

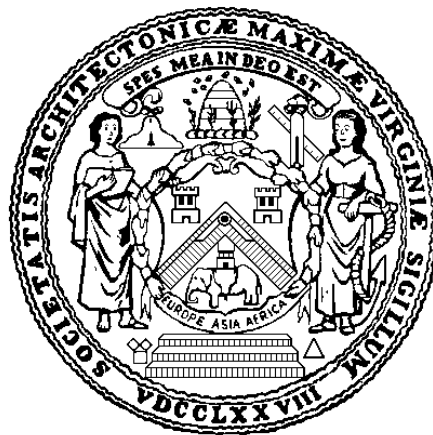
The Virginia Masonic University

Master's Certificate Program

Instructor's Manual

**Module #2
Problem Solving and Planning**

April, 2016



**Grand Lodge of Virginia
A.F. & A.M.**

Organization

- A. **A model for structured problem solving**
- B. **Planning and managing meetings**
- C. **Modes for Effective Communication**
- D. **Budgeting**
- E. **Calendar – Planning Your Year**

A. General Model for Decisionmaking

Step 1: Framing

Framing determines the viewpoint from which decision-makers look at the issue and sets parameters for which aspects of the situation they consider important and which they do not. It determines in a preliminary way which criteria would cause them to prefer one option over the other.

Step 2: Gathering intelligence

Intelligence-gatherers must seek the knowable facts and options and produce reasonable evaluations of “unknowables” to enable decision-making in the face of uncertainty. It’s important that they avoid such pitfalls as overconfidence in what they currently believe and the tendency to seek only information that confirms their beliefs.

Step 3: Coming to Conclusions

Sound framing and good intelligence don’t guarantee a wise decision. People cannot consistently make good decisions using seat-of-the-pants judgment alone, even with excellent data in front of them. A systematic approach will lead to more accurate choices – and it usually does so far more efficiently than hours spent in unorganized thinking. This is particularly true in group settings.

Step 4: Learning from Experience

Only by systematically learning from the results of past decisions can decision-makers continually improve their skills. Further, if learning begins when a decision is first implemented, early refinements to the decision or implementation plan can be made that could mean the difference between success or failure.

I. Framing: A model for structured problem solving

Pareto Analysis uses the Pareto Principle – also known as the “80/20 Rule” – which is the idea that 20% of causes generate 80% of results. With this tool, we’re trying to find the 20% of work that will generate 80% of the results that doing all of the work would deliver.

Tip

The figures 80 and 20 are illustrative – the Pareto Principle is a general one demonstrating the relationship between effort of work versus results obtained. For example, 13% of work could generate 87% of returns. Or 70% of problems could be resolved by dealing with 30% of the causes.

Step 1: Identify and list problems

Firstly, write a list of all of the problems that you need to resolve. Where possible, talk to members and line to get their input, and draw on surveys, one-on-one discussions, other Lodge perspectives, Grand Lodge perspective.

Step 2: Prioritize Problems

Now you need to prioritize each problem. The method you use depends on the sort of problem you're trying to solve.

One technique is to use a matrix approach. Chart your problems on two axes, perverseness (scope) against controllability (ability within your control to solve). See example in Appendix B.

II. Gather Intelligence

Step 3: Identify likely root cause for priority problems

For each priority problem, identify its fundamental cause. (Techniques such as Brainstorming, the 5 Whys, Cause and Effect Analysis, and Root Cause Analysis (fishbone diagramming will help with this.)

III. Coming to Conclusions

Step 4: develop actions to address root causes.

Tip:

To get the most out of your individual brainstorming session, choose a comfortable place to sit and think. Minimize distractions so that you can focus on the problem at hand, and consider using structured techniques, such as Mind Mapping to arrange and develop ideas.

Step 5: Rate potential actions for effectiveness and efficiency.

Characterize actions against doability (efficiency) and impact (effectiveness).

