

Seminary Hill Daylight Lodge N^o. 220

“Conviviality and Caring”

Lodge Concepts, Procedures, and Protocols

“Forget not the ancient landmarks...”

We know that a lodge must be many things: those things which are set forth in the By-Laws and Constitution of our Jurisdiction as well as those things defined by the Digest of Decisions of our Grand Lodge in Assembly. We know too that a lodge can take on a personality and character which, over time, can change – sometimes for the better and, regrettably, sometimes for the worse.

When this lodge was conceptualized, there were several things that were uppermost in the minds of those Brethren who would take the first steps to make it a reality.

- Our lodge will be ‘small and friendly’, where every Brother knows every other Brother well and the bonds of friendship and fraternity are very, very strong;
- No Mason who passes through our doors will ever be a stranger for more than a minute or two. He’ll be met and greeted as a Brother and a friend immediately;
- Moreover, our lodge will truly care about its members and their families and we will be attentive to their joys and their sorrows;
- In our lodge, there will be no place for petty piques and quarrels. We will consistently reflect the concepts which became expressed in the motto that has subsequently been adopted:

“Conviviality and Caring”

- We will practice charity in all of our doings. Whatever the item of discussion, whatever the matter under consideration, the concept of charity in thought, word and deed will be paramount;
- Our lodge will provide an opportunity for working men to enjoy a Masonic meeting during the noonday while also becoming a chance for men in the Bangor area who otherwise had been unable to become members of the Fraternity due to night shift work, to now join;
- There will be a luncheon before each and every meeting, featuring good food and good fellowship;
- We will regularly meet twice a month – except in the winter months - rather than just once, in order that the bonds of friendship and fraternity might grow stronger and that we can reach out to those sojourning in our area;
- Our business meetings will consist of educational and fellowship matters and there will be a speaker/presenter at most meetings;
- Lodge ‘operations’ will be overseen by a Board of Directors who serve the lodge by providing both additional hands to work and minds to conceive. This Board – much like the ‘Board of General Purposes’ found in the lodges of many jurisdictions throughout the world – will stimulate, aid and evaluate the work of the lodge. Taking nothing away from the inherent powers of the officers as proscribed by custom and tradition, the Board will be a helpmate to keep our vision lofty and our goals attainable;
- And that while the International High Twelve organization as well as the High 12 groups in Maine were eminently worthy of emulation, we would not be simply a casual luncheon club

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but an actual functioning Masonic lodge holding meetings at mid-day rather than at nighttime, the better to support the perceived needs of Masons in our area, more especially those unable – for whatever reason (work, health, family obligations, etc.) to attend night meetings as well as for those seeking further Masonic involvement in the middle of their day.

As these concepts emerged, even before the first official meeting of the Lodge in March, 2010, the following concepts were also agreed upon:

Lunch before every meeting: If we are to have a lunch before each meeting, we will invite our ladies as well. This seemed to be a ‘natural’. Should they wish to do other things while we meet, they can do so but at least it will be an opportunity for sharing and caring amongst our Masonic families.

All Masonic Widows are welcome: EVERY Masonic widow, regardless of the lodge or jurisdiction of our deceased Brother, will be both welcomed and encouraged to attend our luncheons. While we as Masons obligate ourselves to look after a Brother Master Mason’s widow and orphans, we also sadly admit that this is an area where we regularly fall short. Some lodges do nothing at all to recognize and honor our Masonic “Special Ladies”; others think of them but once a year. Planning to have 20 regular meetings each year, every one preceded by a luncheon, our meetings will be an excellent opportunity to provide caring in an area where all will admit we as Masons regularly come up short. Accordingly, *any Masonic widow, regardless of the Brother’s lodge location, will be our honored guest at each and every luncheon held by the lodge and they will never be allowed to pay for a meal.* Ever. Further, they will be treated as much a part of our lodge family as any of our own ladies and they will be included in all of our doings as appropriate. As time goes on, we hope we can develop enhanced programming that will allow them to enjoy this time of their lives even more fully through sponsored trips, special programs, etc. This is our commitment to our Brethren who have passed to their final reward – and we accept this opportunity with willingness and humility!

