

THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE OF ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

LODGE COMMITTEES

Applicability and Responsibility

This document is applicable to all Constituent Lodges of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Connecticut, and may be of some use to coordinate and appendant bodies.

Responsibility for maintaining this document rests with the Committee on Masonic Education, and with the approval of the Grand Master.

References

Grand Lodge of Connecticut Constitution, Masonic Law, Practice, Rules and Regulations:

Section 3002	Lodge has Authority over Committees
Section 3215	Master's Prerogative to Appoint All Committees
Section 4115	Petition must be Referred to Committee on Investigation
Lodge Bylaws	May establish Standing Committees

Discussion

The many activities of a Lodge are more than can normally be efficiently handled by the Master and his Officers. Committees are the most effective means to get specific things done.

Committees, General

There are two types of committees: standing and special. Standing committees are those which are required by the lodge bylaws. The membership of these committees may change each year. They may include: Sick and Visiting, Masonic Information, Program, Publicity, House, Finance, Budget, Auditing, Examining, Custodian of the Work, etc.

Special committees facilitate the execution of a particular program, project, or meeting. For instance: Bylaws, Correspondence, Library, Tellers, Entertainment, Picnics, Dances, Plays, Computer, Ladies' Night, Instruction, Printing, etc.

Committee work is an excellent medium for creating and maintaining active interest among the membership, so it is a good idea to pass the "chores" around and give as many as possible something to do.

A most important duty of a Master is the appointment of Lodge committees. Generally, local Lodge bylaws provide for a number of standing (required) committees; likewise, the Grand Lodge Rules & Regulations have certain requirements in this area. A Master is reminded that it is his prerogative to appoint to these committees, brothers whom he and his management team believe will serve the Lodge best. Thus, a motion from the floor demanding the "appointment of a committee to consist of Brothers Dewey, Cheatem, and Howe" is an improper motion and should not be accepted as such.

This also means that a brother who has served in one capacity in the Lodge for many years need not be appointed to that position. Each Master has the prerogative of appointing his own committees; when a Master goes out of office, his committees are dissolved. The newly installed Master then creates his own committee structure.

If a member's work on a given committee is no longer adequate, and if there is available and willing to serve a brother who can effectively handle the responsibility, the Master is well within his rights to effect that change.

Warning! Care must be taken in replacing a volunteer who has done the best job he could for many years. Such a decision may be looked upon unfavorably both by the brother being replaced and the Lodge as a whole.

Perhaps rather than summarily replacing a failing committee member, the well-meaning brother could be asked to teach another brother the duties of the position. If he is willing to "train" a co-chairman who will take over the bulk of the duties of a committee in the future, it is possible that peace and harmony can be maintained. Also, a "member emeritus" position on a committee can be created in recognition of a brother's long and faithful service.

Brother Frank L. Linsley, Most Worshipful Grand Master in 1963, explained the purpose of several lodge committees.

Committee on Education

This committee's job is to "create a thorough understanding so that Masons and non-Masons clearly understand the tenets and principles of the Fraternity; that by proper education, Masons will be better enabled to talk as Masons should; to create a proper atmosphere among Masons and non-Masons, so that a good opinion of the Fraternity will result."

This committee concerns itself with the enlightenment of all the members, both old and new. Its job is to formulate educational and informative programs so that all will become better acquainted with Masonic history, symbolism, tenets, and principles. There are many aids available: candidate booklets, "Short Talk Bulletins", Grand Lodge, Lodge, and public libraries, Lodges of Research, the Committee on Masonic Education, and many pieces of printed matter available at little or no cost.

A few tried and tested educational programs are as follows:

Spelling bees using Masonic words.

Masonic quiz programs.

Skits to underline Masonic "boners."

Debates on Masonic subjects between teams picked in advance from the membership.

Demonstrations, such as differing "Grand Honors" in various Grand Lodges.

Panel discussion on Masonic subjects (requires thorough preparation).

Exemplification and explanation of Masonic law and behavior

Masonic films or slides, like the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association's illustrated lecture, the videotape series available through the Grand Lodge office.

Dissecting a degree. The lecturer stops the degree work at many points to explain special features and invites audience participation.

An "experience meeting." Let three brothers tell of unusual or heartwarming experiences due to Masonic contacts in unusual or faraway situations.

Committee on Programs

"This committee should direct its attention to increasing the social life in the Lodge, to the extent of including member's families and friends." (Linsley)

Actually this committee can be responsible for all types of programs. The chairman becomes the "producer", "manager", and "promoter" of lodge affairs. It is he who relieves the Master of many organizational and promotional details. This committee has many aids available.

General interest programs are easily arranged. Videos dealing with American history, especially the Revolutionary period, are full of Masonic interest. The seasons of the year, Masonic anniversaries, or historic birthdays like Washington's suggest many programs which will interest the brethren of the lodge.

