

**United States Submarine Veterans, Inc., Charleston Base**  
**Minutes of Business Meeting**  
**10 April 2025**

**Opening Ceremonies:**

- The April 2025 Base Meeting was called to order by Base Commander Mike Ciesielko with a quorum of four officers and a total of 51 members. The meeting started at 1900 with the sound of the diving alarm.
- 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 April was given by Base Chaplain Nick Nichols.
- Submarines lost during the month of April:
  - **USS PICKEREL (SS-177)** April 3, 1943 – 7<sup>th</sup> war patrol Lost with all hands – 74 souls
  - **USS SNOOK (SS-279)** April 8, 1945 – 9<sup>th</sup> war patrol Lost with all hands – 84 souls
  - **USS THRESHER (SSN-593)** April 10, 1963 – sea trials Lost with all hands – 129 souls
  - **USS GUDGEON (SS-211)** April 18, 1944 – 12<sup>th</sup> war patrol Lost with all hands – 79 souls
  - **USS GRENADIER (SS-210)** April 22, 1943 – 6<sup>th</sup> war patrol 76 POWs – 72 survived the war
  - **Five Boats and 370 Men Lost**

**Master Chief Fire Control Technician, Submarines**  
**Martin K. Sessler, US Navy Submarine Veteran**  
**Departed on Eternal Patrol 25 March 2025**

- The Creed of USSVI was read by Vice Commander Tom Lawson.
- Vice Commander Tom Lawson welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

**Honor and Appreciation:**

- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko and Chaplain Nick Nichols presented a small award to outgoing NNPTC Command Master Chief MMNCM(SW/AW) Cindy Huratiak as a token of Appreciation from Charleston Base in recognition of her outstanding support of Charleston Base.
- Cindy graciously accepted the award with a very short speech.
- She will be relieved as NNPTC CMC by our Base Member and NNPTC Liaison Anthony Mazza.

**Holland Club Award Presentation:**

- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko introduced Holland Club Chairman Bill Freligh.
- HC Chairman Bill Freligh read the names of the former WWII Swamp Fox Chapter members and many of their contributions to the U.S. Navy Submarine Force and USSVI Charleston Base. All of these men are now on Eternal Patrol.
- Bill recognized Honorary and now Associate Member Casey Power – in attendance this evening – who would drive from Atlanta to ensure that his dad Stacy could be at the meeting each month.
- Bill explained the purpose of the Holland Club and read the text of the USSVI National award.
- Base Commander Mike Ciesielko read the award from Charleston Base and signed each certificate.
- John Lookabill was presented with a qual rocker denoting 70 years of submarine qualification, who then assisted the ceremony by presenting the Holland Club hat to each man.
- Bill Freligh read the Name, Qual Date and Boat of each man below, who came forward with his guests to accept the Holland Club award. Each individual presentation was recorded with a photograph, followed by a group picture once all citations were given:
  - **FTGC(SS) Kenneth Brenneman**
  - **MSC(SS) Randy Bognar**
  - **LT John Furst**
  - **FTCS(SS) Thomas Lawson**
  - **MM1(SS) Joseph O'Saben**
  - **CAPT Stephen Weise**
  - **EMC(SS) William Woodsmall III**

- Bill Freligh asked the senior Base members – in turn – to stand and be recognized as submarine qualified for 65/60/55 years.

### **Introductions of New Attendees:**

- Two men introduced themselves to the group this evening:
  - Rich Holt – MM1 – Qualified on USS Parche SSN683 – JUN 2000
  - James Railton – STS1 – Qualified on USS George C Marshall SSBN654 – SEP 1981 – Also served aboard USS John C Calhoun SSBN630, USS Batfish SSN681, USS L Mendell Rivers SSN686, FLEASWTRACEN PAC, FBMSTC Charleston

### **Old Business:**

- **SC Submarine License Plates – BC Mike Ciesielko / Ed Stank:**
  - Ed talked about the Submarine Designated SC License Plates.
  - To obtain the plates, SC requires a non-refundable fee of \$6,800. Other bases and individuals have contributed to the effort. Treasurer Ricky Collins reported a balance (including the expected \$3,500 to be approved by the Base) of \$6,455.
  - Ed has provided info to the Regional Commander for consideration of 501C designation. It is more likely that one of the State House Representatives will have the tags pushed through as legislation.
  - Currently, there are three of the bases in SC that have not yet participated.
  - Ed has talked to the director at DMV who advise Ed that SC has more than 400 specialty license plates. This number of different plates makes it difficult for police to keep up with what is/is not a valid plate.
  - The sales of the tags are to be applied to the reimbursement of the \$6,800 original fee. Once plate sales exceed that amount, the money shall be provided to the USSVCF. Bob MacPherson is the Ambassador at Charleston Base for USSVCF.
  - Ken Hutchison made a motion with Art Sattler seconding to draw \$3,500 from the Charleston Base Investment Fund to be applied to the Submarine SC license plate effort. The motion passed without any discussion. Treasurer Ricky Collins will withdraw \$3,500 from the Investment Fund.

