



PROTOCOL & ETIQUETTE ESSENTIALS

Prepared by the Grand Lodge P. & E. Committee
Issue No. 15 – First Issued February 2012 – Revised May 2020

Greetings from Your P. & E. Committee

Welcome to the latest issue of "**P&E Essentials**". It is anticipated that these informative and easy-to-read newsletters will be published several times a year.

"**P&E Essentials**" is intended to be an interactive instrument, designed to help you make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge. The Committee welcomes questions and/or suggestions for topics that could be addressed in future issues. Questions or suggestions not related to Protocol and Etiquette will be forwarded to the appropriate Grand Lodge Committee for response.

Contact Information

Gordon Crutcher, <i>Chairman</i> E-mail: Gordon@Crutcher.ca	Garnet Schenk, FCF , <i>Editor</i> E-mail: gschenk@cogeco.ca
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Committee Members

The current Protocol & Etiquette Committee members are:

Gordon Crutcher (*Chairman*); William Elliott; Dennis Hawman; Michael Litvak; George McCowan (*Secretary*); Bryan Middleton; Richard Morreau; James Pearson; David Purvis; Garnet Schenk (*Editor of P&E Essentials*); Brian Seabourn; David Stevens; and Terrance Van Horne.

With appropriate advance notice – and subject to travel constraints – any member of the Committee would be happy to make a presentation about P&E in your Lodge, or at a District Meeting.

THE BUSINESS PORTION OF A LODGE MEETING

This issue concludes the discussion begun last month, about the protocols associated with conducting a Committee of General Purposes (CGP) meeting.

How to Efficiently Conduct the Business Portion of a Lodge Meeting

One way to reduce the time consumed by the business

portion of a Lodge meeting is to conduct as much of the business, (as permitted by your Lodge Bylaws), in the Committee of General Purposes. Then, at the next meeting of the Lodge, instead of duplicating all the discussions which took place at the CGP meeting, the Worshipful Master simply asks for the CGP Minutes to be read, (or summarized, if the Minutes are to be/have been distributed). In one brief report, the Lodge is informed of the accounts that must be paid, of the financial position of the Lodge, of all petitions for membership, of the business that has been resolved or should be placed before the membership for consideration, and of the welfare of all members. A motion to accept the report and to have all accounts paid, duly seconded and approved, can see the dispatch of all business in less than five minutes.

Minutes of Lodge Meetings

- Nothing within our Constitution stipulates that Minutes must be read out at meetings.
- So that every member of your Lodge is fully informed, it is preferable for a copy of the Minutes to be sent out with the monthly summons, (including the minutes of the CGP).
- All that is then needed at the Lodge meeting is to have a motion made, seconded and passed that the Minutes be adopted as distributed.

Agenda

- Open Lodge as per the Ritual.
- Reading of the Summons.
- Motion to accept the Minutes as distributed (or read).
- Reading of the CGP Minutes, voting on adoption of same and paying accounts recorded therein.

Rules of Order

Your Lodge Bylaws may cite a recognized authority, whose Rules of Order would be used as a guide at Lodge meetings, (such as Robert's Rules of Order). However, most Lodge Bylaws are silent on this point.

Formal rules of order are designed to control a meeting such as might be held by a parliamentary committee.

Please share this newsletter with other members of your Lodge – and your Masonic friends

However, this type of strict formality is inappropriate in a Masonic setting. Masonic meetings should be of a more casual and friendly nature, but nevertheless systematic and orderly and, above all, laced with common sense. The W.M. governs debate and decides when a vote shall be taken. He also determines when the Lodge shall close and when it shall recess. While formal rules of order may be used as a guide, they cannot be applied fully in conducting a Masonic meeting, because of the extensive powers vested in the office of W.M. Members are urged to study the sections headed "Lodge Meetings" in the Constitution.

The main motions encountered in a Lodge require a seconder. An amendment to a motion must also be seconded. There can be an amendment to an amendment, but neither must alter the substance of the original motion. Usually in a Lodge the mover and seconder of the original motion might be asked whether they would be willing to adapt their motion to fit in with the general feeling of the debate. If they are agreeable, problems regarding amendments and voting are smoothed away. This would be common sense and Masonic democracy in action.

Motions

Once a motion has been properly proposed and seconded at a business meeting of the Lodge, (e.g. "*I move that the accounts as recommended by the Committee of General Purposes be paid*"), then the W.M. will call for a vote.

When the W.M. declares the result of the vote on the motion, it is implicit that he knows the type of majority necessary for each vote. Knowledge, therefore, of the Constitution and the Lodge Bylaws is vital so the W.M. is aware of the type of majority, (e.g. simple majority, 2/3, 3/4), that is necessary to support a motion.

Voting in a Lodge is not optional. The Constitution does, however, permit the Master to excuse a member from voting. It is assumed that a member would only be excused in exceptional circumstances. Voting in Lodge should not be confused with balloting for a candidate. All members present MUST ballot in this case. Once again, members are advised to read the section headed "Lodge Meetings" in the Constitution.

The Worshipful Master's Powers and Responsibilities

Newly-raised brethren speedily learn that the parliamentary law which governs the usual body of men assembled in any organization does not govern a Masonic Lodge.

In a secular body, the presiding officer is subject to the dictates of the organization and may be removed by it.

The Master of a Lodge is not controlled by the Lodge and can only be removed by the Grand Master. In a secular body the presiding officer's decision can be overturned by the body itself. The Master's decision in a Masonic Lodge can only be appealed to the Grand Master, or the Grand Lodge. The presiding officer of a secular body is supposed to conduct its meetings according to the "Rules of Order". The Master of a Masonic Lodge is totally responsible to the Grand Lodge, the Grand Master and the fraternity in general for all that his Lodge does and, as such, is clothed with all the authority needed to exercise full control.

The responsibilities which rest upon the Master's shoulders are great. The Grand Lodge and the Grand Master hold him responsible for everything that happens in his Lodge. He is not accountable to his Lodge and cannot be removed by his Lodge. There are certain things he cannot do without Lodge action, such as spending Lodge money, or open before the time stated in the Bylaws at a regular communication. But the Lodge cannot dictate to him what can be discussed, and if, in his judgment, something should not be discussed or acted upon, it is for him and only for him to say that it should or should not. Were it otherwise, a Lodge might "run away" with him, and – in its enthusiasm – do that for which the Grand Lodge or Grand Master would censure or punish him. Therefore, the Master has full control of debate, and work, and acts. Ordinary parliamentary law, which might interfere with that control, does not apply.

But, just as the Masonic Lodge is sometimes said to represent King Solomon's Temple and the Master is said to represent King Solomon, so must the good Master exercise the Wisdom of Solomon in his governing of the Craft. He must be careful not to either over-exercise his authority or fail to exercise it; for either way he will drive his members away from the meetings.

His goal should be to observe the following precepts:

1. The will of the majority must be carried out; the rights of the minority must be protected; the prerogatives and responsibilities of the Master and the customs of the Craft must be preserved.
2. Each Brother has rights and obligations equal to those of every other member, subject only the responsibilities of the Master and the traditions of the Fraternity.
3. Each question or proposition presented is entitled to full and free debate if peace and harmony are to prevail among the Craft and debate does not degenerate into argument.
4. Only one subject may claim the attention of the Lodge at any one time.
5. Brethren have the right to ask for information, clarification, or instruction.
6. Certain motions take precedence over, (i.e. may interrupt), other motions.
7. The personalities and desires of each Brother must be merged into the larger unit of the Lodge.

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