

INSTRUCTIONS TO COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

(To be attached to every petition for degrees or affiliation referred to a Committee of Inquiry.)

General Instructions

The principle purposes of the Committee of Inquiry are to guard the West Gate of Freemasonry from the acceptance of an unworthy candidate and to afford the petitioner and his family the opportunity to learn more about the fraternity. Review with the candidate the process for and timing of his election, as well as the Lodge's protocols for member attire and meals before degrees. Make sure he has read the brochure entitled "Maine Freemasonry" and determine whether he (and his family) has any questions. The best interest of Masonry demands that an exhaustive investigation be made of the character and standing of every applicant. It is imperative therefore that your investigation of the petitioner be thorough and that the interview be conducted if at all possible in the petitioner's home.

Completion of the Committee's task should not be limited to the verification of information on the petition for membership. Talk with others who might know him. Committee review of his use of social media sources is essential. At least one member of the Committee should review his Facebook page (if any) and search the Internet for any information that may warrant discussion with the petitioner and may influence your recommendation. Determine why he wants to become a Mason.

If your Lodge requires background checks of all applicants, review the report ordered by and sent to the petitioner and note any issue(s) of concern on the signed copy of the Petition for the Degrees or Membership by Affiliation. The Committee report should not be considered by the Lodge unless this step is completed.

Do not make a favorable recommendation unless you are convinced that the petitioner will conform to the laws, rules and regulations of the institution, and that he will cast the fraternity in a positive light.

Following are the more important points that you will wish to pursue:

1. Ascertain definitely if the **Lodge has jurisdiction** over the petitioner. (That he was at least age 18 when the Lodge accepted his application; has been a Maine resident for at least a year; and has not applied previously to another Lodge – if he did apply previously, was he elected and was the Entered Apprentice Degree conferred on him within one year of his being elected.)
2. Ascertain whether the **petitioner is morally fit** to be received into the fraternity; is he a man of strong character? Ascertain if his neighbors, acquaintances and employers consider him to be of good character.
3. Verify that the petition **questionnaire is complete and the information appears to be true**. If any questions have not been answered, interview the petitioner and have the petition amended, or ascertain the reason for his not answering such questions.
4. Ascertain definitely if the petitioner has any **physical condition** that will prevent him from being instructed in the arts and mysteries of Freemasonry, will require consideration in the conferral of the degrees, or will cause an inability to acquire the means of subsistence.
5. Ascertain whether the petitioner is **mentally qualified** to receive and understand the Masonic Degrees.
6. Ascertain if he **belongs to any organization** that appears inconsistent with the principles of Freemasonry or will impair his usefulness to the fraternity; might his associations impair the reputation of the Craft?
7. Consider the **financial standing** of the petitioner with particular reference as to his reputation in meeting his obligations, and whether or not the maintenance of Lodge membership would be in any way of financial detriment to those dependent upon him.
8. If the Lodge presents a Book of Holy Scriptures to newly raised Master Masons, determine which Book he should be presented (Holy Bible, Torah or Quran).

Members of Committees of Inquiry are urged to become familiar with those sections of the Grand Lodge Constitution which relate to applications (See Table of Contents page iii; and Digest of Decisions, Page 62).

Maine Masonic Code

FOR DEGREES

Grand Constitution ... Of Petitioners for Degrees (Abbreviated)

SEC. 96 No lodge, without dispensation from the Grand Master, shall receive a petition from a candidate for the degrees until he has resided in this State one year, excepting: (See § 82.2)

1. Seafaring men absent only from the State on a voyage to sea.

2. Candidates in the military or naval service who are stationed and have their domicile in this State during the preceding six months. [2002 p. 317]

SEC. 98 ... Blindness alone shall not render a candidate ineligible under the provisions of this section provided he is capable of meeting his Masonic obligations and is otherwise a desirable candidate.

Digest of Decisions, Page 62 ... APPLICATIONS (Abbreviated)

(See CANDIDATE, MEMBERSHIP, OBJECTION, REJECTION)

A petitioner for degrees or affiliation who alleges that he has received any Masonic degrees in a lodge in a Jurisdiction not in fraternal relations with the Grand Lodge of Maine shall not be recognized as a Mason by a lodge in this Jurisdiction. A petitioner under such circumstances must apply for all the degrees as conferred in this Jurisdiction, and must also state the conditions surrounding the receipt of the so-called degrees, and that he had taken such degrees under a misapprehension as to the regularity of the lodge conferring the same.

