

Procedures and Guidelines for Digital Lodge Meetings

Prepared by The Information and Communications Committee

Please note the guidance below will be under constant review and can be withdrawn, without notice, at any time. Lodges are directed to use this guidance to enable essential Lodge business to be conducted. Provincial and District Grand Lodges will confirm at the next Annual Lodge Book Check that a Lodge has complied with this guidance in a reasonable manner, and that the Lodge has operated effectively during the coronavirus pandemic.

Always have a wee thought for those who are not able to join a Digital Meeting, for whatever reason, and give them a quick call to keep them up to date with what is happening for the best interests of the Lodge.

GUIDANCE FOR ALL LODGE DIGITAL MEETINGS

1. As Lodges are currently unable to meet normally they may consider holding Digital Meetings to address **urgent and essential** business, to maintain fellowship, and to strengthen the bonds of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. Acceptable Digital Meetings can be categorised as follows:
 - a. **Lodge Members Social Meeting** - a social or educational meeting with Lodge Members and guests e.g. a lecture, chat about the future of the lodge, a quiz etc.
 - b. **Lodge General Committee Meeting.**
 - c. **Lodge Business Meeting** – to deal with and approve essential and urgent Lodge business.
2. If your Lodge decides to hold Digital Meetings, it will be necessary to select a suitable communication platform to host the meetings and should have these types of features:
 - a. **Essential requirements:**
 - i. Ability to secure a meeting with encryption
 - ii. Ability to create Waiting Rooms for attendees
 - iii. Requirement for host to be present before meeting starts
 - iv. Ability to expel a participant or all participants
 - v. Ability to lock a meeting
 - vi. Ability to enable/disable a participant or all participants to record
 - vii. Password protect a meeting
 - b. **Desirable requirements:**
 - i. Maximum participant number greater than number of current qualified members plus a generous allowance for appropriate visitors
 - ii. Screen share facility for lectures, etc.
 - iii. Screen share watermarks
 - iv. Audio signatures for enhanced security
 - v. Temporary pause screen-sharing when a new window is opened
 - vi. Only individuals with a given e-mail domain allowed to join
 - c. It would also be very useful if the platform provider offered online training videos for new users and administrators, e.g. support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials

The buzz is all on using the Zoom platform, but other platforms are available: Google Meet, Discord, MS Teams, Slant to name just a few.
3. A Lodge Members' Social Meeting is not for regular Lodge business and is informal. Therefore, there is no need to record the events of this meeting. A Lodge may, however, choose to formally record the meeting, producing standard minutes, but is under no obligation so to do. Lodges are, however, encouraged to produce a report of such meetings to be included within their records.
4. All Brethren must be aware that other participants may not be regular freemasons and therefore be unable to guarantee privacy. Signs, secrets, rites, degrees or ceremonies must

not be performed in whole or in part at any time, or in any other way revealed, during a Digital Meeting.

5. Brethren attending a Lodge Digital Meeting should adhere to the same decorum and standards expected at any Masonic Meeting.
6. The Lodge is responsible for having someone who is technically capable of managing the technical aspects of the online meeting (a Video-Host). The Chairman for the meeting (typically the Master) will run and control the meeting and ensure suitable participation assisted by the Video-Host (if not the Master).

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR LODGE COMMITTEE AND BUSINESS DIGITAL MEETINGS

7. Lodge General Committee Meetings and Business Meetings do require to acknowledge and comply with the Constitution and Laws where practical. The following items constitute the guidance to be followed by Lodges, with Grand Lodge acknowledging that in the current environment we need to enable Lodges to manage their affairs with a suitable level of flexibility.
8. Digital Meetings are not “Tyled Meetings”, so it is not permissible to have a working of a degree or discussion of certain aspects of degree work. However, Grand Lodge does recognise that some Lodge business may need to be conducted in a less than strictly constitutional manner. Areas that fall in this category are:
 - a. **Donations** to charities and good causes.
 - b. **Benevolence to Lodge Members.**
 - c. **Arranging repair and maintenance** of Lodge premises.
 - d. **Complying with financial requirements** (e.g. ending financial year and auditing accounts).
 - e. **Other Masonic business.**

