



## PROTOCOL & ETIQUETTE ESSENTIALS

Prepared by the Grand Lodge P. & E. Committee  
Issue No. 14 – January 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.

#### Contact Information

Gordon Crutcher, <i>Chairman</i> E-mail: <a href="mailto:Gordon@Crutcher.ca">Gordon@Crutcher.ca</a>	Garnet Schenk, <b>FCF</b> , <i>Editor</i> E-mail: <a href="mailto:gschenk@cogeco.ca">gschenk@cogeco.ca</a>
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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.**

### COMMITTEE OF GENERAL PURPOSES

Several brethren have recently enquired about the protocols associated with conducting a Committee of General Purposes (CGP) meeting, including the recommended wording of typical motions. This issue will cover these points. Our February issue will be devoted to discussing how the business portion of a Lodge meeting may be conducted.

#### Background

Every month, most Masonic Lodges hold a CGP meeting. It is one of a Lodge’s most vital and important committees. You will find no reference or direction about

such meetings in our Book of Constitution. Instead, it is your own Lodge Bylaws which typically outline its various purposes and its authority. All brethren should be familiar with the provisions of your Lodge Bylaws with respect to the CGP, as they will prevail over any of the following comments.

Our Grand Lodge’s two premier reference books, *Meeting The Challenge* and *The Masonic Manual*, each provide useful information about the CGP, which has been drawn upon when preparing this issue.

Some brethren do not fully appreciate the function, significance and scope of the CGP. It is the main working committee of the Lodge. All recommendations and proposals for the administration and government of the Lodge flow through it. In parliamentary language, it is classified as a “Standing” (or permanent) committee.

The Lodge Bylaws usually stipulate the composition, powers and responsibilities of this committee, including the attendance necessary to make a quorum. (If a quorum is not present, the meeting must be adjourned.) Quite often it is the S.W. who chairs the committee, to give him experience in the business routines of the Lodge and to expose him to the challenges of controlling a meeting. Usually it is the Assistant Secretary who is the Secretary of this committee.

The Bylaws typically provide that the CGP is to have full charge of the finances, to examine all accounts and, after finding them correct, to recommend the accounts to the Lodge for payment. It has the power to summon the Treasurer, the Secretary or any other member who has Lodge books, papers or other property in his possession, to appear before it for inspection. It has the power to give instructions for any alterations to the records, (except the minutes). It can originate plans or arrangements that may be advantageous to the welfare and good government of the Lodge, and it may recommend them to the Lodge for adoption.

The committee membership is set forth in the Lodge Bylaws. It often consists of all Past Masters, Officers and Masons of the Lodge in good standing. There is no obstacle to having a smaller membership, however, if the Lodge so desires.

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

The order of business at a CGP meeting is virtually the same as for the regular meeting of the Lodge, such as to:

- Review all accounts and ensure they are accurate;
- Consider and approve the Treasurer's report;
- Hear and consider all correspondence received;
- Consider and discuss all applications for membership;
- Review and discuss all outstanding or carry-over business;
- Bring forth new ideas for the betterment of the Lodge;
- Hear summaries of activity from all committees.

Although Masonic parliamentary procedure should be followed, CGP meetings are usually less formal than when business is conducted in open Lodge, so that all aspects of a particular situation can be discussed openly and a consensus reached.

There must be decorum and a willingness to address all remarks through the Chairman, so that minor or personal discussions do not break out during consideration of an item on the order of business.

Only one item of business can be on the floor at any given time. A quorum should be declared at each meeting.

CGP meetings are held at the call of the W.M. Notice is given in the Lodge summons of the date, time and place. The meeting place could be at your Lodge building, or another place - even at a brother's home.

The minutes of the meeting are recorded and should be signed by the Chairman, as they will become part of the main Lodge minutes at the next regular meeting.

The minutes could be read out to the Lodge as the "Report of the Committee of General Purposes" at the next regular meeting. A more effective alternative could be simply to summarize the minutes at the next regular meeting of the Lodge, but then to have a copy of the minutes distributed to all members, including those who were not able to attend the meeting.

### Motions

A final decision on Lodge business is usually made in the form of a motion. The committee chairman should encourage any member of the CGP to move motions. It should not always be left to the same two or three individuals. In this way, you enable a broader spectrum of members to feel that they are making some contribution to the operation of the Lodge.

Many of these motions are quite familiar, because they occur so regularly, such as:

- ❖ "I move that the correspondence be received."

- ❖ "I move that the accounts be recommended to the Lodge for payment." (*It is the responsibility of the CGP to actually "find the accounts correct".*)

Almost every motion, (INCLUDING A MOTION TO ADJOURN the CGP meeting), should be moved and seconded. (The exceptions to this rule are few.) After any discussion, the motion is voted upon by a show of hands. Unless otherwise provided in the Lodge Bylaws, just a simple majority is needed to approve motions in the CGP.

At the conclusion of any debate the Chairman will call for a decision by saying, "It has been regularly moved and seconded that . . . ." "You have heard the motion. Are you ready for the question? (pause) All those in favour? Those against? I declare the motion carried / defeated."

There are some topics, mentioned in the Constitution and the Lodge Bylaws, which are of such magnitude that they are beyond the scope of the CGP to approve. The types of topics that would fall into this category are ones which would have a significant impact upon the finances of the Lodge, amending its bylaws, requests for a demit, and the acceptance of candidates.

For such important topics, all members must be given an opportunity to be present to cast their vote. These appear as a Notice of Motion and must be printed in the summons prior to the meeting at which the vote will be taken. The wording would be "I will move, or cause to be moved, at the next regular meeting of this Lodge that . . ."

### Adjourning a CGP Meeting

According to several references, (including *Robert's Rules of Order, Masonic Edition*, by Michael R. Poll), a Motion to Adjourn a meeting:

- If approved, would end the meeting immediately;
- Needs a second;
- Is not amendable;
- Is not debatable;
- Requires a majority vote to adopt;
- Cannot be reconsidered, but if the motion is not approved, members can make it again after some progress in the meeting.
- Result: It ends the meeting, and the business halts at the point where the members adjourned. If the members are in the middle of discussing a motion, this motion will come up at the next meeting under unfinished business and general orders.

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Obviously a CGP meeting and the business portion of a Lodge meeting have several similarities, including some parliamentary procedures common to both.

The topic of the **business portion of a Lodge meeting** will be addressed in our February issue.

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