The Grand Lodge Office has available for loan many videos on a variety of subjects.

The Masonic Service Association of the United States produces video programs of outstanding speakers bringing to brethren one of their favorite Masonic messages. The Association has videos dealing with Masonry's great service of love to its sons and brothers in the Armed Forces, the Masonic Service Centers at various camps and training centers, and the hospital visitation program. An extensive catalog is free on request.

The anniversary of the founding of the lodge or of the Grand Lodge of Connecticut, or a program honoring the heroic death of Brother and General David Wooster in the Revolutionary War, are examples of special programs featuring historical subjects.

Lodges which make a special effort to attend church on St. John's Day in June and December and to devote one night to "Rededication and Reconsecration" will not only attract the interest of their spiritually minded members, but will also present themselves to the community as a fraternal organization with a serious purpose.

No Lodge should overlook the opportunity to celebrate a Past Masters' Night or a Homecoming Day. Such programs, if well planned and directed to non-resident members, can do much to keep the mystic tie a living reality.

For all programs, however, the Worshipful Master should give just as much thought to the termination as to a prompt beginning. More good Lodge meetings have been ruined, and the interest of more members lost, by having too much rather than too little planned or taking place. This admonition applies to conferring degrees, as well as to special programs. Poor planning and careless execution result in delays, long recesses, and excessive closing exercises. More than ever, brethren are interested in meetings that start promptly, move "snappily", and close at a reasonable hour.

Considerable thought should be given to some good social events during the year. Begin with an installation ceremony to which all members of the family and friends are invited, a Lodge picnic, a Ladies' Night dinner (with something special for the ladies), or a dinner-dance, or a family outing to the Masonic Healthcare Center on Grand Master's Day. Any number of other interesting possibilities suggest themselves for making the Lodge less mysterious to the non-Masons in the family. They like to feel that they have a part in the activities of the Lodge.

Lectures on Freemasonry or some important issue of the day, by recognized authorities and scholars, could well be considered. Adapted to the tastes and interests of the brethren, such programs will be well appreciated. The Lodges of Research are willing to provide speakers on many subjects.

The organization of a computer club, dramatic group, or a study club is a further device for capturing the interest of various groups in the lodge. Their talents can provide many special activities for the local brothers; there is a wealth of Masonic resource material for such groups to use. A good executive will discover the talents represented by the brethren of his Lodge and will put them to work to make his programs more meaningful and attractive.

Occasionally read in Lodge excerpts from Masonic literature, such as the Short Talk Bulletins, which the Lodge receives each month from the Masonic Service Association. More Masons will attend Lodge if they know that there is going to be something for them to think about.

Vary the program! Be different! It's the monotony of activities and procedures that keep brothers away from the meetings. Even with a busy schedule of degree work, every Master can increase interest by departing from previous custom or by injecting a new program occasionally. Have some brother, the more obscure the better, who has done something that exemplified a Masonic virtue, escorted to the altar and congratulate him on his work. Extend a special welcome to the oldest Past Master, or congratulations to the member of a degree team who has just completed his one hundredth performance as the principal craftsman.

Encourage debate when there is time for it. Have someone challenge a brother's proposal, even though he may be "for" it. It takes time and effort to dig out the little things that everyone takes for granted, but recognition is a form of appreciation that creates more interest and activity than most men dream of. Good programs are the result of good public relations in the Lodge.

Conduct a show, skit, play, talent revue, or other entertainment for the guests at the Masonic Healthcare Center in Wallingford or Ashlar of Newtown. Ask Masonicare's Vice President of Fraternal Relations how this can be arranged.

Committee on Publicity

"Through use of diverse media, this committee can publicize our Masonic activities, as permissible, that the whole world will know our organization is an active one." (Linsley)

The membership should be kept fully informed about Lodge activities. At each stated communication, the Master should announce future meetings and special events. A schedule should be posted on the Lodge bulletin board.

Many Lodges mail regular monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly announcements to all members; these range from simple post cards to elaborate bulletins. Such "trestle boards" vary according to the size and financial condition of each lodge, but they are invaluable as contacts with distant or absent members. Whatever kind is used, it should be informative, regular, and "on time."

Local newspapers should be kept informed about Lodge meetings and special events. Regular notices of Masonic meetings inform the public that Masons are "at labor." Special programs must be written up and sent to the editors of newspapers by some qualified brother who is willing to serve on the Publicity Committee. Not every story submitted will be accepted. The newspaper's requirements as to length and form should be followed carefully. Inviting reporters and photographers to cover a special event may help to get the coverage desired. Such professionals should be treated as guests, especially for dinners.

