



#### 4. THE NEWLY ELECTED COMMITTEE MEMBER

Ray Burniston writes Part 4 in a series about the Committee.

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Most of us if we have been a secretary for a few years will have encountered the new committee member who having been elected is hell bent on putting the club to rights. Each annual general meeting provides a certain amount of stress to the secretary/manager with changes in officers and committee personnel without having to do battle with the newcomer who has been voted in by a section of the club to carry their banner. The job can be difficult and demanding at times without adding this sort of pressure. In this article we will try to anticipate potential problems and look for solutions to them.

In these days of easy methods of communication you should have developed a strategy towards your committee. This should make sure that they are kept in touch with all happenings at the club and receive regular financial and sub-committee reports apart from the minutes of all meetings. If you can get all your committee members with an email address so much the better because you can very quickly send out information in this way. You should have a set policy of dealing with new committee members following their election so that they can be briefed into current state of affairs within the club.

The secretary/manager with his/her ear to the ground will usually have a good idea of nominations for the committee and any particular reasons why. If you are asked advice about what is expected of a committee member then by all means spell out what is involved and all the salient facts. Avoid “cliques” within the club and try to treat all members the same including any special friends you may have.

For the member joining the committee for the first time it is important that this person is given every opportunity to brief themselves on the current state of affairs at the club. In most cases copies of the minutes of committee meetings during the past year should be sent out. If you have sub-committees such as finance, green and house, then copies of those should be included. If your club has a set of procedures for committee meetings which may include the policy of dealing with matters first brought up at a meeting then it is imperative that a copy is included. It is a good idea to highlight salient points and if necessary to make yourself available before the meeting to discuss any queries the person may have.

Some clubs have a blackball policy on voting new members in and by explaining the procedure you can avoid the newcomer making a fool of themselves at the first meeting. Some clubs have a strict seating plan so again it is important that the newcomer knows where to sit. If you have name plates for each member of the committee make certain you get the person’s name right

including the first name. In most cases you may know the individual well and this helps the situation. They may appreciate your advice on how they address the chairman and what is the procedure for speaking at the meeting on a particular subject. Some chairmen are fairly laid back and have no set procedures; others run the meeting with a rod of iron and heaven help the newcomer if they do not very quickly pick up the thread. Many clubs ban alcohol at meetings and if this is the policy at your club then make certain all the newcomers know of it.

If your club has sub-committees then generally at the first meeting following the annual general meeting the newcomers will be placed on one of them. You may be asked by the chairman to sound them out on for which they might like to be considered. Only do this if you are asked. It will depend on what the club policy is. In some cases the prospective member has to submit a short statement on his/her views before the election which is available for the members to study before voting.

With the move to smaller committees in clubs the member will in some cases be voted into a specific position such as Finance, Green or House. In this case they should be given a portfolio of their duties on the committee and all the relevant papers from previous meetings.

The secretary/manager will usually be responsible for briefing the individual immediately following the election with particular emphasis on outstanding matters. This is a point that needs particular attention because if you have a new member say handling finance on the committee it is your job to see that they know all the relevant facts.

These matters handled in an efficient and professional manner often are the difference between creating a good rapport with the person rather making an enemy from day one. It is imperative that you make yourself available to help and guide any newcomers in committee procedures and other items. Often you will discover by carrying this out that someone who you suspected could be a “pain in the neck” actually becomes a friend and supporter within the committee. If you give them your help and advice and they do not respond at least you can say you did your best. A negative response from you to a new member will only cause bad blood and lay the foundation for skirmishes in the future.

### ***Key points***

- ☛ Try to avoid joining cliques within the club as they will expect favours if their nominee is elected.
- ☛ Treat all newcomers the same and provide them with enough information to help them during the first few months.
- ☛ If they wish to see you in the office before the first meeting then make yourself available. Discuss with the club chairman their suitability for a particular sub-committee if applicable.

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