Exercise of prioritizing actions for membership – use the case study of Appendix A.

Step 6: Schedule and take Action

Keep in mind that if some tracking and reporting of actions accomplished is not done, implementation tends to lag

Group technique

Making decisions within a group can often be challenging.

When things go well, they can go very well. However, when things go wrong, you can end up mired in conflict. Some people may fight for recognition and position, others may be over-critical or disruptive, while others may sit quietly and not contribute anything to the overall effort. Because of this, groups can often spin out of control and make worse decisions than individuals working on their own.

When this happens, it's easy to see why some people throw their hands up in frustration and give up. However, when a group works in the right way, it really works. Groups that function effectively together can outperform individuals and make much better decisions.

But how do you make your group effective? How do you get all group members to contribute and inspire one another to create great ideas and solutions?

One technique is to have individuals, anonymously, provide input to each of the steps above **before** being influenced by anyone else. The results at each stage are aggregated and summarized. This techniques helps to ensure each person

is heard and considered. Each individual is not "stepped on" or overpowered by stronger, louder group members.

All of this helps the group make better decisions.

Tip:
Groups can begin to lose their effectiveness and ability to make good quality decisions if they have too many members. Keep your group small – four to seven team members – to maximize effectiveness.

TIP
Develop group rules and norms at the start of the process for discussions and resolving conflicts

B. Managing Lodge meetings (stated and called).

What Makes a Meeting Work?

There are four important aspects of planning a meeting. The first is to review the **“WHAT.”** What are the results you want from your meeting or parts of your meeting? **WHAT** is the meeting purpose and desired outcome.

The second is **WHO** will be involved. Are the key players present, do you have too many people or too few.

The third is the **“HOW** will you do it.” How are the decisions made for each issue or topic to be discussed? What process will you use to ensure harmony among the craft? How long will each topic take?

The fourth is **WHEN** will it be done. When in the agenda is the topic most appropriate—at the beginning, the end.

Tip
**If you have no meeting agenda, you cannot have meeting control
An agenda is essential.**

Tip
**Don't put too much in your meetings – if you go beyond 1 ½ to 2 hrs. you
will be viewed inefficient and not attentive to the family and other needs of
the craft.**

Developing Agendas

- Develop the agenda together with line officers and key participants meeting.
- State the overall outcome that you want from the meeting
- Design the agenda so that officers get involved—they each have a role.
- Next to each major topic, include the type of action needed, the type of outcome expected.
- Ask participants to input to the agenda.
- Send out the agenda beforehand.

Meeting management analogy

Training tip Analogy Drive the Bus

Passengers don't drive the bus
Stops are scheduled
The driver controls special stop
Keep the bus moving on the intended route
Make sure you get to the end of the route with all you passengers.

I. Conducting Your Meetings.

Meeting Structure – the order should be changed to suit your particular needs – and often it is better for the membership and a courtesy to the speakers to have the program early in the meeting.

II. A default meeting template

- a. Open / Pledge.
- b. Welcome.
- c. Petitions or Applications for Membership for the First Reading.
- d. Maturing Petitions or Applications for Membership.
- e. Treasurer's Report.
- f. Secretary Clear Desk / Bills / Correspondence.
- g. Committee Reports.
- h. Motions / Old Business / New Business .
- i. Ill & Distressed.
- j. Review Trestleboard Calendar.
- k. Masonic Birthdays.
- l. LEO Educational Minute.
- m. Introductions.
- n. Speaker.
- o. Discharge Stewards / Invite all for refreshments following Lodge.
- p. Read & Approve Minutes.
- q. Close Lodge.

II. Preparation

Whatever you do – don't "wing it." The following three items will insure a good meeting.

