally

- Nothing to report.

Little David – Phil Nunnally

- Boards are cut. Will not be as big of a job as last year, but plans are for either late April or early May.

Float Coordinator – Dave Harvey

- Nothing to report.

SC License Plates – Ed Stank

- Ed has not been able to visit the other bases to press for this effort, but he will soon be able to drive again.
- Ed has received some checks.
- Plans are to have a raffle for the first submariner license plate.
- Ed promoted the Moonshine Mountain event in NC which will be in May.

Ambassador USSVCF – Bob MacPherson

- Bob spoke about the good things that the Charitable Fund does to help SubVets in need. There are ten different areas that the CF has including its own scholarship fund. The CF has its own website – ussvcf.org.
- Bob has a website called TheLeanSubmariner.com, which has about 1,200 stories of submarines. It also has a “How-To” manual which will provide guidance on the CF.
- Bob talked about how we could benefit others well past our own lifetimes by giving to the USSVCF which can be done without getting any lawyers involved. Bob’s website contains info on how to set this up.
- For those in attendance from other Bases this evening, Bob highly recommended that if your base does not have an Ambassador, please find someone to fill that role.

Hunley/Housatic – Tom Holcombe

- The members of the Confederate Heritage Trust will be holding the annual ceremony at Breach Inlet. They are requesting our men to attend the event on February 17.
- Tom will be leading a tour of the CSS Hunley tomorrow morning.

Special Events – Tom Holcombe

- The Amberjack Memorial ceremony, as part of the SER Conference, will be held at the DoubleTree hotel beginning at 0900.

PAO – Rafael Guzman

- Not present

Storekeeper – Woody Woodsmall

- The Ship’s Store tonight is located at the DoubleTree hotel due to the SER Conference. Woody will be at the hotel each day this week minding the store and will see everyone of Charleston Base next month.

COB – Greg Landry

- COB thanked everyone for their attendance tonight and expects to have an enjoyable next few days at the SER Conference.

VA – Tom Lawson

- Nothing reported

Vice Commander – Tom Lawson

- Nothing to report.

Base Commander – Mike Ciesielko

- Not present.

GOOD OF THE ORDER**After Battery – Ray Sparks**

- The annual Hog Roast will be held from 30 MAR to 5 APR 2025
- After Battery is open every Wednesday. Dinner is at 5 pm.
- Tomorrow will be the Low Country Boil as part of the SER Conference events.

Flag Retirement Ceremony – Gordon Long

- A flag retirement ceremony will be held at ParkWay Baptist Church on Saturday 15 FEB. It will be officiated by Dr. Russell Kidman – U.S. Army Combat Veteran – 1991 Desert Storm and current missionary to our military. If anyone has a flag that needs to be retired, see Gordon after the meeting.

Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko

- Not present.

VFW Comedy Tour – Rodney McKanna

- The Summerville VFW Post will host a Comedy Tour on Saturday, 29 March. Tickets are available online.

Drawings & Auctions

- FRA Drawing – David McNeally
- Depth Charge Drawing – Ken Nichols

Closing Ceremony

- Chaplain Nick Nichols led the group in a prayer of Benediction.
- Vice Commander Tom Lawson announced adjournment of the meeting with a sound of three blasts of the diving alarm.
- Meeting closed at 2011.