

GRAND CHAPTER
OF
ROYAL ARCH MASONS
OF
CALIFORNIA
DESKTOP PROCEDURES
FOR
CHAPTER SECRETARIES

INTRODUCTION

The secretary's job is one that is far more involved than most members realize, including those member who have volunteered to take on the job. This desktop procedure is designed to help the new secretary understand some of the key duties of the job; and to serve as sort of a checklist for the more experienced secretary as he performs his many and myriad duties.

MEETINGS

Next to the High Priest, the secretary is the most important person in the Chapter when it comes to ensuring meetings are run efficiently and effectively, as well as making sure the members are informed and all information is properly recorded. The busiest time of a secretary's life is the 30 minutes before, and the 15 minutes after, the stated Convocation. The secretary is also extremely busy prior to and after any degree conferrals or festivals as he is the one responsible for applications, marks, dues, etc. The following sections deal with how to handle the secretary's role in these meetings.

STATED CONVOCATION

While most Chapters have their own spin on things they like to do at the stated convocation, the meeting must follow the proscribed format. To wit, the order of business must be:

1. Reading of the Minutes
2. Reports of Investigating Committees
3. Balloting
4. Receipt of Applications
5. Miscellaneous and Unfinished Business
6. Conferring of Degrees

Other ideas for inclusion are Introduction of Past High Priests as part of the reading of the minutes; and a section called "New Business" under the umbrella of Miscellaneous and Unfinished Business.

Generally speaking the secretary should prepare an agenda for the stated Convocation the Friday or Saturday before, and submit it via email to the High Priest for his updates and use. It is a good idea for the secretary to have the agenda before him at the meeting so he can be sure everything is covered. A sample copy of an agenda is attached as an appendix to this document.

The secretary should have all his paperwork organized such that it follows the flow of the agenda; i.e. the minutes should be at the top of his stack of papers, followed by any applications to be read, bills to be paid, etc.

Minutes

The secretary is not only responsible for reading the minutes of the previous stated Convocation and any subsequent special meetings, but also for recording the minutes of the meeting being held. The minutes should be read in chronological order, and between each reading the Master will ask the Chapter if there are any corrections or omissions that need to be addressed. After which, if there are none, the High Priest will gavel the approval of the minutes. The secretary must sign the minutes, and immediately after the meeting get the High Priest to counter-sign them. Some Chapters like to have the High Priest sign the minutes as soon as he gavels them approved; while this is perfectly acceptable, it is

not required. It is best if the minutes follow a specified format so the information is recorded in the same manner at each convocation; as such, a sample copy of minutes are attached as an appendix to this document. Remember, the secretary MUST have a typed and signed copy of the minutes for filing. Hand written minutes are not acceptable for the permanent record.

When taking the minutes of the meeting, remember that minutes are a summary of what took place they are not a verbatim transcript. It is not necessary to capture everything that was said, but it is important to capture everything that was done. Some items are critical; e.g. applications read, results of balloting, bills approved, any motions made and by whom they were made and seconded, reading of any Grand Chapter Communications, etc. It is not necessary to capture all the discussions that were held on a motion, only that it was made, seconded, voted on, and approved or disapproved. Taking minutes is as much an art as it is a science, and the secretary will find that he gets better at it as he does it. After the minutes are approved and signed by the High Priest and Secretary they must be filed appropriately. While NOT required, it is a good practice to keep both a hard copy and an electronic copy of each set of minutes.

SPECIAL MEETINGS (DEGREES)

The vast majority of special meetings are held for the purpose of degree work. On occasion there will be special meetings for events, such as elections, receptions and installations; and the secretary is responsible for taking the minutes for each of these meetings. However, for degrees the secretary has a few more things he is required to accomplish.

Prior to any degree or degree festival, the secretary must be certain that all the paperwork is in order to conduct the degree. The application must be fully filled out and signed, the candidate must be either investigated or the investigation waived, and the applicant must be voted on.

It is important to note that the Grand High Priest in 2017 halted the practice of receiving and voting on applications the day of a Degree Festival. This means the secretary has to be on the ball and get the applications read, discussed, and voted upon prior to any Festival. It is possible to get a dispensation from the Grand High Priest to allow a candidate to be voted upon at the Festival, but this still requires the Chapter to have discussed the Candidate prior to that date.

