

Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Essex
Keystone Province
150th Anniversary Keystone Province
Grand Patron – Mark Benevolent Fund



R.W.Bro Terence. D. Sheern
Provincial Grand Master

Coronavirus Update 9

Dear All,

It was with a heavy heart I had to suspend all meetings from 17th October 2020, especially when we seemed to be making some progress and a number of Lodges had actually met to conduct face-to-face business. It is also difficult to plan ahead when we have no date of when meetings can resume.

I am of course aware that a number of Lodges have held, or intend to hold, Virtual Business Meetings and I do welcome that. I am, of course, also aware that some Lodges are a little reticent or unsure about holding such a meeting. If this is the situation in your Lodge, I offer the following thoughts:

Firstly, Lodge accounts. As we are unsure of when we can meet again and as several Lodges are approaching their usual Installation meeting where Lodge accounts would be presented and approved. For others it could be nearly two years before members see any accounts, which would worry me slightly. Coupled with this we all know that from time to time our hard working treasurers become absent for many reasons, which has the potential to leave Lodges and their accounts exposed.

The current down time is also an ideal time to take stock of annual fees. I know some Lodges have already done this and please accept I am not trying to teach granny to suck eggs. But if your Lodge is one of those who have not reviewed your fees and accounts now may be the time to do so.

For those Lodges that charge an all-inclusive fee and have not spent the expected amount of money on meals there will obviously be a saving. There will also be a savings on Provincial Fees as announced some weeks back now, as well as savings on Organist and Tyler fees. With these potential savings in mind it may be appropriate to reconsider Lodge member annual fees. Non all-inclusive lodges may also have the potential to make savings.

I am also aware that some of our members may be thinking about tightening their belts because of uncertainties with employment and income etc. If Lodges can assist to retain members with a reduced annual fee and I am sure this would be a real beneficial step.

So, having reviewed annual fees and updated Lodge accounts they still need to be approved. This can be achieved in two ways. Either by way of a Virtual Business Meeting or by other electronic means, for example email. Once the accounts have been produced and approved by the auditors I am agreeable (under the present circumstances) to the accounts being sent via email to the members for their approval. Whichever form of approval you decide please ensure that hard copies are sent to those Lodge members who cannot use zoom or email and you receive and circulate any comments they may have.

Secondly, other Lodge business: Without going through the pros and cons of other Lodge business I have copied below a typical Business Meeting Agenda for your consideration

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. The Presiding Officer, W. Bro. ??????, will declare the meeting open.
2. To read the permission to hold the meeting and the Dispensation.
3. To approve the minutes of the last regular meetings.
4. To note apologies.
5. Election of Worshipful Master/Commander.
6. Election of Treasurer.
7. Approval of Accounts.
8. Change of subscription amount.
9. Dispersal of funds for charitable purposes.
10. Exclusions and resignations.
11. Reports of the Lodge Committee, Almoner and Charity Steward.

The Presiding Officer will declare the meeting closed

I am also aware that some Lodge Secretaries are unsure of how to arrange or hold a zoom meeting. You will, of course, need to download zoom on your computer or other device. This is easy to do and only takes a few minutes. Just type "zoom.us" in the search bar and follow the instructions. If in doubt contact the Provincial Secretary who will be willing to help as much as he can.

If, once you have zoom, you would like to conduct a virtual business meeting or Lodge GP meeting to discuss any Lodge business informally, but are still unsure of how to run it, the Province will do so for you. The Province now has a zoom licence and is willing to help any Lodge set up, circulate and run a virtual business meeting for you. Please contact the Provincial Secretary, Paul Busby for more details.

I remind Treasurers that Lodge accounts are to be submitted to the Province each year as required in the BoC, if this has not been done please do so.

Can I give a gentle reminder to those Lodges who have not yet paid their Grand Lodge fees to please do so. We certainly don't want to have a repeat of last year when Grand Lodge was looking at suspending Lodge warrants for late payments. If your Lodge is in financial difficulty please let the Province know sooner rather than latter as we may be able to help.

You may have seen the recent communications regarding the 2030 MBF Festival the Province will be hosting. To help us raise funds for the festival there are items in the regalia shop on the website for sale, all profits will go ultimately towards our festival target.

Lastly I am currently looking into the feasibility of holding informal zoom meetings, one for candidates waiting in the wings and the other for members of the Province with guest speakers, once finalised I will publish the information.

Stay well and safe

Thank you

Terry