1. Use an Agenda.

- a. **Confirm Key Participants** in Advance.
- b. **Don't assume** – also have an emergency program ready just in case. Use the Monthly Planning Sheet in the appendix to help you plan your "To Do" list.
- c. **Review with Your Secretary.** You can review your agenda with your secretary before Lodge, better yet, review a couple of days in advance over the phone. Your secretary can insure you do not forget anything and are taken by surprise. Your secretary can make you look good or bad!

2. Procedures.

- a. **Motions & Discussions.** Remember that we do not use Roberts Rules of Order in Virginia. The Master controls what takes place in each meeting. There are no seconds to motions as the Master decides whether he will receive a motion or not, whether he will allow discussions or not, and whether a vote will be taken. He may reject a motion, postpone any action or discussion to a future time or date, or act upon it.
- b. **Voting.**
 - **Voice Votes or Viva Voce** (pronounced Voh-chay). For votes on catechism recital and normal business a voice vote may be taken. The Master alone decides and declares the winner. Although in close calls he may actually count hands, he is not required to do so. In the case of a tie, the Master has a second vote.
 - **Ballot Box.** In all cases regarding membership, the ballot must be spread according to ritual. It also may be used in straight forward yes or no votes which may be controversial and in these cases it may be circulated. A hotly contested By-Laws change (such as meeting night) would be a good example where the anonymity of the ballot box would produce a fair and true vote while maintaining peace and harmony.
 - **Paper Ballot.** When electing officers, etc., where there are two or more choices, a paper ballot must be taken. Be sure your Secretary has plenty of paper and pencils or pens ready at all times. You will appoint two tellers to count the ballots. The Deacons will distribute materials and collect the ballots, placing them on the altar where the Tellers will make an audible voice count of each ballot. One Teller will read each ballot while the other records the count. The recording Teller makes a mark under each name for each vote cast for an individual, and on each fifth vote for that individual, he makes a diagonal mark across the previous four and announces "tally." At the end of the voting it is easy to count by fives and

add the votes quickly. The ballots should be destroyed immediately after the vote is taken, the same as when using the ballot box.

- **Some Other helpful reminders.**
 - ✓ In case of a tie votes, the Master shall have a second vote.
 - ✓ The Worshipful Master controls the funds of the Lodge and may order them expended for Masonic purposes.
 - ✓ The Worshipful Master may have a disruptive or disrespectful Brother removed from the Lodge room.
 - ✓ The Worshipful Master has the right to refuse to entertain motions as he controls the business of the Lodge.
 - ✓ The Worshipful Master has the authority to order the Trustees of the Lodge to transfer funds to be used as directed by the Worshipful Master or by Lodge vote.

3. Other Procedural Protocols

Introductions - As Worshipful Master, you will be responsible for introducing visiting Brethren and dignitaries. Repeat this mantra "Members and guests are **introduced** at their seats, and **presented** at the altar." Again, "Members and guests are introduced at their seats, and presented at the altar," and once more for good measure, "Members and guests are introduced at their seats, and presented at the altar." This means that if you are introducing a Brother or a guest, they are introduced at their seat. But if you are going to present them to the Lodge for an honor or to receive a presentation award, then you would have a committee present them at the altar. If you need to, put this on the top of your agenda, so you will always have a reminder.

Masonic Protocol and Formal Ceremonies. As the Worshipful Master, you set the tone and are responsible for proper decorum and protocol. Protocol is universally defined as the ceremonial forms and courtesies established as proper and correct in official interactions between heads of state and their ministers. In Freemasonry, it refers to the established forms and ceremonies used in welcoming dignitaries at either a stated or called communication. Whether an informal introduction of these Brethren at their seats, or the more formal presentation at the altar depends upon the circumstances.

- Most Lodges favor the use of the less formal method of recognizing dignitaries at their seats at routine stated communications, reserving the more proper and time consuming ceremonies for distinctive occasions, such as the reception of the District Deputy Grand Master or the Grand Master on their official visits to the Lodge.
- Courtesy requires that visiting Brethren be asked which method of introduction they prefer. Visiting Past Masters should be presented by a Committee of Past Masters or Past District Deputy Grand Masters, or higher ranking individuals.