The secretary should bring all materials required for candidates to submit their "Marks" to the Degree Festival, as well as ensuring there are enough tokens for all of his candidates. After the Royal Arch Degree, the secretary must be certain that all his newly Exalted Royal Arch Masons sign the By-Laws of the Chapter. This should be done immediately, prior to the Companions leaving the venue.

BOOK OF MARKS

As stated in the Mark Master Degree, Marks are to be recorded by the secretary in the Lodge Book of Marks. The Book of Marks is an important record, and is the only place where the history of Marks is recorded. While the secretary is responsible for the book, it is not an uncommon practice for a Past High Priest to be designated as the Responsible Officer for its maintenance. Regardless of who maintains the book, it is imperative that its condition and location are clearly understood by the secretary for accountability purposes.

DUES

The secretary is responsible for sending out dues notices, collecting and recording dues payments, issuing dues cards, and sending out suspension notices. This part of the secretary's responsibility takes up a much larger percentage of the secretary's time than you would think. Each member requires at least four activities when it comes to their dues; notification, collection, registry entry, dues card issuance. Since these activities are not linked, it is recommended that the secretary keep his own spreadsheet to monitor progress which makes five total steps for each member. An excel spreadsheet works well, and might look something like the following:

XXX Chapter 2017 Dues Ledger

Full Name	Dues Paid	Check Number	Amount	Card Issued	Log Registry	Late Dues Notice
Allen A	Y	1234	127.00	1/12/2017	Y	
Bill B	Y	345	127.00	2/13/2017	Y	
Charles C						
David D	Y	129	127.00	4/15/2017	Y	
Eric E	SNPD					Y
Fred F	Y	890	127.00	1/12/2017	Y	
Greg G	LIFE			1/2/2017	Y	

Dues Paid	508.00
Dues Remit	0
SNPD	1
Dimit	0
Number Paid	4
Percent Paid	0.57

The next several paragraphs discuss how to accomplish each of the steps involved in collecting and recording dues.

NOTIFICATION

The dues notice ideally will go out in November, but no later than the first week of December. The notice can be in the form of a letter sent to all the Companions. It is possible to send out the dues notice via email, but it is better practice to send it out via US mail. The secretary should discuss the option with the Council and decide which method to use. Keep in mind that should you decide to send it out via

email, there are Companions who do not use email and the secretary will still have to send out some via “snail mail”.

COLLECTION

The majority of members will pay their dues prior to the end of January, but some payments will continue to trickle in all throughout the year. Some members will provide a check at a meeting, others will mail a check, and others will provide cash at a meeting. Some will pay by credit card. Receiving cash at a meeting can be a tricky proposition. As previously stated, the busiest 15 – 30 minutes of the secretary’s life are just before and just after a meeting. It can be too easy to forget who gave the cash, or even to misplace it. If a Companion does pay with cash it is imperative to take the time necessary to properly mark it and account for it.

If a Companion joins the Chapter during the current year, either by receiving the degrees or by Affiliation, the secretary must determine the amount of his dues and send him a notice. Dues are charged on a pro-rated basis depending upon when the Companion joins. To determine his dues simply take the total amount of dues charged to the Companions and divide it by 12, then multiply it by the number of months in the year the Companion will be a member of the Chapter. For example, if the dues are \$136.50 and a Companion joins in May the determination is as follows:

$$136.50/12 = 11.38$$

June through December inclusive is 7 months and $7 \times 11.38 = 79.66$.

Thus this Companion’s dues would be \$79.66, which can be rounded as desired.

Once a payment is received, it must be given to the Treasurer to deposit and a receipt must be taken from the treasurer per the fiscal section of this document.

It is strongly recommended that the Secretary’s spreadsheet is immediately updated showing the Companion paid his dues.

DUES CARD ISSUANCE

Once a current member has paid his dues, it is incumbent upon the secretary to issue him his dues card in an expeditious manner. The best way is to hand deliver the dues card to a Companion at a Stated Convocation. Unfortunately many of our members do not come to the meetings as often as we would hope. The secretary should have a good idea of which members he expects to see, and which he does not. For those members who are not regular about attendance, the dues card should be sent to them via U.S. Mail as soon as possible after receiving their payment, in no case more than two weeks should pass between receipt of payment and mailing the dues card.

