

THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE OF ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

LODGE MEETINGS

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 3001	Powers of a Lodge
Section 3005	Lodge Cannot Suspend Bylaws or Be Adjourned
Section 3011	Previous Question Not Permitted
Section 3202	Nominations Prohibited in Any Lodge
Section 3207	Prerogatives of the Master
Section 3208	Duties of the Master
Section 3214	Power of Master to Break Tie Vote
Section 3216	Master to Determine Order of Business
Section 3217	Master Not Bound by Parliamentary Rules
Section 3400 Through 3413	Regulations Concerning Lodge Communications
Section 4001	Rights of a Member
Section 4007	Duties of a Member
Section 4015	No Discussion of Internal Qualifications Permitted
Section 7002	Method of Opening Lodges

Discussion

Meetings of the Lodge held for the purpose of conducting business or work (conferring degrees) are known as "Communications". These are formal and dignified occasions, preceded by a proper ritualistic Opening Ceremony, an order of business determined by the Master, and concluded with the proper Closing Ceremony. While the Lodge is at Labor, the Worshipful Master is in complete control, and the brethren are to conduct themselves with courtesy and respect for one another, are to refrain from personal attacks of any kind, and are not to speak or leave the meeting without the permission of the Master. No business of any kind, including reading of minutes, may be done when the Lodge is not at Labor. One of the principal duties of the Master is to maintain peace and harmony in his Lodge, especially during Lodge Communications.

There are three types of communications: Stated, Special, and Emergent. These are explained in the Grand Lodge Rules and Regulations; the business that may be done at each type of communication is also explained there.

A Stated Communication is the regularly scheduled meeting of the Lodge on the day and time prescribed in its Bylaws. Certain types of business such as presentation of petitions and voting on candidates may only be done during a Stated Communication. See Section 3403.

A Special Communication is any meeting of the Lodge called at the pleasure of the Master and may be held on the day and time specified by him. Section 3406 generally limits the type of business which may be done during a Special Communication to degree work.

An Emergent Communication occurs when the Lodge emerges from the Lodge room after Opening to appear in public in Masonic Dress, usually to perform a Masonic Memorial Service or to attend St. John's Day Services.

Masonic Dress

The seriousness and dignity of Masonic labor suggest that every brother attending Lodge should be appropriately dressed according to his Lodge tradition, or as he would for any serious occasion. Unusual weather conditions or extenuating circumstances may suggest a relaxation of such requirements. Attendance and participation are more important than a strict adherence to any dress code.

For the officers, uniformity of dress is desirable. Some Lodges expect formal dress or tuxedo for certain occasions. Some may substitute white jackets from Memorial Day until Labor Day. It is suggested that white jackets not be worn at Masonic funeral services. When formal dress or tuxedo is not worn, officers should try to achieve uniformity.

Officers' jewels should be uniformly displayed, either hung around the neck from a suitable cord or from a collar draped over the shoulders.

The apron is a badge of honor and as such it should be worn over the customary clothing, not underneath the coat. (An exception to this procedure is made for members of the oldest Connecticut Lodge, Hiram No. 1 of New Haven, among others). Aprons should be

laundered with reasonable frequency, and old, tattered, and stained aprons should be discarded.

The Master's hat is an article of dress as well as a mark of distinction. It need not be a top hat, but should reflect Lodge tradition. The Master's hat may or may not be worn at Masonic memorial services at the discretion of the individual Master. The Master always wears his hat in Lodge except in the presence of superior authority to whom he surrenders the gavel. An acting Master wears the hat when the gavel is presented to him. A Master removes his hat in the presence of death, when mentioning Deity, when giving an Obligation, and when saluting our national flag.

Masonic Etiquette

When a brother enters a Masonic building to attend a communication, he is expected to observe Masonic etiquette. Once the meeting starts he should not indulge in talking or laughter that may disturb the Lodge. His conduct toward other brethren should always be courteous and respectful. This is especially true if candidates are present, for to give them the impression that vulgar conduct, levity and practical joking, or other forms of disrespect are countenanced by the craft, is a misrepresentation of the Lodge in particular and Masonry in general.

