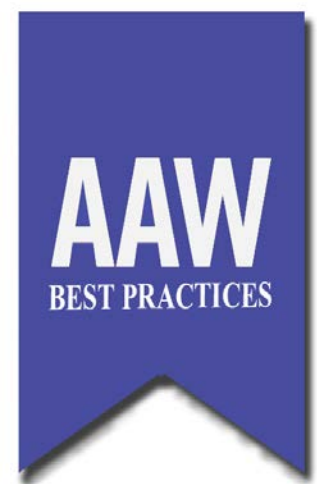


BEST PRACTICES



Best Practices #036: Elections and Officers

Electing officers is a most important function of club success and continuation. In this Best Practice, we will cover the election process and succession of elected officers.

The date of elections decided on by the club should be listed in the bylaws. The length of time between the election and assumption of duties should be enough to allow a smooth transition of the duties of the office if a new person is elected. This would provide the newly elected officers some time to work with the outgoing officers. In many clubs elections are held in the fall, with the assumption of duties beginning on January 1st.

Some clubs use a nominating committee to identify a proposed slate of officers. Members of the committee typically contact each current officer and board member to ask what their availability is for the coming year. The committee speaks with candidates in advance to insure their willingness to serve. Of course additional nominations from the floor during the election meeting is permitted. Keep in mind that the four key officers need to be members of the American Association of Woodturners for the club to qualify for the liability insurance sponsored by AAW.

Voting rights for the club members are described in the bylaws. Members in good standing is a common term, but there should be a clear description of what constitutes good standing. If there are different classifications of membership, the bylaws should make clear which classifications have voting rights and which do not.

The duties and responsibilities of each officer should be listed in the bylaws. The number and term of elected officers is determined by the club and included in the bylaws. The most common elected offices are President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. Other elected positions may be added as deemed necessary by the club.

Elections are best conducted by individual secret ballot on paper. The ballots should be counted by at least two people not nominated for an office. The ballots should be available for review should any member request a recount or review.

On the date of election, the floor should be opened for nominations for one office at a time. Nominations do not need a second to be considered according to Roberts Rules of Order. If there is only one nomination for an office, there need not be a vote. The office may be deemed filled by acclamation.

Nominations and voting should proceed in an orderly and unhurried fashion. Allow time for all nominations to be heard and acknowledged. If there is a contested position, a recount should be done with two additional club members not in consideration for the office. In case of a tie, there should be a run-off election. One nominee may concede or withdraw their name and that would break the tie. If a tie cannot be broken at that meeting, the election of that position can be carried to the next business meeting.

Special Considerations

If a club is considering incorporating and becoming tax exempt, it is best to check the state requirements for officers in Tax-exempt Corporations early on. Then the bylaws could match the minimum state requirements from the outset.

A practice in some clubs is to elect members at large. An At Large position is usually that of assisting while learning the duties and responsibilities of the other officers. It is a way for newer members thought to have potential for future leadership to be involved in club operations. The at large duties should be listed in the bylaws. At Large positions may be elected by the membership or by the board as described in the club bylaws.

A club may have an elected board of directors with officers for the board and/or a slate of officers for the club. Club officers are usually elected by the membership, while the board members usually determine board officers. The positions may be similar or the same. In a large club a board of directors could set the direction and goals of the organization, while the club officers handle day to day club business following those goals. The relationship between the board and the club officers should be made clear in the bylaws when a club has a board and club officers.

The bylaws should include a succession plan should any officer be unable to complete an elected term. An appointment can be made by the remaining officers or by the nominating committee for the remainder of the term, or an election can be called to fill the office. A replacement strategy may be stated in the bylaws, such as the vice-president shall fill the office of president if the elected president cannot serve out the term.

I would like to thank the Best Practices Committee Chair and AAW Board Member Denis Delehanty, and Committee Member Michael Peace <http://mikepeacewoodturning.blogspot.com> for all their help on this Best Practice.

Pat Jenkins, Central Texas Woodturners Association.