If there is a radio or cable TV station in the community, keep the newscasters informed of the Lodge's activities. Their programs are too short to include all the announcements they receive, but persistence is frequently an aid in establishing the importance of the news items submitted.

Caution! The names of candidates for the Entered Apprentice degree must NEVER be listed in mailed announcements, trestle boards, or releases to newspapers, radio, or TV stations. They are never publicized in any manner. The names of those advancing to the degrees of Fellowcraft and Master Mason may be included in local trestle-boards so that friends in the Lodge who may have been unaware of their application may witness their advancement in Masonry.

A good publicity program will make our Masonic brothers aware of the Lodge's programs and achievements. This committee should make use of every means to attain their end: newspapers, radio, mail, and the bulletin board. They might even author the trestle board, produce flyers and announcements, write a speech for the telephone committee, etc.

Committee on Public Relations

Freemasonry's relations with the community are important to the individual brother, the Lodge, and the fraternity as a whole. Over and over again, however, it must be emphasized that good public relations depend on the individual Mason. Each brother

promotes good public relations only if his Masonic training is reflected in his daily life at home and in the community at large. Every member is a window through which non-Masons look at the institution. What they see in the individual Mason determines their attitude to the craft as a whole.

The fraternity might spend millions to "promote" Masonry through the media of mass communication. But Freemasonry's great reputation for benevolence, brotherly love, relief, and truth was earned without such fanfare and publicity. It was earned by good Masons who remembered their obligations and lived up to them faithfully, in spite of the ruffians of prejudice, scorn, and misunderstanding.

Good public relations still depend on the individual brother who demonstrates publicly his pride in the fraternity and its ideals, who knows its great and good works and contributes generously to their support, and who goes on foot and out of his way to aid and assist those who need his understanding, sympathy, kindness, dependability, patience, and staunch adherence to morality and truth. Practically, brotherly love is still the fraternity's most productive medium for developing and maintaining good public relations.

One of the oldest traditions in speculative Freemasonry is its benevolent activities to help the infirm and the needy. Lodges which never pay attention to opportunities to help a stricken widow or a fatherless orphan are ignoring one of the fraternity's fundamental "public relations" programs. Lodges which fail to respond to worthy Masonic calls upon their benevolence are forgetting the obligation which every brother took when he knelt at the altar.

Every brother should be taught the facts of organized Masonic charity in Connecticut, as exemplified in the Masonic Healthcare Center at Wallingford and Ashlar of Newtown. Every Mason should know how much of his initiation fee was given to the Masonic Charity Foundation, what it was used for, and how much of his annual dues are a per capita assessment to help pay the operating costs of that work. Every new member should be taken to the Masonic Healthcare Center at Wallingford as part of the Masonic education which he receives from the Lodge.

Informed Masons are proud of their fraternity's great services to humanity. Every brother should be made aware of Masonic charity, not only in his Lodge and Grand Lodge, but also in the concordant bodies. The Knights Templar Educational and Eye Foundations, the educational and medical research projects of the Scottish Rite, the aid to cerebral palsy sufferers by the Grottoes, the Muscular Dystrophy Fund of the Tall Cedars of Lebanon, the world-famous Shriners' Hospitals for Crippled Children, and the Shriners' Burns Institutes (all of which minister to sufferers without regard for race or creed), and the widespread service of love to our sons and brothers in Veterans' Administration Hospitals by the Field Agents of the Masonic Service Association all contribute to a significant image of "men of good will" which Masonic benevolence has created in the minds of the American people. If our Masonic brothers are not aware of such achievements, they will scarcely impress others by their pride in Masonry's fundamental program, "to help, aid, and assist." Good public relations begin at home with well-informed members.

There are a few occasions on which a Lodge appears before the public. These are the funeral ceremony, the laying of cornerstones, the attendance at services of divine worship, the installation of officers, and local parades or fairs. On all such occasions, great care should be taken that the public receives a good impression of the craft and its workings,

so that its reputation is preserved. Aprons and gloves, if used, should be freshly cleaned. The Masons in procession should be well drilled in their order and movements; their demeanor should be serious and purposeful. Ritual should be rehearsed beforehand, even if some of it is read. Its delivery should be clear, audible, and meaningful.

Relationships with churches should never arouse comment or criticism. The Lodge is not a substitute for the church, and Freemasonry is not a religion. Every Mason should fortify his religion and his Masonry by active worship of his own choosing. Masonic services are conducted only when they have been requested by the decedent or his family. A harmonious understanding about the Lodge's participation in the ceremonies at the funeral home or the grave should be worked out with the clergy beforehand.