- It is courteous to notify committee members in advance of the presentation, so they are prepared to insure they have the full name and rank of the individual they are to present.

As Worshipful Master, you should consider yourself the Maestro or leader of the band. You want to allow more time when interesting programs are occurring, and move things along when they bog down or get uninspiring. Accordingly, as Worshipful Master, you should simplify the meeting where feasible. Thus, if announcements are too prolonged, consider having most of them typed up prior to the meeting and passed around to the Brethren. This will have more impact, save time, and leave the Brethren with something they can keep and place on their calendars. Similarly, you should instruct the Secretary to clear his desk rather than wasting time asking if there are new petitions, maturing petitions, bills, etc. The Secretary can cover what is on his desk devoid of this dialogue. As the Master, you will want to make sure that the minutes are summarized – to cover the major events of the meeting. There is nothing more dispiriting than to listen to a long recitation of the minutes where the Secretary rereads the communications.

Exercise – Break into groups (3-5 per group) and have each group set up a meeting agenda with the situation and requirements in Appendix B

B. Modes for Effective Communication

I. Communications.

Communications is the glue which holds your entire organization together. Without good communications, your members will lose interest and attendance will diminish. There are many dimensions to communications beyond the mere relating of facts. Good communications will evoke excitement and eagerness to participate. Above all, be sure that all of your communications are upbeat and enthusiastic. If you are not enthusiastic, how can you expect your members to become so? If you happen to be lacking in the necessary talent to write in an enthusiastic manner, you may want to enlist help from someone who can re-write your information in a more upbeat manner. Never hesitate to ask for help, understanding that not everyone has the same talents. It is your responsibility to see that the best possible job is done, not necessarily to do it all yourself. Be sure to regiment your approach to communications. Put reminders on your calendar to allow enough time to plan, write and execute your various modes of communication with your members.

1. Internal.

a. Trestleboard.

Your printed Trestleboard is probably the most important element of overall Lodge communications.

Plan ahead and allow enough time for the writing, printing, addressing, and mailing so that the members will receive their Trestleboard well in advance of the meetings and events it announces.

Ideally it should be sent monthly to keep a constant line of communication with the members of your Lodge. Whether your Trestleboard is a large and fancy 4-color printed piece or a single sheet self-mailer, remember that its focus should be on future activities and events.

You should try to create a feeling of excitement and enthusiasm. Long complaints about poor attendance, even if they are accurate, only tend to increase the problem. Keep it positive and upbeat. Be sure to include contact information for key officers to keep communications open in both directions with your members. Invite them to comment and volunteer to assist with Lodge events.

b. Email

This avenue of communication is becoming increasingly important in today's society. Just be careful not to ignore those who choose not to use email. Many Lodges deliver their Trestleboard via email for those who choose to receive it in that manner and save on postage costs.

If you have a good list of email addresses, it is a great way to send individual reminders for upcoming events.

Some Lodges are using Facebook or other social networking sites to disseminate information to members. Just be cautious to protect personal information and careful not to ignore those who are not online.

c. Website

A Lodge website is a wonderful tool to post current information about upcoming events and to display photos of past events. It also can include, a history of the Lodge, location and direction information for visitors, and how to contact key officers. Just be sure to keep it current.

Important Tip
Keep your Website current

Links to other Lodge websites, a District website, and to the Grand Lodge are helpful. Also, information about appendant bodies can be helpful to members. Posting papers presented by speakers or your Lodge Education Officer is easy if they can give you copies in electronic form. The Grand Lodge provides assistance and will link to your website. Be sure to check the Grand Lodge website for policies and guidelines governing your Lodge website at

http://www.grandlodgeofvirginia.org/committee/information_technology_committee.htm

Review the Grand Lodge Policy on Information Technology to ensure your Lodge is in conformance with these evolving technologies.

d. Phone Calls

For emergencies, such as a request for a funeral service on short notice, phone calls may be your best option.