Conduct of Meetings

All communications should start on time. Prompt openings encourage punctual attendance. An officer's tardiness should not delay the call to order. If necessary, a substitute should be appointed for at least the opening. The importance of prompt openings should be stressed at officers' meetings, but remember that "action speaks louder than words". Tardy brothers are entitled to admission when the Tiler alarms the Lodge. The Junior Deacon announces the alarm as soon as he can without disturbing the proceedings. After being ordered to "attend the alarm," he ascertains the cause. He announces that a certain number of brethren, "properly clothed and avouched for, desire admittance". When the Master orders them admitted, they go to the west side of the altar and salute the Master, who then recognizes them.

A Master need not rise when he gives the signs; he generally does not rise while the craft is seated. Late arrivals should disturb the meeting as little as possible. They should not expect special attention or an address of welcome. Some Lodge traditions allow saluting the Senior Warden instead of the Worshipful Master under certain circumstances.

Business should be disposed of as quickly as possible. Long discussions on matters of little consequence should be discouraged. A brief officer's meeting before the Lodge is opened, at which the agenda is discussed, will expedite business in the Lodge. This does not mean, however that business matters should be "pressured through". Many Lodge affairs are decided by vote, and because the business of Masonry is democratically managed, the discussion of business in Lodge must be properly safeguarded. It should not degenerate into argument or personal attack; in other words discussion, also, has its etiquette.

The conduct of business is carried on according to the Rules and Regulations of Grand Lodge and the bylaws of the Lodge. Ceremonies are conducted in due form, all signs and gestures of courtesy and respect are given, no loud talking, jesting, or unnecessary moving about is permitted, and harmony and dignity prevail.

The Master has great power as well as responsibility in the conduct of business. Among the unusual powers and prerogatives of the Master of a Masonic Lodge, contrary to those of a presiding officer in a deliberative body using Robert's Rules of Order, for example, are:

The Master may propose a question to the Lodge without waiting for someone to make a motion.

The Master may accept an amendment to a motion if it is clear that there is little or no objection to it, and simply restate the motion as amended.

The Master may speak on the question without giving up his chair.

The Master may revise a motion to make it clear to the brethren so that they know on what they are voting.

The Master controls the debate and decides when to call for a vote. Calls from the floor for "Question" or a motion for the Previous Question are out of order and may be ignored by the Master.

A brother who wishes to speak must rise and salute the Master to request the floor.

All remarks are directed to the Master. A brother who wishes to address another brother, must first obtain permission from the Master to do so.

The Master does not have to accept a motion to Table, but may terminate or postpone discussion at his pleasure.

The Master may set limits on debate, such as how long speeches may be and how many times a brother may rise to speak, or how many speakers will be permitted.

The Master determines when the meeting will be Closed. A motion to adjourn is always out of order.

The Master may simply ask if there are any objections to a question, and if none are raised, may declare the measure approved, as, for example, when a brother has requested a dimit.

A good Master will use these powers to promote efficiency and harmony; to achieve those ends he will never use his gavel autocratically.

Voting in Connecticut Lodges

In the following table, where the word "vote" is used, the law permits voting to be done openly by an 'aye' or 'nay' voice vote or by a show of hands. The Master may, however, require the voting to be done by ballot, or by secret ballot, if in his judgment the peace and harmony of the Lodge would be preserved thereby.

Where the word "ballot" is used, voting may be by balls and cubes or by written paper ballot. Where a "unanimous ballot" is required the ballot must be taken by use of a ballot box with balls and cubes. Regardless of the color of same, the ball is a positive vote and the cube is a negative vote. The numbers in parentheses refer to the applicable Grand Lodge Regulation or to a Grand Master's decision in Nickerson's "Digest of Decisions".

