



## **New Guidelines for Council Meetings: Question & Answers**

**1. Is the *Guidelines for Council Meetings* consistent with the *Charter, Constitution and Laws of the Knights of Columbus (CCL)*?**

A variance to the current CCL has been approved by the Board of Directors. This authorizes the council meeting changes pending a formal CCL update at the next Supreme Convention.

**2. Are councils required to hold two meetings per month?**

Yes. Council meetings and Officer Planning meetings are both required each month.

**3. Can the Officers' Planning meeting be held immediately before the Council meeting?**

Smaller councils and those in remote areas may find this a necessary accommodation. It is difficult, however, to adequately prepare for a Council meeting if the Officers' Planning meeting is held an hour before. Every effort should be made to hold these meetings on separate days. Another remedy is to hold the Officers' Planning meeting *virtually*.

**4. The guidebook says council officers, directors and chairpersons are required to attend the Officers Planning meeting. Can a member be removed from his position for poor attendance?**

A Grand Knight expects his officers and directors to fulfill the responsibilities of their position; this includes regular attendance at meetings. An officer who cannot attend a required meeting (work, illness, family emergency, etc.) should give ample notice to his Grand Knight. Failure to provide sufficient or adequate notice, can result in an officer's removal from office per Section 6 of the standard council bylaws.

**5. Are we required to include fraternal socializing on meeting nights?**

No, but you are strongly encouraged to do so. Fraternal socializing is a great way to improve attendance at meetings and is one of the unique benefits of our Order. Every effort should be made to have informal fraternal socializing among brothers before or after meetings.

**6. If non-members can now attend meetings, are meeting no longer secret?**

While meetings have traditionally been *closed* to non-members, the work undertaken at meetings has never been '*secret*'. Family and community members can greatly benefit from experiencing Knights of Columbus meetings. Approved guests (including guest speakers) may attend Knights of Columbus meetings, upon approval by a council vote. Such invitations should be for special occasions, not normal practice. Guests should not be invited to meetings if contentious items will be on the agenda.

**7. Do we have to “sign in” members and guests or is inspection of membership cards sufficient for member admission?**

A sign in sheet should be used and retained. The Grand Knight must know who in attendance can vote on any motions. A list should be presented to the Grand Knight and Recorder. The record of attendance may also be needed for contact tracing.

**8. We have seen an increase in attendance at virtual meetings. Can we continue virtual meetings after the pandemic is over and in person restrictions are lifted?**

Virtual meeting practices may continue to be used, but councils must return to in person meetings when restrictions are lifted. Live streaming options will allow members, who are unable to attend in person, to participate virtually.

**9. Is the Grand Knight required to hold a council vote before inviting family members and other non-member guests to attend a meeting?**

Yes. Council meetings are primarily for members only. When family or other guests will be invited, a council vote should be held in advance of the meeting. If desired, the Grand Knight can plan for a guest to address the members prior to or immediately after an official meeting.

**10. How do we verify membership status for voting eligibility at virtual meetings?**

A virtual meeting platform should be used that allows for attendance to be taken. The Warden, or other designee of the Grand Knight, can verify member status by comparing the attendance list with the official council roster.

**11. Can any topic or issue be voted on via email between meetings?**

Email voting between meetings should be avoided in general. However, in light of COVID-19 restrictions, when circumstances require, the Grand Knight may call for an email vote on pressing matters that cannot wait until the next meeting. The monetary expenditure of such votes may not exceed the maximum amount specified in the council bylaws or outlined in the council budget.

**12. Can council votes be held at an Officers’ Planning meeting?**

No. Council votes can only be held at Council Meetings.

**13. Can minutes from a previous meeting be posted on a council webpage so they do not have to be read at the current meeting?**

Meeting minutes can be posted on a council webpage if access is password protected and accessible only to members. Notification should be sent to all members when minutes have been posted.

**14. Do the Treasurer and Financial Secretary both speak during the Financial Report of the Council meeting? The script only mentions the Treasurer.**

In general, the Financial Report will cover only the status of council accounts managed by the Treasurer. The Financial Secretary may be asked to provide a report on other timely matters, or in response to a question from the members.

**15. Does the Financial Secretary report on council standing, dues collection, etc. only at the Officers' Planning Meeting?**

The Financial Secretary provides a complete and full report at the Officers' Planning meeting. Members interested in the details of council finances should attend the Officers' Planning meeting where more in depth financial discussions take place.

**16. When and at which meeting should a member raise a new topic or issue?**

A member should notify the Grand Knight, prior to any meeting, of a new topic or issue he would like to raise. This allows the Grand Knight time to discuss the matter with his leadership team and, if necessary, add the item to an upcoming meeting agenda. Suggestions and new topics should be addressed at the Officers' Planning meeting. However, time sensitive or emergency issues may be raised during the New Business portion of a Council meeting.

**17. Can the meeting agendas be modified?**

The *Guidelines for Council Meetings* was developed with input from fraternal leaders at all levels and a survey of members. It represents the collective wisdom of Brother Knights and is designed to maximize the effectiveness of council operations. The agendas contained in this guidebook can be modified only if needed to accommodate unique circumstances that may exist in some councils. Care should be taken, however, to preserve the intent and purpose of standard agenda items and to ensure meetings do not exceed one hour.