Prepare for such emergencies by constructing a phone tree among your officers. For example the Master calls all the elected and appointed officers (12 not counting himself). Those 12 each call a portion of the membership. Make up the call lists in advance to avoid confusion when the need arises to use the phone tree. Be sure to send backup lists to your officers, so that if one is out of town, another can take care of his list as well.

Another use of the phone is to confirm speakers or to confirm cast members for degrees. Phone calls should be used to inquire about absent members or those who have been ill. One Master increased his Lodge attendance by personally calling everyone who was celebrating their Masonic birthday, about a week before the stated meeting for that month, telling them that their birthday would be recognized and inviting them to be there.

Should you have a special event for which you fear a poor attendance, you can use the phone tree to personally invite each member of the Lodge. There are also web-based systems such as PhoneVite.com which will deliver your pre-recorded message to your list of phone numbers. Many Lodges have used this successfully to remind members of regular meetings, special events, and to inform members of last-minute meeting changes (snow storms, etc.).

e. Cards and Letters.

Cards should be sent to members for their Masonic Birthday, for illness, births, deaths, etc. .This is a perfect opportunity to assign this task to a committee and involve more Brethren. Letters can be used to promote and encourage attendance at special events. A letter to personally invite all Past Masters to a Past Masters' Night is not only a nice touch, but can increase participation. Cards and letters are an excellent way to remember Lodge widows. Be sure to invite them to Lodge picnics, Ladies' Nights, etc.

2. External (Publicity)

Every Lodge event is an opportunity to project a good public image by sending photos and articles to your local newspaper. It also is an opportunity to involve Brethren in taking photos, writing the articles, or both. Some of the Grand Lodge programs are also great opportunities for publicity: the Community Builders Award, Eagle Scout recognition, and Child ID events, to name a few. Be sure to include these excellent programs in your annual plan. You can request assistance from the Chairman of the Grand Lodge Committee on Publicity.

a. press releases. Here are some tips for writing good press releases:

- ✓ Make sure the information is newsworthy.
- ✓ Start with a brief description of the news, then identify who announced it, and not the other way around. Include who, what, when, where, and why.
- ✓ Make sure the first 10 words of your release are effective, as they are the most important.
- ✓ Avoid excessive use of adjectives and fancy language.
- ✓ Deal with the facts.
- ✓ For events, provide as much contact information as possible: The name of the individual to contact along with address, phone and fax numbers, email and Web site information.
- ✓ Make it as easy as possible for media representatives to do their jobs.

D. Budgeting

Planning

The Worshipful Master has the responsibility to establish the budget for the ensuing year. A budget should be used in every Masonic Lodge. Budgeting is necessary to attain your desired goals and to keep Lodge planning within the realm of reality. It requires a systematic evaluation of estimated income and expenditures to ensure that funding will be available for programs, activities and building maintenance.

I. Income

The first step in creating a budget is to estimate the income that the Lodge will receive. Lodge income are typically made up of one or more of the following:

1. Dues
2. Interest and dividends
3. Sale of stocks or bonds
4. Income from rental property
5. Applications and affiliations
6. Donations
7. Other

II. Fixed costs or non-discretionary expenses

The second element is to determine the costs associated with your Lodge, and without which it cannot function. These are the fixed costs, and should be itemized separately from non-fixed or discretionary expenses. Fixed costs should include the following; but are not limited to:

1. Rent/maintenance
2. Utilities
3. Salaries and associated taxes
4. Trestleboard printing and postage
5. Telephone
6. Per-capita tax

This list is presented as a suggested guide for planning. Actual fixed cost items can only be determined by considering your Lodge's unique situation.

