

Planning the Business Program for a Masonic Meeting

The business portion of a Masonic meeting provides the opportunity for all the members of a Lodge to participate in the needs of the Lodge, and keeping the business moving as efficiently as possible only needs a bit of advanced preparation and consistency. The advanced preparation is used to determine the business of the Craft for that night, and the consistency from meeting-to-meeting provides the Lodge with the ability to anticipate and respond to the needs of the Lodge from meeting to meeting.

Lodges have many variations and traditions as to orders of business, and some Lodges have By-Laws covering certain aspects of a meeting. Remember, that just as the Lodge By-Laws might set forth certain responsibilities for each meeting, the Lodge By-Laws might also contain things that do not need consideration at all meetings. Take the time to review the By-Laws and apply them as a working tool to your program and operation of the Lodge.

Anything that can be handled away from the floor of the tiled Lodge will allow the meeting to advance efficiently. Consider streamlining or removing issues that have the potential for taking a great deal of time in a Lodge meeting. Examples of such items as budgeted and approved expenses might not need more than a report from the Secretary or the Treasurer; and certain committee reports or minutes might be printed and distributed prior to the meeting then referred to for discussion and acceptance at the appropriate time.

One essential approach to efficient handling for busy meetings is to write down an agenda for the evening, announcing the agenda after opening the Lodge, and use the agenda as a guideline for the meeting to stay on task. Announcing the agenda gives the entire Lodge a sense of what is going to occur and a level of comfort that sets the expectation of the evening. An example of a very simple agenda is listed below, with the highlighted portions indicating what will be read aloud:

Open the Lodge
Greetings
Agenda for the Night
Secretary's Report
Treasurer's Report
Old Business
New Business
Educational Program or Presentation
Sickness and Distress
Announcements
Close the Lodge

Following the announcement of the Agenda, the East can call out each segment beginning with the Secretary, and ask for each portion as written in italics.

Secretary - *Reading of minutes (if not already printed and distributed), approval of minutes, warrants for non-budgeted payments with voting as required, Grand Lodge correspondence, other correspondence, written committee reports, other business, first petition reading, second petition reading, balloting on petitions.*

Treasurer - *Report of working balances, payments made since last meeting, other financial business.*

Old Business - *Oral Committee Reports as needed, old business as needed.*

New Business - The East should be aware of any New Business that is coming to the floor. The concept here is that New Business should not be *Surprise Business* to the Worshipful Master. Often is the case that a piece of perceived new business is actually part of a committee or existing budget and that the New Business has been handled or can be handled within existing parameters. It also gives the Lodge the ability to review anything with a financial impact to make sure the funding and appropriations are properly positioned. Something that appears as a surprise piece of business during a meeting could easily be held over to the next meeting or deferred to a committee. This ordered approach of bringing New Business to the Master before the opening of Lodge might take a few meetings for everyone to witness and comprehend the positive effects, but once instituted the Lodge will reap the benefits of decorum and efficiency. Everyone can communicate during meet and greet time before Lodge, or email/phone communications during the days prior to the meeting to direct any new business to the appropriate location.

Educational Program, Sickness and Distress, Announcements

Follow through with these segments of the agenda, but be aware that on occasion New Business likes to slip into Announcements. Just as above, deferring to the next meeting or committee might be appropriate.

These suggestions are presented for consideration in improving your Business Meeting agenda. A change in the efficiency of regular meetings might have an unexpected result of increasing regular attendance and participation.

Share your ideas with the Masonic Education Committee at moed4u@momason.org