

## **Some Tips on Creating an Effective Committee**

By Carol Maxwell, 2002; slightly edited 2010

These are observations on recurrent themes. They are offered in the spirit of helping you be an effective clerk.

### **Hold meetings. It will help the group identify as a group.**

Perhaps the most common pitfall of struggling committees is that they don't actually meet as a group. Your committee may need to meet once a month, or just once a quarter. But if you get together less than quarterly, it's pretty likely that the committee will suffer, particularly with attrition and lack of participation. The root cause will be that the members don't really feel as if they are part of a group.

**Create an agenda for the meeting ahead of time.** Be aware of time, and allot enough time to each agenda item to do it justice. Be prepared to move on from a particular item, even if unity has not yet been reached. And also be prepared to continue discussing an item past the allotted time, if it feels right and the other items can wait.

### **Make sure that members come away from the meetings knowing how they will contribute to the group.**

Everyone needs a task. If committee members don't feel that they're really needed on the committee, they'll stop coming to meetings and stop participating in activities. Sometimes, the clerk doesn't want to seem bossy. Deciding who does what can definitely be a collaborative process. But the Clerk must get the ball rolling. And it's your job to make sure that (a) the committee work gets done, and (b) everyone on the committee has a role in doing that work.

### **Create a schedule.**

Many committees get stuck on scheduling. Perhaps no one wants to do the job, so it gets postponed. Unfortunately, this has a negative effect. So early on (at your first meeting), don't leave without identifying someone as the scheduler. You may ask for volunteers and it's possible that no one will volunteer. So you may have to do it. So be it. If a committee doesn't tend to this task early on, it often never gets around to actually doing it, to the committee's detriment.

### **Look for ways to create some group bonding.**

Maybe it's an afternoon retreat to talk about goals, or maybe it's an activity related to your committee work. Look for ways to enhance the feeling of community and togetherness. It will help members get to know each other better (which after all is why many people join committees) AND it will allow for creative time in which members can innovate on the committee's work.