



PROTOCOL & ETIQUETTE ESSENTIALS

Prepared by the Grand Lodge P. & E. Committee
Issue No. 18 – May 2012

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.

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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.

ELECTION OF LODGE OFFICERS

Just imagine if someone told you:

1. That you could **not** nominate a member of your lodge for election as an Officer, (*except for the Tyler*).
2. That on Election Night, at any time, you could vote for any member of your lodge that you wished, to fill any of the offices. (*Only members who have served for twelve months as a Warden are eligible to be a W.M.*)

3. That It was improper, before an election, to speak in the body of the lodge for or against any candidate.
4. That some Officers are elected simply by an open vote in lodge. Others must be by a written ballot.
5. That you cannot be a Lodge Officer unless you have proved your proficiency in the Master Mason Degree, in open lodge.
6. That without prior written permission from the Grand Master, no one can hold two offices in the same lodge at the same time, nor hold office in more than one lodge at the same time.
7. That, with the exception of the W.M., the Constitution does not specify the order of rank and seniority of Lodge Officers

Well, all the above statements are true. (*All brethren are encouraged to read Sections 217- 229 and 291-293 of our Constitution for further enlightenment and to review any minor limitations which may be applicable.*)

If the number of questions received recently by the Committee is any indication, it seems that the protocols and practises pertaining to the election of lodge officers are not well understood by the brethren. Perhaps the following explanations and comments will be useful.

Any member, regardless of his social, business, or economic position outside the lodge room, may aspire to be Master of his lodge. This is usually accomplished by progressing through the various offices of the lodge. Generally, this progression takes seven or more years.

The term “*progressive office*” refers to a series of offices within the lodge, culminating in the office of Worshipful Master. Ideally, a Mason starts in the most junior office and “*progresses*” to the next in line each year. However, bear in mind that each office is an elected one and while progression is common, it is not mandated.

The exact composition of the progressive officers can vary but will typically finish with the series: Junior Deacon, Senior Deacon, Junior Warden, Senior Warden,

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

and Worshipful Master.

In accordance with each lodge's Bylaws, and depending upon the office, a lodge office can be filled by either:

- Election by the members of the lodge in a written, secret ballot; or
- Election by the members in an open vote; or
- Appointment by the Worshipful Master.

No member has special authority when voting. There is no veto, nor weighted voting. Each vote is equal. Every member has but one vote – except when there is a tie vote. (In which case, the Master and the Wardens shall each cast a second ballot.) Every member present must cast a vote in an election. Voting is not optional. Each vote is a statement of support for a brother.

It is significant to elect by secret vote the executive Officers of the lodge. It is a written vote, free of influence. The scrutineers proclaim the decision of the lodge. A mandate is granted by the members to the Officer-elect. It is his to accept or decline. The vote is a statement of support, encouragement, trust and respect in the Officer-elect.

Lodge Officers are elected and/or appointed to their positions annually. Typically, an Officer appointed as a Chaplain or Inner Guard will progress through the other appointed Officer ranks. However, lodges can be flexible in this, as circumstances dictate.

If eventually elected as a Deacon, a brother will likely progress to the offices of Junior and Senior Warden, and then to Worshipful Master.

The offices of Secretary and Treasurer are not part of any progression. They are elected based on the interest and skill of the member. The same is often true for the appointed offices of Director of Ceremonies, Organist, and Historian. The Tyler, Auditors and Trustees are usually elected by open vote.

The sole requirement for anyone to become an Officer, (save where a member must have held the office of Warden before he is eligible to be elected as the Worshipful Master), is his fitness and ability for leadership.

The Lodge, (often with some input from the Worshipful Master and the Past Masters), must be the sole judge as to the member's fitness, so that neither the brother nor his friends should take offense at the action, nor should there be any ill feeling when our greater loyalty to the lodge is exercised, by dropping an Officer from the line. There is no such thing in Freemasonry as **"advancement to a higher office by right."** No one is automatically advanced to the next office.

All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real worth and personal merit only.

In their selection of Officers, the brethren ought always to have in view the interests of the lodge. They should avoid electing any brother to the office of Warden who they deem not qualified for the superior dignity and capability of one day becoming their Worshipful Master.

All Officers, therefore, should strive to discharge the responsibilities of their office in an exemplary way, so that the brethren will not feel themselves placed in the difficult position of either wounding the feelings of an otherwise respectable individual by passing him over, or by electing him to an office which he is incompetent to sustain.

A lodge office exists only for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the Craft. An Officer is but a humble servant whose untiring zeal will be evident in his devotion to the responsibilities and requirements of the office occupied by him.

There is not supposed to be any politicking or campaigning for an Officer's position. In the ideal lodge situation, each man simply advances each year, learning each position's duties and a portion of the Masonic ceremonies. By the time he becomes Worshipful Master of the lodge, he has sat in most of the chairs (except, perhaps, those of the Secretary and Treasurer). He has learned public speaking, management of a volunteer organization, decorum, and responsibility.

Eliminating the annual popularity contest for election, (under which many groups labour), results in a smoother, friendlier and more competent line of succession.

There is no reason why certain aids for a speedy and proper Election of Officers cannot be implemented. New brethren who recently joined the Lodge may have to be instructed as to whom the Officers are and how they are elected and/or appointed. A brief explanation by a knowledgeable Past Master of the Lodge before the start of the elections would be in order.

A printed information sheet, (made available before lodge is opened), which lists the current Officers and their Stations can be a helpful guide for the election process. Some lodges even indicate, on this information sheet, the names of any known candidates for election.

Common sense should remind us of a few practical tasks to prepare for an election. Ballot papers and writing instruments should be available. The ballot papers may be blank pages, or some convenient form upon which the brethren can write the name of the member for whom they are voting. Scrutineers may be recruited from another Lodge in the District to provide impartiality. Each Brother expecting to be elected should be contacted and his attendance confirmed. If a nominated or elected Brother is not present, the WM is then in a position to speak for him.

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