III. Non-fixed expenditures or program budget

Once the resources and fixed expenses are identified and cataloged, the task of budgeting can begin. After all revenues are identified, and the totals compared, the Budget Committee will have a good idea of the amount of money available for your special programs.

IV. Project and program choices

When the Budget Committee has determined what the budget allows, they will have to make some project or program choices. Projects and programs can be very expensive or very inexpensive. It all depends upon what you plan and how you execute it. The costs of various projects and programs must be carefully estimated, if you are to come up with a realistic budget. The following items should be considered in your estimates:

1. Printing costs (special trestleboard inserts, flyers, programs, tickets, etc.)
2. Postage for flyers and/or tickets
3. Entertainment costs (musicians, entertainers, and scenery for home or local talent, etc.)
4. Decoration costs
5. Food or refreshments (include condiments, paper goods, etc.)

You may not have all the details for each of your programs worked out to the level shown above; but the closer that you can come, the better your estimate will be.

V. Matching program costs and available resources

As soon as it has been determined what the budget allows, and how much the proposed projects and programs cost, you will have to make the hard decision as to which programs can be afforded, and which will have to be dropped. Benefits of possible programs are not easily evaluated, but they must be considered, if they are to be presented to your Lodge with an interesting plan of activities. It is necessary to choose programs that will be enjoyable for the majority of the members and will be well attended.

VI. Finalizing the Plan

We now come to the best part of the budgeting process. You have now completed the project or program evaluation process and know how much revenue is available for these items. In some instances, you may have determined that the benefits to be derived from a particular program warrant its full support by Lodge funds. In others, participant charges for all or a portion of the program costs may be warranted.

See sample Lodge budget in Appendix C.

Exercise;

Using the Template in Appendix C – Develop an initial budget for your Lodge based on what you know.

Tip

REMEMBER, your budget is a plan, and as such, is subject to change. Do not hesitate to change the plan when it becomes necessary.

Tip

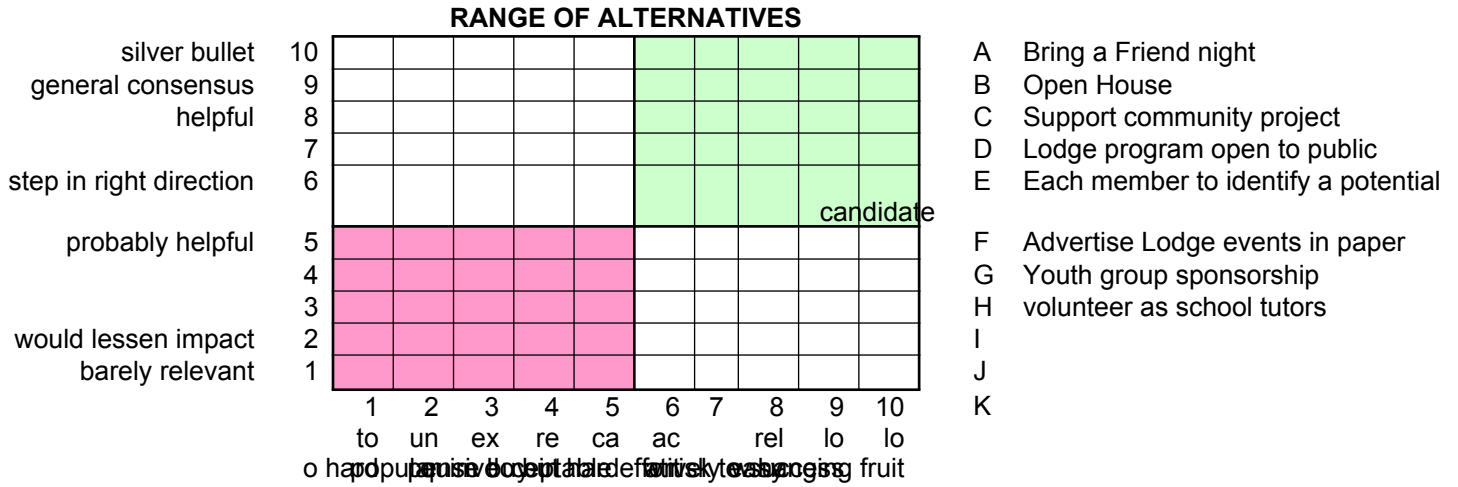
Institute a budget tracking system that allows you to use past information on income and expenditures to build your budget and to develop future needs.

