

Masonic Minutes—April One

Planning A Lodge Meeting

We have all sat through one probably more often than we care to admit; the lodge meeting that goes nowhere and seems to never end. The disruptions from the sidelines, the bickering over the minutes from the previous meeting about who brought the potato salad and the moments where nobody seems to know what to do next can all be avoided with some simple forethought. The key for any Master of the lodge to plan an effective meeting starts with good communication. He should speak with his officers on a regular basis and have a good idea at all times what activities or issues the lodge is facing. In today's world staying connected is easier than ever so there is no reason not to stay informed. Your lodge Secretary is always a good source of information on upcoming news so a phone call a few days before can assist in your next step in planning an effective meeting; the written agenda.

Writing out your agenda ahead of time is the best way to stay organized when it is time to hold the meeting. This allows you to cover everything you wanted to communicate and also helps you stay on task and not drag the meeting out any longer than necessary. A good example can be found on page #105 in the Missouri Manual. As you write out the various things you wish to cover on your agenda remember to give a call when you get to a special event or issue handled by a particular committee or member to see if they have anything to report at the next meeting, and don't be afraid to specify the amount of time they have to give their report. This will force them to think about what they want to say ahead of time and keep the meeting on track.

It is always good to get members involved in various activities in the lodge, just remember that the key to delegation is the follow-up. Without accountability to those who delegated the responsibility some tasks will not be completed due to a lack of focus.

Remember that your agenda is just a guideline and sometimes other things will come up that need to be discussed. Remember that as Master you control the meeting and can decide when issues need to be expounded upon. It is often forgotten that we do not follow parliamentary law or Roberts's Rules of Order as these do not apply because ultimately the Grand Lodge holds one person responsible for what takes place in the meetings and that is the Worshipful Master.

So, once you have your agenda written out and have spoken with all the necessary people, don't forget to make time for anything someone would like to bring up under miscellaneous business. And, this is a good time to point out that if any regular member wishes to offer something at the meeting it is always polite to inform the Master of your intentions prior to the meeting and to briefly explain what it is you wish to discuss.

Lastly, and most importantly, always include quality education toward the end of your meetings. You might be asking yourself why we suggest saving education for the last item and not thrown into the middle somewhere. It is because the topic should be one that not only gets everyone's attention, but it should be something that will stick in their minds and require them to contemplate even after they leave the lodge. Your education should consistently be the focus of the meeting, it should always be allotted the most time and be the last thing on everyone's mind as they retire from this sacred retreat to mix again with the world; after all, Masonic education is a large part of the answer to the question "***What come you here to do?***"