### **New Business:**

- **Charleston Base By-Laws Amendment (First Reading) – Base Secretary Gordon Long**
  - (First Reading in April – Vote at Second Reading in May 2025)
  - THE BOD RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENT BE ADDED TO THE BYLAWS.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **ARTICLE V - MEMBERSHIP**

##### **Section 3. ASSOCIATE**

E. Associate Members will not hold the elected Base offices of Base Commander, Vice Commander, Secretary, Treasurer or appointed position of COB. Associate Members may participate and vote on Base matters during any meeting the same as Regular members. The Base Commander may appoint Associate Members to serve on Base Committees and as Committee Chair.

NOTATION: This paragraph E will be inserted into Article V – Section 3. The existing paragraphs E, F and G shall be relabeled as F, G and H respectively.

\*\*\*\*\*

- **Charleston Base Elections – Election Coordinator Ken Hutchison**
  - The upcoming Base election has two (2) nominees for Base Commander
    - Dave Harvey
    - Johnny Brown
  - Ken made additional requests for nominees for Base Commander with no response.
  - The upcoming Base election has one (1) nominee for Treasurer – Ricky Collins
  - Ken made additional requests for nominees for Base Treasurer with no response.
  - Elections for both of these offices will be held at the end of the May Base Meeting.

### Secretary – Gordon Long:

- The Minutes from the March 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 March 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:
  - **USS THRESHER (SSN 593)** was commissioned in 3 August 1961.  
62 years ago today, on April 10, 1963 the THRESHER was lost with all hands during deep-diving exercises, 112 crew members and 17 civilian technicians – a total of 129 men. 15 minutes after reaching test depth, she communicated with USS Skylark that she was having problems. Skylark heard noises "like air rushing into an air tank" - then, silence. Rescue ship Recovery (ASR-43) subsequently recovered bits of debris, including gloves and bits of internal insulation. Photographs taken by Trieste proved that the submarine had broken up, taking all hands onboard to their deaths in 1,400 fathoms of water, some 220 miles east of Boston.
- **Historic date: 125 years ago**, April 11, 1900 the United States Submarine Force was established.

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

- **Marty Sessler** departed on EP on 25 March at Summerville Medical Center. He had been admitted for double pneumonia, fluid on his lungs and a bacterial infection in his blood. Sharon has said there will be a memorial service at St. Luke's Lutheran in Summerville on 22 May. SUBVETS will participate. More info will be forthcoming after we talk with the funeral home and pastor.
- **Gail Railton, wife of base member Jim Railton**, passed away early morning on 6 April at Agape Hospice Care after suffering a stroke. Please be in prayer for Jim and the family.
- **Ed Collins**, a non-base member but many of you know, had a triple bypass on 18 March. We understand his recovery is going well.
- **Ronnie Vandiver** had throat surgery on 2 April. The surgeon told Kim it went well. He was hospitalized for a couple of days and in home recovering
- **Jerry Stout** is managing his skin and prostate cancer with treatment plans.
- **Rick Carlson** has been diagnosed with low level prostate cancer.
- **Ed Simokat** is receiving some assistance at his house from the NNPTC FCPOA. Ed fell on Sunday and his wife, Judy, hurt her back when she tried to stop his fall. Ed would like to hear from some of his shipmates. Number and email are on the Sailing List.
- **Dave Harvey** is recovering well from neck surgery.
- **James Graham Sr.** is a new grandfather. Daniel Dewey Graham was born on 27 March.
- **Ken Curtis** is at home with Palliative Hospice care coming to the house several times during the week. He welcomes phone calls and visitors. Please keep Ken and Barbara both in your prayers. Rick Carlson visited Ken and said he is doing well.
- **Roger Rader** has home health coming in and recovery is going well. He is getting out now.
- **John Lookabill** had the heart valve repair on 24 Mar. The surgery was successful and he is recovering at home.
- **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 anyone is having a boat reunion here in Charleston there is a place on the home page of the base website to inform shipmates about it. I just put up the 641 2026 Reunion.
- 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.
- USSVI National Senior Vice Commander Tim Carlisle reports that the Blackbaud Contract ends on 3/14/25, so on 3/15/25 the ussvi.org website will go down. Please use <https://ussubvets.org> for any of your website needs. We are working hard on the replacement website and will announce updates soon.
- Many of us are used to the magazine called “Shift Colors”. It has been discontinued. The new one is **Sailor for Life**, a magazine designed especially for Navy Veterans, Retirees, and Families. Its pages contain updates on Navy matters including news from the SECNAV Retiree Council, stories about DOD policies, medical and educational benefits, legislation affecting veterans, and photographs from around the fleet. It is now the Official Newsletter of MyNavyHR, and is dedicated to ensuring Sailors have the most up-to-date information about Personnel, Pay, Education, Training, Retention and MyNavy HR transformation. It will be delivered to you via email if you have a DFAS email address. Also you can find the first two issues of this magazine on our base website on the Documents webpage.
- **Base Standings** [those with more than 200 members]: Charleston is #3 in USSVI membership.
  - Groton 1090 - 2) Hampton Roads 284 – Tied for 3) Charleston 242 & Bremerton 242