For those new Companions who receive the Degrees at a Festival, once the amount of a newly joined Companion’s dues are determined, and he pays them, the secretary will issue his dues card as soon as possible. As before the standard is either the next stated convocation, or if the Companion does not attend, within a few days of the meeting.

Don’t forget, the dues card must be signed and stamped to be official. It is strongly recommended that an entry be made in the Secretary’s spreadsheet showing the date and type of delivery used (Hand Delivery vs U.S. Mail) when issuing the dues card.

If a Companion has not paid his dues by June, the secretary should endeavor to contact the Companion and find out his status. If the Companion wishes to dimit, then the secretary should inform the High Priest and that action taken at the next stated Convocation. If the Companion is elderly and unfirm, or is in severe financial straits, the secretary should inform the Council and recommend the Companion's dues be remitted for the year. This action has the effect of the Companion being in good standing without paying dues, but does require the Chapter to pay that Companion's per capita.

NON-PAYMENT OF DUES

If a Companion becomes delinquent in paying dues, defined as being two years in arrears, the secretary is required to take several steps. First, the secretary should send out via certified mail a notification to the Companion informing him of his status, the amount due to make him current, and the fact that his is up for suspension at the Stated Convocation 30 days after the letter was sent. The secretary should also attempt to contact the Companion via phone and email. If the Companion either does not respond, or indicates he will not pay, then the secretary makes a recommendation to the High Priest and Council to suspend the brother. If the High Priest takes this action, the secretary should again contact the Companion to tell him of his status. NOTE: If a Companion is suspended for any reason from his Blue Lodge, he is automatically suspended from Chapter. It is imperative the Chapter Secretary stay in close coordination with his Blue Lodge counterparts to keep up on such matters – as well as to know when brothers are raised to Master Mason and thus are potential candidates for membership in the Royal Arch!

FISCAL MATTERS

It is clear that the secretary has some responsibilities when it comes to the fiscal matters of the Chapter. However, the work is far more complex than merely "to receive all moneys from the brethren, pay the same to the treasurer, and take his receipt therefore." In fact, the secretary has a large fiduciary responsibility to the Chapter that can, and often does, consume a good deal of his time. This section of the Chapter Secretary's Turnover Folder explains in detail some of those duties.

BUDGET

The Chapter budget is prepared by the incoming High Priest, and must be presented and approved no later than the January stated convocation. The budget is very helpful to the secretary when determining whether any bills received during the year are budgeted or are an unexpected cost to the Chapter.

BILLS

The secretary is responsible for seeing that all the bills are properly audited and paid. While this is not a difficult task, it is critical and must be done in a timely manner. The tasks required to pay bills are done each month and center around the stated Convocation.

The first step is to gather the bills and have them audited. This is really quite simple. Throughout the month you will get the bills in the mail, or someone will tell you they have a bill that needs to be paid; e.g. supplies or rent. On the Friday before the stated convocation, simply send an email to the High Priest, the Treasurer, and the Audit committee members informing them of what bills you have and that you expect to bring them up to the Chapter for approval at the next convocation. This way the Treasurer

can prepare checks ahead of time, and the audit committee can question any expenditures they feel need further explanation.

The next step is to prepare a voucher to give to the treasurer. There are several formats available for use, and really any are fine; so long as you can list to whom the money is being paid, invoice numbers as available, for what purpose, and how much. You and the High Priest should both sign the voucher. Once the Chapter has voted to pay the bills, and you have signatures on the vouchers, you simply give them to the Treasurer. The Treasurer will, in turn, give you checks for each approved bill for which he has a voucher.

As soon as possible after the meeting, preferably the next day, the secretary should distribute the checks to those for whom they are intended. While often the bank does not require double signatures, it is good practice to initial on the "for" line of the check to show that there is double accountability by displaying both the secretary's initials and the treasurer's signature on the check. Checks that go to the Hall Association, or to individual members of the Chapter can be hand delivered to them. Other checks should be mailed as soon as possible. Remember that the stated Convocation at most only comes once a month, so it is possible the vendor has been waiting to be paid for 30 days or more.