A Continuously Supported Charity Fund: Recognizing the value Masons place on the concept of Charity, our lodge opened a Charity Fund banking account simultaneously with its operating fund account. At each meeting of the lodge, during our luncheon, a collection basket will be unobtrusively placed so that those who wish to make a donation may do so and those who find themselves unable to assist will not be embarrassed by their lack of ability at the time. All funds collected will go into the Charity Fund to be expended by vote of the lodge as they see fit. *In addition*, from time to time, an additional collection may be taken for a particular charity or cause, generally when a particular speaker is present. Such funds will be collected by passing “**The Master’s Hat**” (our own Master’s hat!) through the room and the funds arising from this collection will be dedicated to the particular cause/charity described when the hat is passed.

Potential petitioners will be referred to their local lodge: The founders of this lodge believe that every Mason should have strong ties to his local community and therefore it has been agreed that those who inquire about Masonic membership through our lodge will be referred directly to the lodge which serves their home. After taking degrees there, the new Brother will be more than welcome to petition for affiliation with us. It is our stated goal to ONLY accept as candidates, those who for specific reasons are unable/unwilling to petition their local lodge and we have set our application fee above all other lodges in the area as an inducement toward this end.

Using modern communications: We live in an age where communications are instantaneous and we’ll strive to use the most modern means of ‘connecting’ with one another but we will also take care than none are left behind because they cannot or will not adopt certain technologies.

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Long-standing Officers: Recognizing that, for every lodge, one of the most pressing matters is finding sufficient men to fill officer stations, we seek to avoid that problem in a unique but – we hope – provably successful way. While we will, as required by the Constitution of the Grand Lodge, hold elections annually, each person elected or appointed to office will acknowledge that he is willing to serve multiple terms in the same station until such time as he no longer wishes to do so whereupon he will be relieved of his duties with the thanks of the lodge. We have deliberately not established a ‘progressive line’ system. As most members of this lodge will have already served in their home lodges, they can pick and choose to serve as their time and ability dictates, not feeling the pressure to ‘move up’ in the chairs each year.

However, should any member of the lodge wish to take ANY office or should he wish to proceed to the East in a ‘progressive line’ fashion, then the current office incumbent will graciously step aside for the time being to permit the Brother to pass through that office for that term, and will be ready to step back into place afterwards.

Through this means, we hope to achieve stability and strength, allowing each member to do as much or as little as he wishes based on his own inclinations and obligations. While there is no foreseen problem with this methodology, it is expected that any problem arising can be handled through the application of the Masonic principles of justice and toleration.

Lodge “Best Practices” encouraged: Every lodge has one or two ‘very special things’ that they do that are unlike that done in other lodges - but they’re “darn good”. In business terms, these would be termed ‘best practices’ and worthy of emulation. In the establishment of this lodge, we talked about the ‘really great things’ that some of the lodges we knew about were doing – and it was agreed that every member and visitor would be encouraged to share similar stories/knowledge with us in order that we too might adopt them. Rather than inventing or reinventing the wheel, we can look to lodges near and far to see what makes them good/great – and then using, not ‘stealing’, their ideas in a brotherly way to benefit the Craft, giving credit where credit is due.