#### **Hobson Memorial – Nick Nichols:**

- On 27 April at 1330 the FRA will be having a Memorial Service at the Home to recognize the sinking of USS HOBSON DD464/DSM464 on 26 April 1952. *Hobson* collided with the aircraft carrier USS Wasp (CV-18) and sank with the loss of 176 crew. The ships had been undertaking amphibious exercises in the Atlantic, with *Wasp* practicing night flying, when *Hobson* attempted to turn in front of the carrier and collided with *Wasp*. *Hobson* was broken in two and quickly sunk, causing the greatest loss of life on a US Navy ship since World War II. *Hobson* was commissioned in 1942. SUBVETS will be participating with other groups in the laying of a wreath during the service.

#### **Social Media – Lewis Leal:**

- Not present.

#### **Membership – Larry Knutson**

- Larry reported that as of this moment, USSVI NATIONAL lists Charleston Base as having 242 members, however, these numbers will increase next month.
- Larry read the names of those members whose dues had lapsed and membership restored.
- Larry read names of new Regular and Associate members.
- [SECRETARY’S NOTE: Was unable to clearly hear the names on the recording. Names will be obtained from Membership and published in the May Base Minutes. It was also about this time that there seemed to be a medical emergency with Steve (Buddha) Nelms. The meeting was paused briefly while one of the Base members, having had medical training, checked him out. There was no medical emergency. Buddha left the meeting under his own power with some help.]
- **Base Standings** [those with more than 200 members]: Charleston is #3 in USSVI membership.
  - Groton 1090 - 2) Hampton Roads 284 – Tied for 3) Charleston 242 & Bremerton 242

#### **National Awards – Bob Browning**

- Bob requests help with obtaining information for the National Awards.

### **Scholarship – Tom Lawson III**

- The drawing for the heavy metal Dolphins will be at the end of the meeting tonight.
- The drawing for another set of Dolphins will be at the May Base Meeting.
- The balance in the Scholarship fund is approximately \$6,300 at this time. We have had some very generous donations and we are thankful for these.
- The Base Website Scholarship information has been updated.
- The deadline date for scholarship applications is now May 9, 2025. Scholarships will be presented at the June Base Meeting.
- The Admiral Osborn Scholarship is limited to graduating High School Seniors.
- Tom joined the Scholarship Committee after seeing the results it provided for his granddaughter.
- Tom is looking for another team member to be part of the Scholarship Committee.

### **Fleet Reserve Association – Ken Hutchison**

- Ken Hutchison issued a Mea Culpa for the scheduling conflict of the FRA Old Fashioned Navy Breakfast with the Amberjack/Lost Boats Ceremony.
- There will be a drawing for a Barbeque Smoker on April 12 during the breakfast..
- On Sunday, April 27, the FRA will hold the Hobson Ceremony. The Fleet Reserve National President will be there as guest speaker.
- The FRA will hold a Memorial Day Ceremony and will put flags on veterans' graves at Plantation Memorial Gardens.
- On May 3, the FRA is planning a simple get-together to simply drink beer and "have a good time".
- Ken recognized Cindy Huratiak again, as she was the guest speaker at the FRA Veterans Day event two years ago, where she did an outstanding job.