**18. Is the Recorder required to keep minutes of the Officers' Planning meeting?**

Anything that needs to be included in the formal record of the council must be mentioned or presented at the subsequent Council meeting. The Council meeting is where votes are held, and decisions are formally ratified.

**19. Is the new *Guidelines for Council Meetings* book consistent with other Knights of Columbus resources?**

Yes. All relevant Knights of Columbus resources will be updated to align with the changes found in the new *Guidelines for Council Meetings*.

**20. If the Chaplain cannot attend a meeting, who leads the prayer? Can the Grand Knight share a written report from the Chaplain?**

If the Chaplain cannot attend a meeting the Grand Knight, or his designee, should lead the council in prayer. The Chaplain can submit his report to be read by the Grand Knight.

**21. Will the *Guidelines for Council Meetings* book be mailed to councils?**

The *Guidelines for Council Meetings* will be mailed to councils at start of the 2021-2022 Fraternal Year along with other print materials such as the *Fraternal Planner*. In the meantime, councils should download the book from the internet and print copies.

**22. What should the Lecturer talk about during his reflection?**

The Supreme Council offers many resources that can be used for the Lecturer's Reflection, including: The Supreme Chaplain's Challenge (published monthly in *Columbia*) and *The Knights of Columbus: An Illustrated History* by Andrew and Maureen Walther. If the Lecturer's Reflection occurs during the meeting, he should speak for about five minutes on a topic related to Catholic virtues or the principles of the Order. If the reflection is during social time his remarks can be longer.

**23. Can we still use the Opening and Closing Odes?**

Nearly 55,000 responses were received from an all member survey on council meetings. All standard meeting agenda items were value ranked and the Odes were deemed to be of very low value. The new meeting agenda retains only the most highly valued and essential agenda items in the hope that members will find a council meeting to be a satisfying use of their time. Councils may continue to sing the Opening or Closing Odes if the members vote to do so, but they are not part of the official agenda.

**24. Did the removal of the Opening and Closing Odes have anything to do with recent civil unrest and related anti-Columbus sentiment?**

No.

**25. Are we permitted to keep aspects of the former meeting structure that have been removed?**

A council may vote to retain aspects of the former meetings structure, however, careful consideration should be given to the value of these elements as well as the time involved. All meeting agenda items should be completed within one hour.

**26. Are the District Deputy and Field Agent Reports required at Council meetings?**

Yes. If the District Deputy and Field Agent are present, they should give a report to the membership. They should strive to meet the three minute guideline for their reports and respect the Grand Knight's efforts to keep the meeting to one hour. If more time is needed, they should make arrangements in advance and allow the Grand Knight to adjust the agenda accordingly.

**27. Do council bylaws need to be updated to align with these changes?**

Yes. Standard council bylaws will be updated after the 2021 Supreme Convention. More guidance will be given then for councils to update their bylaws to reflect these changes.

**28. Will there be changes to council quorum requirements?**

No changes have been made to council quorum requirements. The number of members needed to reach a quorum are set by each council in their bylaws.

**29. Are councils required to have a formal budget?**

A well-planned budget is an essential best practice of successful councils. It provides financial transparency to the membership and a planning template for future council leaders. It also ensures that meetings are not bogged down with voting on each project or program expense individually. Every council, regardless of size, should have a budget.

**30. Is there a new agenda for Assembly Meetings?**

There currently are no approved changes for Assembly Meetings. That said, *The Guidelines for Council Meetings* book provides helpful suggestions that can be used in Assembly Meetings.

**31. Why was the council chamber setup modified?**

The prior setup facilitated exemplification ceremonies during the meetings themselves. Now that 'Initiations' are no longer part of the meeting agenda; the modified chamber setup is more appropriate. The officers and directors who will be giving most of the presentations are all seated in front of the members. The members are all facing the front of the room where the speakers will be giving their remarks.

**32. With these changes to the Council meeting agenda, the *Recorder's Minute Book* (#1403) is now outdated. Will this resource be updated?**

An updated edition of the *Recorder's Minute Book* #1403 will be released in 2021.

**33. What is included in the Financial Report?**

The Financial Report should be limited to a status of the council's bank accounts, including aggregate receipts and expenditures, funds raised from events, and charitable contributions by the council. It should assure members that adequate funds are available for upcoming commitments.

**34. How should my council set up the Council Chamber, given COVID restrictions?**

As with other aspects of council operations, the arrangement of the Council Chamber may be impacted by COVID restrictions and the need to integrate virtual attendees at in-person meetings. Adjustments to Council Chamber set up should be made to comply with civil, diocesan, and parish health guidelines. For example, given the need to space members six feet apart in order to ensure proper distancing, the seating of all officers at the head table for Council meetings may not be possible. When determining which members should be seated at the head table for a meeting, the Grand Knight should always be seated first, followed by dignitaries. Use good judgement when making any changes to ensure a positive experience for all members and refer to the #1612- *Protocol Handbook* for additional details.

*Revised December 9, 2020*