DEPOSITS

Generally speaking, the secretary is not responsible for making deposits; that is the responsibility of the treasurer. However, it is a good idea to get copies of the deposit slip and keep them in the secretary's files along with receipts the secretary received from the treasurer. This is very helpful to the audit committee so that they can see that the receipts and the deposits match. Do not worry that the dates of the receipts and deposit do not match. It is nearly impossible for the secretary to give all monies collected to the treasurer and have them deposit them the same day. What is important is that the total amount of money on the receipts from the treasurer match the total amount on the deposit slips.

REPORTS

The secretary is responsible for providing several reports to both his Chapter and the Grand Chapter. Most of the forms and documents you will use are located at the Grand York Rite website: www.yorkriteofcalifornia.org. If you scroll down the main page you will see a link for "York Rite Forms and Documents", click on that link. Next click on the Grand Chapter logo. Your user ID is "cagyr" and the password in "brio". In particular pay attention to the Officers Manual, which has a lot of information of value to the secretary. Among the reports for which the secretary is responsible are: Annual Election Report, Annual Installation Report, Report of No Election Held, and the Royal Arch Monthly Report. An example of each is included on the website, as well as a host of other reports and documents which you, or your Chapter, may from time to time need to use.

Appendix 3 is a form provided by the Grand Secretary which you can use to send in information as required. The form is appropriate for Chapter, Council and Commandery so use it as necessary. The information it shows is the minimum information the Grand Secretary needs to maintain the membership database. You may send in the information via email to sec-rec@californiayorkrite.org.

CANDIDATES

The role of the secretary when dealing with men who are interested in joining the Chapter is critical to the success of the applicant. Often the secretary is the first person with whom the candidate will make contact within the Chapter, and the secretary becomes the “face” of the Chapter to him. The most common way that a man contacts the Chapter to express his interest in becoming a member are through other members who have invited him. Other ways include; contacting Grand Chapter via their website, through the individual Chapter website, via e-mail, or via phone message. If the candidate contacts Grand Chapter, they will send a letter to the secretary (with a copy to the High Priest). Regardless of how the candidate contacts the Chapter, the secretary is responsible for following up on his inquiry.

Unlike Blue Lodge, most candidates are known to one or more members of the Chapter. Still, it is the secretary’s duty to ensure the candidate is in good standing with his home Lodge (normally done by viewing his dues card), and has properly filled out an application and paid his fees. Many secretaries themselves try to meet with all candidates, but sometimes this just isn’t practical.

Once a candidate expresses interest, the secretary is intimately involved in the process as it goes forward. At the next stated Convocation the secretary reads the Application in Chapter. It is not necessary to read everything off the application, simply the applicant’s name, address, Blue Lodge, and recommenders.

If the applicant is not known and thus the investigation is not waived, the secretary must now prepare investigation forms for the High Priest to give to the investigators. Most Chapters have a standard form, and this is no more an effort than printing off copies to give the High Priest.

Once the application is voted upon, the secretary must make notation in the minutes. It is the secretary’s responsibility to contact the candidate and let him know the good news. It is also incumbent upon the secretary to ensure the candidate knows the date and time of his degree conferral.

PER CAPITA

The Chapter is required to pay its per capita bill to the California Grand Chapter no later than January 15th. If a Chapter has not paid its bill prior to January 15th, the Chapter Charter can – and probably will – be suspended in accordance with the Grand Chapter Constitution. If the charter is suspended, the Chapter cannot hold meetings, or do any business, and will not be able to participate in Grand Sessions and will thus lose its right to vote on legislation and the new slate of Grand Officers. The suspension of a charter for non-payment of per capita will be lifted as soon as the payment is received at Grand Chapter.

A common misconception is that the Chapter has to vote to pay this bill. That is not the case, our Grand Chapter Constitution clearly states no vote is required to pay this bill (among a few others). The secretary will receive the Per Capita bill from the Grand Secretary; and the secretary should immediately fill out a voucher, present it to the treasurer and get a receipt and check from the Treasurer. The check should be mailed to the Grand Chapter secretary as expeditiously as possible. The amount of the payment should be presented to the Chapter as information at the next stated convocation, and thus the payment entered into the minutes.