<u>PURPOSE</u>	<u>CONDITIONS PRECEDENT</u>	<u>VOTE NECESSARY TO MAKE EFFECTIVE</u>
Advancement, objection to elected, uninitiated candidate	No degree received. Private request made to Master of Lodge by a member of the Lodge (R4204). No reason given (R4203).	UNANIMOUS BALLOT (R4120). May not petition again for 6 months (R4206, N891, N893) Lodge acquires 3-year jurisdiction (R3309).
Advancement, objection after obligation	Masonic charges must be presented (R4121). Must be in writing and signed by a Master Mason (R6300).	MAJORITY VOTE (R6302). Lodge to be open on highest degree accused has attained (R6301).
Dimit, to grant	Written request, signed by applicant (R4601). Dues paid in full to end of year, not under charges, U.M.C. or Masonic censure (R4001). Not holding a Lodge office (R7203, N475, N311).	MAJORITY VOTE (R4601).
Election of Lodge officers	Annually at stated communication held in December. Master must be a past Warden (R3205). Nominations prohibited (R3202).	WRITTEN BALLOT. Majority of all ballots cast. Blank ballots not counted (R2111, N700). Bylaws cannot be suspended (R3005).
Election to affiliate by dimit	Petition personally signed with full name (R4301). In good standing and fully paid up in Lodge of which a member, or in possession of a valid dimit. Held over one meeting, investigated and report by committee (R4302).	UNANIMOUS BALLOT (R4302). Every member present must vote (R4200). No waiting period before reapplying to same or another Lodge (R4303, N477).
Election to affiliate as a dual member (R4006)	Same as previous item except reference to dimit.	UNANIMOUS BALLOT (R4302). Every member present must vote. No personal jurisdiction acquired. No waiting period before renewal of application.

Election to receive degrees	Petition personally signed, full name (R4111). Two weeks or more elapsed since receipt. Investigation and committee report made (R4115). Not previously rejected within 6 months (R4206).	UNANIMOUS BALLOT (R4200, R4205, R1003xi, R1003xii). Every member present must vote (R4200).
NOTE: Elected candidates and affiliates do not become members of the elected Lodge until they sign its bylaws (R4101, R4123, N802).		
Initiation, objection to	See Advancement, uninitiated candidate.	
Payment of bills	Reading of bills. Approval of finance committee if required by Lodge bylaws.	MAJORITY VOTE.
Petition, to receive and refer to committee (R4115)	A petition properly filled out, signed with full name. Signed by proper recommender and avoucher (R4111, R4112, R4113). Proper fee accompanying. Minimum eighteen years of age (R4104a, R1003x).	MAY BE RECEIVED WITHOUT VOTE.
Release of personal jurisdiction of three years	Personal jurisdiction previously acquired by a ballot within 3 years. No degrees received. Written request from Lodge petitioned.	MAJORITY VOTE (R3309, R4206).
Release of personal jurisdiction over rejected candidate	Personal jurisdiction previously acquired by a ballot within 3 years. Candidate rejected. Written request from Lodge petitioned.	UNANIMOUS BALLOT (R3312, R4206, N726)
Release of personal jurisdiction over Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts	Written request made by Lodge that has been petitioned for remaining degrees or degree.	UNANIMOUS BALLOT (R3309, R7011, N964). Fees received for degrees not conferred to be refunded if release is granted.
Granting a Dimit	Written request. Paid in full. Withdrawal will not materially impair efficiency of Lodge (R4602, N475)	MAJORITY VOTE (4601) Vote is final, cannot be reconsidered.

Reinstatement after obtaining a dimit	Written application to Lodge which granted Dimit. Dimit and payment of current year dues and assessments. Cannot be voted upon at same communication at which it is received. (R4400)	MAJORITY VOTE (R4402)
Striking from the roll N.P.D.	Delinquent in payment of dues and/or assessments. Due notice given as prescribed (R4700, R4702, R4703). A member may not request (N533).	MAJORITY VOTE (R4704).
Reinstatement after striking from the roll for N.P.D.	Application in writing <u>only</u> to Lodge from which dropped. Full payment for current year and indebtedness. Cannot be voted upon at same communication at which it is received (R4402c, R4400, N435, N807).	TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY (R4402c). No personal jurisdiction acquired where reinstatement is rejected (N431). Request may be renewed as often as desired, not waiting six months as required in other cases (R5008).