The Grand Master Mason has considered that, during these unprecedented times, we need to adopt a more flexible approach and has agreed to give dispensation for a Lodge to conduct its business in the following way, and only where absolutely necessary (i.e. the Lodge has determined that the matters being dealt with cannot wait until the next Regular Meeting):

- a. **Donations** to any external non-masonic charities and good causes can be made from any Lodge fund, EXCEPT the Benevolent Fund. The Trustees and Treasurer must satisfy themselves that the Lodge can afford to make any charitable donation and satisfy themselves that by doing so they are not putting the Lodge at risk of being unable to meet any future financial obligations.
 - b. **Benevolence** to Lodge Members, their widows, or their dependants, can be provided from the Benevolent Fund, in the first instance, and from other Lodge Funds, but only if the Benevolent Fund is exhausted.
 - c. **Arranging repair and maintenance** of Lodge premises. The Lodge General Committee should consider all works required to keep their building in good order and repair. In an emergency, work should be instructed by any competent Lodge General Committee Member, who will report to the next committee meeting, the reason and need, for the work instruction to have taken place.
 - d. **Complying with financial requirements.** The Lodge’s General Committee should ensure the financial transactions and records are being maintained to enable appropriate auditing of the accounts to take place when practically possible. The Provincial or District Grand Master should be informed if it is not going to be possible to prepare audited accounts within the prescribed timescale, as stipulated by the Lodge Bye-laws.
 - e. **Other Masonic Business** - The Lodge’s General Committee must satisfy itself, before considering any other business matters, that such business is both urgent and essential, and cannot be held over until such time as Regular Lodge Meetings have resumed.
9. All Brethren attending a Business or Committee Meeting must be identifiable and all present must give their name. The Lodge Secretary should keep a record of all those in attendance.
 10. Minutes of every Business or Committee meeting should be taken by the Lodge Secretary and maintained in accordance with Law 190.

11. The requirement for signatures, as per Law 162, may be satisfied by declarations made at the time of circulating the minute for approval, and at a Lodge's next meeting, that signatures will be appended by the appropriate office-bearers as soon as circumstances permit. In the meantime the Lodge's General Committee will be allowed to approve minutes after two weeks of being circulated to the membership, provided that no request for amendment has been received. Any brother who requires an amendment to be made, must submit full details of the amendment to the Lodge Secretary within the fourteen-day period. Should a request for amendment be received, the minute can then only be approved at the next Lodge Meeting once the suggested amendment has been duly processed.
12. Procedures for commencing and conducting a Digital Lodge Meeting:
 - a. A Video-host may require to be nominated by the Master if he feels it necessary. The Video-host of the meeting is someone attending the meetings who is responsible for, and will manage, all the online aspects of the meeting.
 - b. The Master, Secretary and Video-host (if not the Master) must satisfy themselves that only members of the lodge, or any invited guests, are present.
 - c. The Master should remind those present of the need to maintain privacy and security in their own immediate vicinity.
 - d. The Master will advise how the meeting will be managed and how attendees request permission to speak, e.g., using the "raise hand" function or chat facility.
 - e. When satisfied that all is in order, the Master should declare the meeting open.
 - f. The meeting should follow a strict agenda, which should have been notified in advance.
 - g. When all agenda matters have been satisfactorily dealt with, Brethren should be given an opportunity to raise any other items which may be to the benefit of the Lodge or the Craft.
 - h. When every Brother has had his say, the Master should formally declare the meeting to be closed.
13. The following Lodge Business **cannot** be conducted, under any circumstances, by Digital Meeting.
 - a. Nomination and Election of Office-bearers. If necessary, the Grand Master Mason will look favourably at granting dispensation to hold the Nomination and Election of the Lodge Office-bearers on the same day as the Installation.
 - b. Enquiry Committee by Video or Conference Call.
 - c. A Notice of Motion submitted for consideration at the next Lodge Meeting.
 - d. Discussion or vote on a previously proposed and seconded Notice of Motion, which must be conducted at the Lodge's next Regular Meeting.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

Please contact your Provincial or District Grand Secretary should you require any of the above items clarified or there are specific circumstances that you feel have not been covered.

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