Exercise:

Review the sample report in Appendix D and have small groups discuss and report on what they like and don't like

E. Calendar – Planning Your Year

Appendix A Contingency Planning



Doability

Appendix B

Exercise for setting a Lodge Stated meeting agenda



Considerations

- Electricity, gas, Internet, and water)
three bills are for (support to a local food bank request—from \$100 to \$400, a request for the DeMolay for \$100, The continuing support (last 4 years) for a Little League team \$400)
- The District MAHOVA Representative has a presentation to make (10-15 minutes) that you have requested him to make.
 - A petition for membership, second reading and vote.
 - A request from a 40 year Lodge Member to make a motion for enlarging the kitchen since it is in poor condition for preparation of meals. This has not been discussed among the Lodge members to this point.
 - Two new Entered Apprentices are ready to present their catechisms in Lodge, and the LIW has informed you that he wants to move them along.
 - The Lodge schedule of degrees has become complex and you need to sort this out with the LIW and catechism coaches, and line officers.
 - The Senior Warden would like to put before the Lodge the need for a dues increase since he sees his year as being in need of additional funds for the programs and events he plans.
 - Your LEO has a program on John Marshall as a Mason that you have put off for three months and the LEO is anxious to get this program presented.
 - You have two DDGM visiting your meeting to night as well as a Past Grand Master.
 - Two members have expressed a need to discuss a request from the local town for the Lodge to get involved with a community fair and want to discuss this in Lodge.

Your Task: Plan the order of the topics that will be dealt with in your meeting, those items that will not be dealt with and the order in which they are done – and why.

Appendix C

Sample Lodge budget

Williamsburg Lodge No. 6, A.F. & A.M. January 2, 1997

REPORT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE FOR 1997

The Budget and Finance Committee met on December 31, 1996, to prepare a Proposed Budget for 1997, which the Committee recommends as follows:

PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 1997

Estimated Income	1996 Actual	1996 Budget
Dues	\$7,410.00	\$7,410.00
Income from Suppers	\$2,240.00	\$2,000.00
Interest on Lodge Investments	\$300.00	\$300.00
Interest on Checking Account	\$15.00	\$10.00
Miscellaneous	\$320.00	\$0.00
TOTAL	\$10,285.00	\$9,860.00

PROPOSED EXPENDITURES	1996 Actual	1996 Budget
Secretary's Expenses	\$1,100.00	\$1,175.00
Rent	\$4,200.00	\$4,200.00
Aprons	\$150.00	\$180.00
Postage	\$385.00	\$400.00
Sewer	\$300.00	\$425.00
Electricity	\$485.00	\$500.00
Salaries	\$800.00	\$800.00
Per-capita	\$1,852.50	\$1,852.50
TOTAL	\$9,272.50	\$9,532.50

The following will summarize the Committee's considerations in preparing the proposed 1997 budget.

Appendix C Sample Lodge budget

Lodge _____

PROPOSED BUDGET FOR _____

Estimated Income	Past year	Your Year
Dues		
General donations		
Fund raisers		
Income from meals		
Interest on Investments		
Fees		
Miscellaneous		
TOTAL		

PROPOSED EXPENDITURES	Past Year	Your Year
Donations		
Rent		
Supplies		
Postage		
Meals		
Utilities		
Maintenance		
Grand Lodge Per-capita		
Other fees		
Other costs		
TOTAL		

Appendix D
Sample Lodge Financial Report