The amount of the Per Capita is based upon the membership numbers on the roles as of the end of the year. The secretary is responsible for the Annual Report, and the accuracy of it is critical. If you have been keeping up with the monthly report, the Annual should be a piece of cake.

INSURANCE

The Chapter insurance payment is due on Jan 15th, and it is paid by the Grand Chapter. The secretary will receive a bill for reimbursement from the Grand Chapter which should be paid immediately. This, like per capita, does not require a vote of the Chapter to be paid. You should follow the same procedure for paying this bill as described in the preceding section on paying per capita.

GRAND CHAPTER

The annual Grand Sessions for the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in California takes place every year in May. Here is where Constitution and By-Law Changes, Ritual Changes, and the Grand Officer Line are voted upon. Your Dais officers are expected to attend and vote for your Chapter. If they cannot attend, they may issue a proxy or the Chapter can vote and elect a representative. As the secretary, it will fall on you to remind them of this and to make sure they register in a timely fashion. You will receive notice of the Grand Sessions from the Grand Chapter, and the forms needed can be found in the forms and documents section of the Grand Chapter website.

ORDER OF THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD

One of the highlights of the Grand Sessions is the conferral of the Order of the High Priesthood. It is a Constitutional requirement that all High Priests receive this Order. You, as the secretary, should be sure and have your High Priest submit the petition (which can be found on the forms and documents page of the website) and attend the ceremony. If your Chapter pays for the Degree, remember to add it to your list of bills and submit it to the Lodge so you can register your High Priest in a timely manner.

CONCLUSION

This desktop procedure document is not expected to be all conclusive, and there is no doubt you will find many challenges not covered in this document. If you have something occur that you feel should be added, let the Grand Secretary know.

You are providing an incredibly important service to you Chapter, and in many ways the success of your Chapter depends on you. Keep a positive outlook, and reach out for help to the Grand Secretary, your Inspector, your Department Grand Officer, and other secretaries as you need. Each of them is willing to help.

APPENDIX 1 SAMPLE AGENDA

The following is a sample of an agenda that may be used at a stated convocation. It is NOT proscriptive, but provides an idea of how you may prepare the agenda. The more information you put on the agenda, the easier it is for the EHP to run the meeting. You will see that in some cases the words are provided for the EHP to say. You'd be surprised how helpful that can be!

MY CHAPTER #XXX R.A.M. ANYWHERE, CALIFORNIA CONVOCAION AGENDA

Royal Arch Stated Convocation of DATE

Open Chapter

In Memorial: (Insert list of any Companions for whom a memorial moment is appropriate)

Introductions: EHP introduces any VIPs:

(Insert here a list Grand Chapter Officers, Grand Lodge Officers, etc. as appropriate who may attend the meeting. Be sure to include their full names and titles.)

Reading of Minutes

EHP: "Companions, this being our stated convocation of _____, we will begin with the reading of the minutes of our last stated and any special convocations."

Secretary commences to read minutes

EHP: “If there be no objection, they will be
(Approved as read, or if needed Approved with corrections)”

Reception of Petitions:

EHP: “Companion Secretary, have we any petitions.”
(Secretary reads any new petitions for membership)

Report of Investigating Committees: EHP reports on any investigations that have been completed

EHP: “The committee of investigation on the application of Brother (fill in name(s)) has submitted a full and favorable/favorable/unfavorable report.

Balloting: Vote on any candidates as appropriate in accordance with Ritual.

Payment of bills:

EHP: “Brother Secretary, have we any bills?”
(Secretary reads a list of all Bills, remember to include total at the end)

Rent: \$

Supplies: \$

Properly audited bills totaling: \$ were submitted.