### **Recreation – Johnny Brown**

- Nothing reported

### **NNPTC Liaison – Anthony Mazza**

- Anthony reported about the Submarine Birthday Ball. Several of the young submariners mentioned how good it was to meet the retirees.
- The tentative date for the Submarine Ball is April 18, 2026 to be held at Trident Tech on Rivers Ave. (Same as this year).
- Ken Hutchison, along with those in the room, congratulated Anthony Mazza on his new job as NNPTC CMC.

### **Comptroller – Rick Wise**

- The First Quarterly Report is available online. If you would like to see it, Rick has a copy at his table; see him after the Meeting tonight.

### **Nuclear Power School Awards – Phil Nunnally**

- The next graduation ceremony will be held on April 11.
- Phil likes to see people there – even if not a NUC.
- Parking is limited. Meet at the NEX parking lot to carpool, leaving at 0800 sharp.

### **Newsletter – Phil Nunnally**

- There are a lot of events this month.
- Even if you are not the official photographer, please send photos to Phil. He will put as many as he can in the Newsletter.

### **Little David – Phil Nunnally**

- Working party on April 26 to replace boards. On April 29, we will paint.

### **SER Conference – Dave Harvey**

- The location for the next SE Regional Conference has not yet been determined, however Dave expects to hear from them by next month.
- The National Convention is in Orlando, FL on August 31 – September 6.

### **Float Coordinator – Dave Harvey**

- Dave asked and Anthony Mazza will check on placing the float outside the building for the Sub Ball next year.
- The float will be commercially transported to Manitowoc, WI for “All Things Submarine” where it will be in the parade.
- Dave will take the float out to the Lost Boats Ceremony at Patriot’s Point.
- Dave talked about fund raising for Scholarship with the float.
- Dave talked about the contacts made at the fair. He is interested in putting together a Membership Promotion Team.

### **Ambassador USSVCF – Bob MacPherson**

- Bob spoke of a recently designed coin of which the sales support the USSVCF Brotherhood fund. This is a fund of which we can use to provide material for the NNPTC FCPOA when they are assisting one of our Base members.
- The USSVCF has ten different funds which offer varied assistance. The USSVCF Scholarship fund is another source of money for our young people.
- A sailing regatta will be held on Saturday, May 31. They are looking for crew members. A lot of recognition to Charleston Base could be obtained.
- Fund raising is all about networking. We may even be able to take the float there for display.

### **Kaps 4 Kids – Art Sattler**

- Nothing to Report

### **Special Events – Tom Holcombe**

- The Lost Boats ceremony will be held 1000 on Saturday, April 12 at the Cold War Memorial at Patriots Point. The conflict with the FRA Navy Breakfast was noted. Tom asked for a show of hands for how many expect to be there at CWM.
- COB and BC will meet at the storage building to get chairs and other items for the ceremony.

### **PAO – Rafael Guzman**

- Not present

### **Storekeeper – Woody Woodsmall**

- Woody did some investigative work and located the owner of the patch found in the parking lot.
- Woody has obtained more of the USSVI 60-year patch sets.
- Woody encouraged everyone to go to “theleansubmariner.com” and follow the link to the USSVCF to place orders for five of the new coins. He has a couple of them right now, which he provided to Scholarship for auction.
- Woody has some heavy dolphin pens which take a Parker refill. The wood is from a whiskey barrel and will last you a lifetime. \$30.
- There are plenty of items to put on your vehicle to display your submariner status. Go see Woody.

### **COB – Greg Landry**

- Nothing reported

### **VA – Tom Lawson**

- 2024 VA Benefits book is now on the Charleston Base website under DOCUMENTS.

**Vice Commander – Tom Lawson**

- Nothing to report.

**Base Commander – Mike Ciesielko**

- Mike thanked the members of the Board for support during his seven years as Base Commander.
- Mike expressed his gratitude to Cindy Huratiak and Anthony Mazza for the coordination between NNPTC and Charleston Base.
- Mike thanked Chaplain Nick Nichols for his sound advice in many situations.
- Mike believes that his goal as BC to leave the Base better (and younger) than he found it has been met.

**GOOD OF THE ORDER****After Battery – Rick Wise**

- Nothing to report

**Gun Club – Mike Ciesielko**

- Mike will plan some good Gun Club activity in the future.

**Drawings & Auctions**

- FRA Drawing – Stephen Weise
- Depth Charge Drawing – Ken Hutchison
- DOLPHINS – Woody Woodsmall

**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 2054.