

Chapter 5: All about Meetings

The Potluck as a GMC Institution

Food is fun. It brings people back. GMC has a tradition of great potlucks and it is a good idea for a section's annual meeting. In fact you'll find that many working meetings of your section are held in private homes. Usually the hosts and the participants share in providing some snacks and beverages. In these hectic times, knowing that you can arrive at a meeting with a dish in hand and thereby gain access to a full smorgasbord is a wonderful incentive.

Name tags are always helpful. Even if everybody knows everybody, there are hopefully a few new people, and name tags make it so much easier for them. Plus, some of us forget each others' names!

Formal Business Meetings

Depending on purpose and nature, first decide whether the meeting is formal or strictly for working on and reaching a specific result (such as a quarterly schedule of outings). An agenda may be useful but not always necessary. Ask whether you need minutes. Minutes are required at any meeting where a vote takes place. Once you get started, stick to the agenda.

Sample Steps to Running a Formal Business Meeting (Robert's Rules)

- Approve the minutes of the previous meeting.
- Receive the treasurer's report.
- Adopt the budget.
- Hear committee reports.
- When an agenda item is introduced, be clear on whether it is an action item.
- If action on the item is required, entertain a motion.
- When a motion is made, it must be seconded.
- Make sure the secretary has the motion correctly recorded.
- Call for discussion.
- During discussion, amendments are in order.
- When an amendment is moved and seconded, it becomes the item on the floor until it is voted on.
- Call for a vote: "All in favor?", "All opposed?", "Abstentions?"
- Announce the outcome (e.g. "The ayes have it, and you have passed the motion.")
- Practice democracy: Solicit opinions (e.g. "Would anybody like to offer a different opinion?")
- Try to recognize people who have not spoken before recognizing the same person again and again!
- Keep it moving — it is okay to bring an item to closure when all the opinions have been heard once or twice.

The Section Annual Meeting

Are there section members you've never met? They may turn up at an annual meeting. For some of them it's the only opportunity to participate. The annual meeting serves a business purpose as well as being a social gathering for all members. Create the atmosphere and allow time to have members get acquainted and chat. Don't overwhelm them with section business. Some members, after having paid their dues, may be just as happy to enjoy the company over a potluck dinner.

It's nice to have an official speaker but sharing slides and stories in an informal manner may be a better way to make section members feel part of the family.

Ten Planning Steps for a Perfect Annual Meeting

Some sections have a committee to plan and organize the annual meeting. A chairperson may be the vice president or any other section leader or volunteer. Other sections may trust the planning to a

veteran member who is familiar with section traditions and past annual meetings. In any event, the organizers should keep a good balance between the social and business part. Members want to enjoy the meeting!

If possible, each year hold the meeting in the same general location and during the same month. Selecting a good convenient site is important. Many sections have access to a church or local hall.

1. Reserve the designated location (e.g. local church, community hall). This needs to be done early so that the date and details can be printed in the section's newsletter.

2. Set an agenda which highlights the section's activities during the past year. Include committee reports.

3. Decide whether you need a formal speaker or prefer members to share slides and adventures of the past year. When talking with potential speakers, always ask if they charge a fee. Decide if your section is willing to pay a speaker or offer to reimburse them for traveling expenses. Always invite them to join the section for dinner. Ask potential speakers if they need items such as a screen, slide projector, or extension cord or if they will bring their own. Ask for written details about their program so that a proper introduction can be given at the meeting.

4. It may be nice to purchase gifts for the most active trip participant, trail worker, and trip leader. The section treasurer will reimburse the buyer. Table decorations or door prizes are optional. Keep records or find out which club member may have unused miscellaneous items from previous meetings.

5. Send a written invitation or call the staff at GMC headquarters to invite them to the annual meeting. Find out if any of the staff would like to speak (briefly) at the meeting. Ask if anyone has information for the president to convey to the section.

6. A few days before the annual meeting, the chairperson or other committee member should contact the location and the speaker with a reminder, to make sure things are all set and will be on schedule.

7. The contact person for the dinner (list in section newsletter) will be getting calls about what foods to bring. They may try to direct people into bringing a dish in one of four general groups: main dish, salad, bread, dessert. Some people can also be assigned to bring drinks, but the contact person may ask the treasurer to buy tea and instant coffee as these tend to be pricey. Make sure someone will bring milk or half-and-half for coffee and butter or margarine for bread. Church

President's Agenda for Annual Meeting

Before business meeting...

1. Welcome attendees.
2. Acknowledge members who have died or been born during the past year.
3. Name and welcome new members.

After business meeting...

4. Honor outgoing officers and outstanding volunteers.
5. Award door or raffle prizes (if applicable).
6. Introduce guest speaker.
7. Thank guest speaker.
8. Close meeting.

Agenda Items for an Annual Meeting's Official Business

1. Open meeting and approve minutes of last year's meeting.
2. Hear reports from officers and committee chairs.
3. Hear and approve financial report.
4. Review other old business.
5. Hear report from the nominating committee.
6. Call for nominations from the floor.
7. Review new business.
8. Elect new slate of officers.
9. Adjourn business meeting.

kitchens often have salt, pepper and sugar available; make sure they can be used or have someone bring some, just in case.

8. Make sure that at least 3 or 4 people will come early to help set up tables, etc. Usually finding helpers to clean up after the meal isn't a problem.

9. On the night of the dinner, make sure that everyone involved is bringing their assigned items. Provide name tags and a sign-up sheet for attendees.

10. At the end of the evening, make sure the tables and chairs are back in their original location and that all agreements with the contact person at the site have been met. Don't forget things like locking all the doors, etc. Also make sure the site and speaker have been paid; send thank-you notes to both.

Section-Sponsored Special Events

Special events may include educational meetings (including those offered by the main club), workshops, informal member slide shows, the GMC James P. Taylor Winter Series and other programs. Planning largely depends on the purpose and setting of the event. The checklist below includes many elements already described for the annual meeting. Modify your approach as needed.

- Find site, determine time, and recruit speaker.
- Find a volunteer to act as contact person for the event.
- Advertise in section newsletter, *Long Trail News*, local newspaper, radio, etc.
- Plan for refreshments (cups, plates, napkins, etc.).
- Arrange to get key for the site or have the facility opened and closed.
- Plan activities for children.
- For slide shows, arrange for a projector, extra bulb, and screen.
- Get name tags. This makes it much easier for new people who are coming to a program for the first time.
- Have a sign-up sheet.
- Remember: Leave No Trace. At the end of the evening, put away chairs and tables, pick up trash, turn out lights, and lock up.

Hosting a James P. Taylor Winter Series Event

Since 1992, the James P. Taylor Winter Series has provided adventure, educational, and nature slide shows to members and the public. The series has matured to the point of including events that are a bit more professional than the average home slide show but are affordable to host. The series has been a terrific way for the club to remain visible in the public eye during the winter months. In recent years many sections have helped to sponsor series slide shows in their area and have been able to use the events as a way to recruit new members and fundraise. Because these shows are part of a formal series, they are planned well in advance by the club's education coordinator.

Hosting a Taylor Series event provides the section with an excellent opportunity to showcase its presence and activities to the area community. It brings section members together in an additional annual event. Planning for and hosting the event is a team effort where members can work together as well as share in the satisfaction of a show well done.

If your section is interested in hosting a show in association with the series, contact the education coordinator during late summer or early fall. He or she will determine what services the GMC office provides and what responsibilities are expected of a section when sponsoring a series event. Not all of the section responsibilities may apply depending on the show you host and the location; always request a detailed list of your section's duties.