(Secretary should move to pay the bills, Treasurer should second, but any Companion can do so)

EHP: “It has been regularly moved and seconded that we pay our bills. All those in favor say aye, those opposed No, the aye’s have it, it is so ordered”

Communication: EHP “Brother Secretary do you have any communications?” (Secretary reads any communications)

Committee Reports: EHP calls on the various committees for their reports:

(List Committees here so EHP has them on hand)

Unfinished Business: (List any business that was carried over from the previous convocation)

New Business: (List any new business known)

Masonic Education: (List name and topic of Masonic Education planned so the EHP has it at hand)

Good of the order: (List calendar events, upcoming birthdays, and any other information your Chapter regularly reports. The

EHP may read these, or he may ask you to)

Closing

APPENDIX 2: MEETING MINUTES

Below is a sample of meeting minutes for a stated convocation. Just as with Appendix 1, it is NOT proscribed. You can use any format that works for your Chapter. You will note that these minutes closely follow the format used for the meeting agenda in Appendix 1; it is highly recommended that you find a way to make your agenda and minutes follow as close to the same format as you can, this will greatly reduce your workload and make finding information easier.

MY CHAPTER #XXX R.A.M.
ANYWHERE, CALIFORNIA

Royal Arch Stated Convocation of 9 February 2017, the Tyler's register reflects XX officers and members present.

The Chapter was open at 7:00 o'clock PM in due form by EC Incharge.

In Memorial: none

Introductions:

EC David G. Rathgeber, Deputy Grand Lecturer, South Region and Grand Orator, Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of California

EC Thomas R. Handel, Grand Marshal South, Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of California

EC Thomas E. Colgan, Grand Soloist, Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of California

Reading of Minutes

The minutes of our stated Convocation of 12 January 2016 were read and approved as read.

Reception of Petitions: none

Reporting of Investigating Committees: None

Balloting: none

Payment of bills:

Properly audited bills totaling: \$120.00 were submitted.

It was moved to pay our bills by: EC Jones and

Seconded by: EC Garcia. The motion carried.

Communication:

1. Three Way Reception on 11 Feb 2017

Committee Reports: none

Unfinished Business: none

New Business

Practice Schedule for Spring Festival on 01 April 2017 – EHP to get rehearsal schedules out within two weeks.

Masonic Education: - EC Brown presented a paper of the components of the Most Excellent Master Degree, with emphases on The Temple as Creation/ The Temple as Man and the Esoteric Implications of this degree.

Good of the order:

EC Incharge thanked the Brethren for attending the meeting and encouraged members to sign up for a meal preparation and education program for one month during the next year.

Closing

No further business to come before the Convocation, it was closed in due form by EC Incharge at 8:10 PM o'clock.

Respectfully submitted.

Bob C Jones, PHP

Secretary

I.M. Incharge

High Priest

APPENDIX 3: MEMBERSHIP REPORT FORM

The following form is provided by the Grand Chapter secretary, and is appropriate for use by Chapter, Council and Commandary. The information required is the minimum, and can be sent via email to the Grand Secretary at: sec-rec@californiayorkrite.org.

MEMBERSHIP REPORTING FORM

Last Name:	First Name:	Middle Name	Date of Birth
Smith	Samuel	Andrew	01-01-1959

Address:

12345 Main St; Bakersfield CA 93308-3022

Blue Lodge: CA 123

Date of:

Royal Arch Degree:

Select Master Degree:

Order of the Temple:

(Indicate if new member and if a transfer or a plural candidate indicate from what previous Chapter, Council or Commandery.)

(Indicate if it is a transfer or a plural membership)

Reports are required for:

Change of address

Death (date of death is required)

Demit (date of demit is required)

Suspension (date required)

Reinstatement (date required)

Note: If the member is in your Chapter, Council & Commandery, you only need to send ONE change of address or ONE notice of death.

All reports may be sent to the Grand Office via Email to save paper & postage. Just make sure the above information is in the Email.

Note: The Grand Encampment Data Base requires the members MIDDLE NAME & ZIP CODE + 4

If the member has died and no date is given, the data base will not accept the info.

If the member has been knighted and no date is given, the data base will not accept the info.

New members should have the Top Line Signer listed

THE FOLLOWING CERTIFICATES ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE GRAND OFFICE

Membership (all 3 Bodies); High Priest; Past High Priest; Illustrious Master, Illustrious Past Master;

Commander, Past Commander; 25 Year & 50 Year; RA Meritorious Service Award; CM Ish Sodi; KT

Meritorious Service Medal.