



Practical Parliamentary Procedure

Guest Speaker Skyped to Pennsylvania

April 11, 2012 Lorenzo Cuesta, PRP

Roles of a Parliamentarian as Goals for the Developing Parliamentarian

1. Parliamentarian:

A parliamentarian is called to serve during Annual Sessions, Conventions of Delegates, Quarterly Board Meetings, Special Meetings and more.

Each type of meeting has its own purpose and needs. The parliamentarian meets with the officers at least once before each meeting, and ideally at least once after each meeting. From these meetings the parliamentarian prepares the officers for each meeting or the result of each meeting. This could include writing scripts, explaining the bylaws, presenting options, etc.

During the actual meeting the parliamentarian participates in the meeting as little as possible so as not to dilute the power of the presiding officer. The parliamentarian is vocal only if some one presents a parliamentary inquiry. The rest of the meeting, the parliamentarian communicates with the presiding officer without attracting attention or interfering with the proceedings.

2. Training:

Training in parliamentary procedure or one of the state Open Meeting Laws is always in demand. Board of Directors have short terms and a turn over is constant. The new board members are also typically new to parliamentary procedure and open meeting laws.

3. Professional Presiding Officer:

Often an organization will find itself in a situation where trust has been eroded, or an issue has violently divided the members, or no one wants to be the ogre in taking an inevitable action.

At these times the best thing for the society is to hire a neutral outsider to take care of the business no member wishes to handle. I have been called in to run an election after distrust has set in; to handle the debate and the voting on a distasteful motion; and to handle the expulsion of officers or removal of pastors.

4. Parliamentary Opinion:

Parliamentarians are often asked to review a complex issue, and write an opinion on the legality of an action taken, or on potential solutions to a parliamentary situation.

This requires much research of the society's bylaws, constitution, agendas, minutes, policies, other documents of governance, and even customs. The parliamentarian must be able to support his parliamentary opinion in case the issue is taken any further into more legal levels.

5. Bylaw Editor:

Commonly, an association will amend its bylaws over several years until the final product is a document full of contradictions and omissions. It takes a parliamentarian who is familiar with what a functional set of bylaws should include and how bylaws should work together.

Members avoid this task because it is a daunting undertaking and some one will always assume the member editor may have a personal interest in the wording of the final product.

The parliamentarian bases his skills on his knowledge of parliamentary procedure. But, he sells his services based on his analytical, objective, and altruistic approach to a society's needs. A parliamentarian's compensation is not financial alone.

His greatest compensation is the knowledge that he has moved a society from a state of near collapse to a state of fulfilling its objectives and that of its members, again.