The Junior Warden’s Fund: One “best practice” idea that was immediately agreed upon was the enhanced duty of the Junior Warden to dispense charity on behalf of the lodge. This idea was suggested by our first Secretary, Bro. Edward L. King, who witnessed it in Meridian Lodge #60 in Franklin, New Hampshire where was elected Junior Warden. On the night of his installation, the Lodge Treasurer handed him \$200 in cash explaining that he was now the lodge’s representative to dispense charity that was needed quickly and could not pass through the normal channels for lodge decision. Whether for funeral flowers or a meal for someone down on their luck, it fell to the Junior Warden to act whenever and wherever an appropriate need arose. These funds will be replaced as needed without explanation as to the expenditure. Recognizing that the Treasurer will report any seeming abuses to the Master, it was agreed to adopt this concept for our newly-forming lodge and it was so stated in the proposed by-laws. The Junior Warden will act as our eyes and ears, alert to the greatest of all our duties as Masons: charity! Thus, this program was enshrined in the initial set of by-laws presented to the members receiving dispensation and has been fully and completely supported by all members. This ‘instant charity fund’ was not created to subvert or eliminate the usual process of having the lodge members vote on the spending of their charity funds but was, instead, created to provide IMMEDIATE access to a very moderate amount of money for charity. Any matter of charity that can wait until the next stated meeting of the lodge will do so in order to be voted upon by the membership. This fund is for emergent circumstances only and the full \$200 is to be turned over to the incoming Junior Warden at each annual installation of officers.

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Dress is “as appropriate”: Being a noon-time meeting lodge, there will be Masons coming from their work, perhaps on construction or building sites and thus it is recognized that expecting members/visitors to dress with shirts and ties (something many lodges in our Jurisdiction fail to see even when all members can take the opportunity to prepare themselves for a meeting), would not be conducive to the friendship and fellowship of the lodge. Thus, it was agreed that officers – IF POSSIBLE – will wear a white shirt (short sleeve in summer and long sleeve in winter), black pants, and black shoes. Shirts embroidered with the lodge name and/or logo are particularly welcome. However, the dress of a member is left to their own discretion and we would rather have someone attend lodge than be concerned about their appearance and not attend as a result.

We’ll wear sashes: The Maine Masonic Textbook (17th Edition, Printed 2002 Page 151) says

Formerly, an officer of a lodge was required to wear a blue sash: and, according to ancient usage, a sash is a part of the clothing of an officer, but, in this State, he may wear one or not, as he sees fit: it is recommended that Marshals wear them, whether the officers do or not.

Following this admonition, it was agreed that we would wear sashes, as much to marginalize the diversity of appearance amongst the officers as to add a historical reminder now never seen in this Jurisdiction.

“Marking well”: We will continuously create those things which will help our members connect with each other and with our past. Initial plans involve creation of a Book of Remembrance where the history and life of the lodge is documented, a Members Handbook so that we constantly remember our motto of “Conviviality and Caring”, and more.

The Candle of Memory: Another of the ‘Best Practices’ of the lodge comes from Mystic Lodge #65 in Hampden where a Candle of Memory is lit to mark the passing of a Brother. This we will do at Seminary Hill Daylight Lodge although it is our fervent desire that this not be a practice we will undertake often. Death is a difficult subject for us to discuss yet our Masonic ritual provides much comfort and so we will wish those that leave us with the words “Soft and safe to thee, my Brother, be thy resting place! Bright and glorious be thy rising from it!” and light our Candle of Memory.

Adopt-A-Widow Program: Recognizing that even in our earliest days we were attracting Masonic widows to join us for the friendship and fraternity of our luncheons, we also know that we have assumed a cost for this. Should other lodges wish to make donations to assist us in this endeavor which benefits their widows, we will welcome such contributions. If our own members find themselves in a position to assist in the financial support of the program they are welcome to simply advise the Secretary when they pay for their lunch that they have included an extra contribution for a widow. All contributions of whatever amount are gratefully received.

Conclusion:

Each of the above concepts/ideas is part of the Seminary Hill Daylight Lodge “DNA” and although there will be more items added as time goes on, these things marked our first year of existence and they are what we hope will continue to guide and motivate our Masonic heirs in the years, decades, and centuries to come. “Mark well the ancient Landmarks....”

At Bangor, Maine. September, 2010.