The Worshipful Master may extend fraternal courtesies and cooperation to other Masonic or fraternal bodies. However, he should keep in mind the fact that the welfare and happiness of his own Lodge are always his first concern. When facilities are shared with other bodies, schedules of meetings and use of facilities should be harmoniously agreed to and clearly understood. The Master of a Lodge must always employ good sense and courtesy in regulating the contacts of his Lodge with other organizations.

Always, however, he will teach by precept and example that good public relations result only when each Master Mason practices the duty assumed by the Worshipful Master, "to set a good example." By a full observance of his duties as a Master Mason, the individual brother will maintain relationships in the community which will bring credit to himself and honor to the fraternity.

Committee on Investigation

Upon acceptance and reading of a petition for membership in Lodge, the Worshipful Master is required to appoint an investigating committee of three brothers, and to designate who is to be chairman.

The appointment of investigating committees, which will interview applicants for Masonry, is a special responsibility of the Master. The committees must take their responsibility seriously. Such committees perform one of the most serious labors of a Masonic lodge. They are "the guardians of the gate," because their recommendation in most cases determines the acceptance or rejection of a candidate. In effect, they determine the kind of men who become members of the Lodge. It takes Masonic knowledge and Masonic wisdom to judge whether an applicant is duly and truly prepared in his heart. It takes Masonic responsibility to investigate and to recommend impartially, without the prejudice or bias of friendship or dislike. A Master should give serious thought to the appointment of investigating committees.

Many applicants are only aware that they know a very few Masons. Other than his recommender, members of the investigating committee may be the only Masons that the applicant meets until he takes his degrees. If he is positively impressed with the men who represent the lodge, and if they do their job properly, he will, upon a positive vote of the lodge, approach his degree work in the proper frame of mind.

Conversely, an unknowledgeable committee, or one which goes about its task in a lackadaisical manner, gives the applicant the impression that Masonry is not the first class

organization which he had hoped to join. Combine this unfavorable impression with poor degree work and the lodge will be lucky to retain that candidate as a member, much less set him to work.

Members of such committees have a double responsibility to the Lodge and to the petitioner. They must be sure that an applicant is worthy and well qualified so that the Lodge will not suffer from the admission of weak or unharmonious workmen. They also have a responsibility, as well as a golden opportunity, to present Freemasonry to the petitioner and his family in the light of its aspirations and beliefs. They should lead the petitioner to consider Masonic initiation as a great honor and a stimulating mental and spiritual experience.

Information to be Obtained:

Investigating committees should learn about the home and family life, the work experiences, and the moral reputation of the petitioner. They should review his physical qualifications, his motives in petitioning, his financial capability, and the extent of his participation in church and community activities.

If Masonic dues and assessments will create hardship for the family, the petitioner should be advised to postpone his application until he can afford it. A petitioner's wife should always be included in that part of the interview which explains a Mason's obligations and assessments.

An investigating committee should, whenever possible, interview the petitioner in his own home. The conference may begin by finding out whether the candidate understands fully the petition he has signed.

The investigation questionnaire should be followed closely, and is generally self-explanatory. Included with this form is an explanation section which should be left with the applicant for his further review. Discreet inquiry in the community may also be made if it is needed to confirm or to contradict the committee's first impressions. The candidate must be a moral and upright man, responsible to his family, his employer, and his community.

The committee's report should evaluate the petitioner's "internal qualifications" only by a general recommendation or disapproval. His physical qualifications should be specifically mentioned only if he has any defect which might impair his ability to receive and transmit instruction, or which might become a hazard during initiation.

Information for the Petitioner:

During the interview, the petitioner should be clearly informed that Freemasonry is not a "burial society" or an insurance benefit organization. As a Mason, he and the members of his family are entitled to appeal to the Lodge for charity or assistance in a time of crisis, but no guaranteed benefits accrue to him because of Masonic membership.

Brother Ralph J. Pollard, Honorary Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Maine, had this advice for those who serve on investigating committees:

"Freemasonry teaches the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, but this does not mean that all men are equally qualified, equally eligible, or equally fitted for membership

in our Fraternity. Freemasonry is an exclusive and highly selective society, which rightly restricts its membership to men of the highest character and standing in the Community; men who put their trust in God, who obey the moral law, and who live under the tongue of good report; men who are mentally, morally and spiritually capable of appreciating and understanding the sublime teaching of our Order, and of translating those teachings into good and noble lives.

"Whenever men who do not possess these qualifications are admitted, trouble is certain to result, and we find ourselves with members who do not belong in an institution such as ours, who can never become Masons in anything but name, and who will always be liabilities rather than assets to our Lodges. With the world in its present condition of confusion and ferment, and with our own American society in a state of moral decline, it is more important than ever that we be vigilant in guarding the gates, and that we exercise the greatest care in the investigation and selection of our candidates. We cannot overemphasize the importance of this responsibility."