

Council Secretary's Guide



SO, YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE SECRETARY OF YOUR AMD COUNCIL...

Congratulations! Being the Secretary of a Council of the Allied Masonic Degrees (AMD) is one of the easiest and most rewarding administrative roles in the Craft. If you have not done so already, please reach out to the Grand Secretary immediately following your election / installation into office. His contact information can always be found on the Grand Council website at www.amdusa.org. He will make sure that you are denoted as Secretary in the proper systems and that your preferred mailing address is used for all Grand Council business.

WHAT FORMS DO I NEED?

An AMD Council is very easy to administer. You only need three forms, all of which can be found in the Resources section of the aforementioned Grand Council website.

Supplies Order Form

Used to purchase rituals, jewels, certificates, and other items from the Grand Secretary's office.

Red Branch of Eri Nomination Form

Used to nominate members of your Council to any of the Ranks of the Royal Order of the Red Branch of Eri.

Annual Return Form

Used to file the annual return for the Council. This form is updated in November of each year and is due by January 15th.

Each Council is permitted to create their own invitation letter or form for new members. The Grand Secretary can supply examples upon request.

HOW DO I REPORT NEW MEMBERS?

New members are reported during the annual return process, at the end of the year. You do not need to report new members until this time.

HOW DO I REPORT A CHANGE OF OFFICERS?

New officers are reported during the annual return process, at the end of the year. You do not need to report new officers until this time. The only exception is the Secretary, who should report himself to the Grand Secretary following his election / installation.

HOW DO I REPORT DEATHS?

Deaths are reported during the annual return process, at the end of the year. You do not need to report deceased members until this time.

DUES CARDS

At the end of each year, you will receive a package of pre-printed dues cards, at no cost, for the members of your Council.

HOW DO I GET ACCESS TO THE GRAND COUNCIL DATABASE?

Constituent Council access is not necessary. All membership database administration is handled by the Grand Secretary's office. His office employs the MMS system developed and used by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar. All data in MMS is interconnected, so if someone changes their address with Grand Encampment, or any other group that uses MMS, the address is flagged for update across all systems. This is the same for deaths. In this way, the database is kept remarkably up to date.

TRANSFERS

The Constitution does not permit transfers of membership except in one very specific case. Under certain special circumstances, a member in good standing may request to transfer into Grand Master's Council "A" - the holding Council. In all other cases, a man must be invited to join a Council; he cannot request that he be transferred. This is because we are an invitational order with a membership limit on each local unit. Ergo, any member must be invited to join.

PLURAL MEMBERSHIPS

Plural membership is allowed. A man may be a member of more than one Council, provided he is invited to each. The first Council that a member joins will be his home Council. All other Councils that a member may belong to will be Plural Councils. The member does not count against the limit in these Plural Councils, but otherwise enjoys the same privileges of membership as any other member. (See Article XIII, Section 5 of the Constitution.)

EMERITUS MEMBERSHIP

The Constitution permits each Council to nominate up to two members per year to Emeritus status, to a maximum of 7 Emeritus members. These members do not count against the 27 member limit of the Council and they may no longer hold office. The Council still pays per capita on Emeritus members. Emeritus status allows for additional members in a Council. Since plural members do not count against a Council's membership total, requesting Emeritus status for a plural member is unnecessary. To nominate a member to Emeritus status, the Secretary of the Council should draft a letter, countersigned by the Sovereign Master, that outlines the reasons for moving the Brother to Emeritus status. The letter should state when the Council voted unanimously in favor of this action. (See Article XIII, Section 7 of the Constitution.) That letter is then sent to the Grand Secretary. Once verified by the Grand Secretary, the Secretary will receive a confirmation letter of the action. He will report the change on the next Annual Return.

PUBLICATIONS

Each year, the Grand Council publishes two volumes - the *Annals* (the proceedings of the Grand Council) and the *Miscellanea* (a compilation of research papers.) As Secretary, you will receive a box containing the copies for your Council. We ask that you distribute them to your members. If your Council is in arrears for the annual Per Capita, the volumes will be shipped to the Grand Secretary, who will forward them to you once your payment is received. (See Article XXIII of the Constitution.)