When a lodge finds, before ballot, that a candidate has been rejected in another lodge, the only thing to be done is for the Master to cause to be entered on the record "that it appearing that the lodge has no jurisdiction in the case, the application is ordered to be returned."

(See CLANDESTINE, RECOGNITION; Const. § 36—8, S.R. 10—1)

A petitioner who has joined a clandestine lodge must make all facts known, renounce allegiance to such lodge and sign a pledge on his honor as a man that he will hold no association with any of its members, as such, in the future. Lodges should be extremely careful in investigation of such cases to determine whether or not the applicant knew that he was joining a clandestine lodge at the time he applied for degrees therein, and if it appear that he did know the lodge was clandestine, it will be a question for the lodge receiving a petition under such circumstances to determine whether the applicant possesses that manly character which should underlie the eligibility and right of any man to become a Mason.

A false statement in the application is ground for charges. Where an applicant has, in his petition, stated that he has never applied to any other lodge for the degrees, and after conferring the degrees it is ascertained that he had made an application to and been rejected by another lodge, charges should be preferred against him, and if on due trial the charges are proved, he should be expelled, notwithstanding the general rule that a Mason cannot be tried for offenses committed before he was a Mason.

Receiving and Acting on Petitions

Before an application can be acted upon by a lodge, it must be properly brought before the lodge. No application can be properly before a lodge unless it was received at a stated meeting except by dispensation from some authorized officer to receive it at a special communication.

Referring Petitions

If the petition shows on its face that the candidate resides in another Grand Lodge Jurisdiction, it should not be referred to the Committee of Inquiry until the permission of the Grand Master in whose Jurisdiction the candidate resides is obtained. (His approval should be attached to or noted on the petition for membership.)

When a petition is presented and the Committee of Inquiry is unable to obtain adequate information concerning the candidate, the lodge should take further time; the lodge should require evidence not merely that the petitioner is not objectionable but that he is absolutely worthy.

FOR AFFILIATION

A demitted member must file his demit with the petition for affiliation. (See DEMIT)

Where a brother wishes to make application for multiple membership, a certificate of good standing must be presented in lieu of a demit.

A demitted Brother can apply for membership at any time; no limit.

A demitted Mason may petition for membership in any lodge in any Jurisdiction regardless of his residence or its location.

A Brother who was a member of a lodge not now in existence may become a member of a lodge in this Jurisdiction although he never was demitted from his old lodge. A certificate from the Grand Secretary will supply the want of a demit.

Brethren raised in a lodge under dispensation, the charter of which is afterward refused, are unaffiliated Masons in good standing and can apply to any lodge for membership. A certificate from the Grand Secretary will supply the want of a demit.

FOR DEGREES AND MEMBERSHIP

Provisos on Petitions

If it appears upon the face of the application or in any other manner, before rejection or initiation, that the lodge has no jurisdiction over the candidate, either because he belongs to another lodge (and has not the required consent) or has not resided the required time in the State or in the jurisdiction of the lodge, or is mentally or physically disqualified, or has been rejected by another lodge (and has not the required recommendation), or is ineligible for any other cause, the fact should be noted on the record and his application returned without further proceedings.

An applicant for the degrees should be recommended by at least one member of the lodge to which he applies. If no member can recommend the candidate as worthy, his application ought not to be received.

A decision approved in 1865, page 85, states that "an application should not be accepted until it is recommended by at least one member of the lodge". If there is no by-law of the lodge requiring the application to be signed by two members of the lodge, then in view of the above decision, only one of the men signing the recommendation need be a member of the lodge. However, if the by-laws of the lodge require that two members sign the application, then that regulation should be followed.

Application without the signature of the applicant is null and void.

A candidate who cannot write is ineligible. A candidate must be able to sign his name; a mark is not adequate.

A candidate who cannot read and is able simply to write his name is not eligible.

A candidate, rejected by a lodge in another State, shall not be received in a lodge in this State without the consent of the rejecting lodge.