SUPPLIES ORDERS

The Grand Council, through the office of the Grand Secretary, offers for sale supplies that may be useful in operating your Council. Items include ties, pins, jewels, and rituals. A current list of supplies available for order may be found on the Grand Council website in the Resources section. *Only Council Secretaries may place orders.*

The Grand Council does not offer paraphernalia required to perform the degrees. The Grand Secretary can provide information regarding suppliers of these items, though the Grand Council does not officially endorse or recommend any specific suppliers.

THE DEGREES

Upon joining a Council, a member is considered to hold all of the standard degrees even if he has not yet witnessed them. These include the Royal Ark Mariner, Order of the Secret Monitor, Saint Lawrence the Martyr, Knight of Constantinople, Grand Tilers of Solomon, Excellent Master, Masters of Tyre, Architect, Grand Architect, and Superintendent. These degrees are contained in Ritual 1.

Upon being installed as a Sovereign Master of a Council, a member is also considered to then hold all of the “chair” degrees without witnessing them. These include Installed Sovereign Master, Worshipful Commander Noah, Installed Master of St. Lawrence the Martyr, and Installed Supreme Ruler. These degrees may be performed by the Council locally and are contained in Ritual 3.

TRACKING DEGREES

The Grand Council only tracks the date of joining for each member. While many of these dates are recorded in our database, dates for long time members may only be found in our paper records, requiring additional research. Because each member is considered to already hold each degree as previously outlined, the Grand Council does not track which degrees each member has witnessed, with the exception of the Order of the Scarlet Cord and the Royal Order of the Red Branch of Eri as outlined later in this document. It is up to the constituent Council if they would like to track this information. Certificates and lapel pins for each degree are available from the Grand Secretary via the supplies order form.

YE ANIENTE ORDER OF CORKS

The Corks degree is superintended by the Grand Council directly. Per Article II of the Constitution, Conferrals of the Corks degree are held in a “Cellar” at the discretion of the Grand Council, under the direction of the Sovereign Grand Master.

THE ORDER OF THE SCARLET CORD

All Councils are permitted to work the first three grades of the Order of the Scarlet Cord. Due to the complex nature of these conferrals, they are often best planned for a regional Ingathering or some other large event. Councils must coordinate, in advance, with the office of the Grand Secretary. He will supply information regarding timing, fees payable, rituals, etc. It is recommended that you reach out to the Grand Secretary at least 120 days in advance of when you plan to perform a conferral.

THE ROYAL ORDER OF THE RED BRANCH OF ERI (RORBE)

The RORBE is an honorary set of ranks and ceremonies under the control of the Grand Council. They are defined in Section XX of the Constitution. The first four ranks are contained in Ritual 2. The Order comprises six ranks in total, being:

- Man-at-Arms - Available to any member who has not held an office in his Council but has performed exceptional service to the Order.
- Esquire - Available to any member that has held office in his Council. Limited to two nominations per calendar year.
- Knight - Available to members with seven or more years of service. Limited to one nomination per calendar year.
- Knight Commander - Available to any Venerable Brother (Past or Current Sovereign Master) of a Council. Limited to one nomination per calendar year.
- Knight Grand Cross - Awarded by the Grand Council
- Knight Supreme Grand Cross - Awarded by the Grand Council.

The requirements and limitations on nominations for these ranks are strictly enforced. All ranks must be awarded by vote of the Council (or Grand Council, as appropriate.) The ranks are not progressive; a member does not need to be a Man-at-Arms before being advanced to the rank of Esquire. A member does not need to witness or participate in a conferral of the rank in order to be accorded it. The regalia for each rank is provided in exchange for the passing fee, as outlined in Appendix A of the Constitution.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

The Grand Council does not require constituent Councils to file an annual financial report, nor does it audit Council financial records. Financial controls and review are the responsibility of constituent Councils.

THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Each constituent Council must have its own Employer Identification Number (E.I.N.), which is issued by the Internal Revenue Service (I.R.S.). A Council will have used this E.I.N. when applying for a bank account, submitting its tax return, etc. It is also to be reported on the second page of the annual return submitted each year to the Grand Council.

If a Council believes that it has previously been issued an E.I.N., but is unable to locate it, please refer to the following I.R.S. webpage for help:

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/lost-or-misplaced-your-ein>

Please note that the Grand Council and the Grand Secretary cannot confirm a previously issued E.I.N.

If a Council is ultimately unable to locate its E.I.N., or has never been issued one, then it should apply for a new one. Please refer to the following I.R.S. webpage:

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online>

TAX-EXEMPT STATUS

The Allied Masonic Degrees in the U.S.A. is a domestic fraternal society, operating under the lodge system, as defined in Section 501(c)(10) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Grand Council is a tax-exempt organization and submits its own tax return annually to the I.R.S.

However, it is very important to note that each constituent Council is also responsible for submitting its own tax return annually to the I.R.S.

It is also very important to note that obtaining an E.I.N. is a separate process from obtaining tax-exempt status. One does not accomplish the other.

If a Council believes that it has tax-exempt status that was previously approved by the I.R.S., it may confirm that status by visiting the following I.R.S. webpages:

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/tax-exempt-organization-search>
Tax Exempt Organization Search

<https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/>

If a Council firmly believes that it has tax-exempt status that was previously approved by the I.R.S., but cannot confirm it using the websites above, it should contact the I.R.S. directly. Please note that the Grand Council and the Grand Secretary cannot confirm the tax-exempt status of a Council.

ANNUAL TAX FILING

Constituent Councils that have tax-exempt status previously approved by the I.R.S. must submit Form 990-N annually to the I.R.S. (Larger Councils or those in special circumstances may have to file Form 990-EZ or 990 rather than 990-N.) Please refer to the following I.R.S. webpage for more information:

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/annual-electronic-filing-requirement-for-small-exempt-organizations-form-990-n-e-postcard>

A link to submit the Form 990-N may be found on that same page.

The successful submission of Form 990-N is to be reported on the second page of the annual return submitted each year to the Grand Council.

REPLACEMENT CHARTERS

Your Council's Charter is the most important document that your Council has. Unfortunately, some Councils have misplaced or lost their Charter. In these situations, the Council should request a replacement Charter from the Grand Secretary.

To provide a replacement Charter, the Grand Secretary will need a complete list of the Council's Charter members as well as the names of the first Sovereign Master, Senior Warden, and Junior Warden. He will then compare the names to those on file with the Grand Council to prepare an appropriate replacement.

SUBMITTING TO THE MISCELLANEA

Papers published in the Miscellanea cover a variety of topics and are wide ranging. Most frequently, the research presented falls into one of three categories relating to Freemasonry - history, ritual, and symbolism, though there is often cross over between the three.

Publishable papers must be narrative and in electronic format (Word or PDF files preferred.) Papers must be original works and not published in any other medium, including on the internet. Citations are required; no paper should rely primarily on electronic citations only. Prior to being published, the paper must be presented at a meeting of an Allied Masonic Degrees Council. Powerpoint presentations and other slide decks do not constitute a paper. Please refer to the “Quarry Project” for a style guide while writing papers as a recommendation.

If your council has a particularly well written and original article, please ensure it is properly cited and have the Secretary send it in Word / PDF format to publications@moamd.org. While we cannot print all papers, we want to ensure that our Grand body is keeping record of the transactions taking place and publishing quality and original work.

Please ensure you include the following information in the title on the paper:

Author’s Name, Council Name and Number, Date Presented, a phone number and email address where the author can be reached.

THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

The Constitution of the Grand Council is available, for free, on the Grand Council website in the Resources section. Should a question arise, you should consult the Constitution and your by-laws first. If a question remains, contact the Grand Secretary. He can refer you to the appropriate authority.

If your Council has approved updates to your bylaws, you should send the updated by-laws, denoting the specific changes, to the Grand Secretary. He will coordinate the review and approval of the by-laws by the Sovereign Grand Master. Upon approval, a signed copy of the by-laws will be returned to the Secretary via email.

IF YOUR COUNCIL IS STRUGGLING

If your Council is struggling and closure is being considered, please reach out to the Grand Secretary as soon as possible. We understand that sometimes Councils close, or perhaps the membership desires to affiliate to another Council. While the Constitution of the Grand Council does not offer a mechanism for Councils to merge, there is a process that can be followed to ensure Brothers retain their membership.

GETTING HELP

The Grand Secretary is here to assist both you and your Council in creating a positive and enjoyable fraternal experience for your members. If you have a question, problem, or concern, please do not hesitate to reach out to him. He is here to serve.

Version 1.0 // Published March 2024