



Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariner West Yorkshire

Guidance for Royal Ark Mariner Scribes regarding the holding of meetings during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Question: *Can a RAM Lodge meeting be cancelled?*

No. Rule 123 applies. Every Lodge meeting, as set out in its By Laws, should be called by a Summons and cannot be 'cancelled' in advance. All such meetings are termed 'Regular' meetings. Further additional rules apply specifically to 'Election' and 'Installation' meetings.

In sum, a meeting cannot be cancelled beforehand.

Question: *Can a RAM Lodge meeting be postponed?*

Yes. Under the current circumstance all the above kinds of meeting, whether Regular, Election or Installation, can be postponed by Dispensation from Provincial Grand Lodge.

To facilitate this, Province-wide Dispensations have been set up for use by Lodges. Lodge Scribes must apply for these in the usual way, using the on-Line MMM30 form on the Provincial website.

For Election and Installation meetings, Rule 105(i) applies and the appropriate Dispensation to request is No. 909.

For Regular meetings Rule 122(iii) applies, using Dispensation No. 910.

When applying for these Dispensations, Lodge Scribes should indicate which sort of meeting they wish to postpone, (i.e., Regular, Election or Installation), and should also state the subsequent date to which the meeting is proposed to be postponed, (which, at the present time, is likely to be some months later, e.g., perhaps the date of a later Regular meeting?).

In sum, a meeting can be postponed beforehand.

Question: *Can a RAM Lodge meeting be abandoned?*

Yes. If a meeting called by a Summons, whether a Regular, Election or Installation meeting, fails to attract a sufficient number of Brethren to make it quorate, (i.e., 3 Brethren plus a Warder), then such a meeting can be declared as 'abandoned' and a suitable entry made in the Minute Book, e.g., *"The regular meeting of the Lodge on day Month, 2020 was duly called in accordance with the attached summons. Owing to the incidence of the coronavirus the required number of Brethren to open the Lodge could not be assembled and the meeting was abandoned"*, or some other brief form of words that described what took place. Should this occur and you are unclear what to record, please feel free to take advice from the Provincial Secretariat before making a formal Minute entry.

In sum, a meeting may be abandoned if insufficient Brethren attend on the night.

Question: *Can an Emergency Meeting of a RAM Lodge be cancelled?*

Yes. Emergency meetings are in addition to those set out in the Lodge By Laws and can be cancelled without dispensation at the discretion of the W.C.N. of that Lodge. Care should of course be taken to notify all Brethren and Visitors who may have planned to attend. Similarly, if such a meeting is cancelled, the Lodge Scribe must inform the Provincial Grand Secretary.

Question: *Rather than postpone a meeting, can a RAM Lodge plan to hold a 'reduced' meeting with a smaller or minimum number of Brethren planning to attend?*

Yes.

Question: *How many members are required to open a RAM Lodge and what business can be undertaken?*

Answer: Rule 125 applies.

No Lodge shall be opened unless three Brethren are present in addition to a Warder, and no business shall be transacted at a meeting unless three members of that Lodge are present, but an entry of the meeting shall be made in the minute book. Any items of business on the agenda for such meeting, other than the election or installation of a Commander, may be considered at the next meeting of the Lodge. If the meeting in question be the Election or Installation meeting a special report shall be made to the Provincial Grand Master and his direction taken as to the course to be pursued.

Question: *Does this meeting need to be held in the Lodge Room stated in the By Laws?*

No. Rule 120 applies

The Provincial Grand Master may by dispensation authorise a Lodge to hold a specified meeting or meetings at a specified place other than its ordinary place of meeting. Should the specified place be within the jurisdiction of an Authority other than the Authority granting the dispensation, a further dispensation shall be required from the Authority within whose jurisdiction the specified place may be.

To use plain English, you may apply for a Provincial Dispensation to hold your meeting described under Rule 120 at the home or place of work of one of your members. However, if that place of work or home is within another Mark Province, a Dispensation from that Province will be needed. It is therefore advised that any such proposed changes of venue should remain within the Province of West Yorkshire.

Question: *Rather than postpone an Installation, a RAM Lodge may try to go ahead with their Installation meeting with reduced Brethren attending. How does a RAM Lodge deal with this during the Coronavirus Pandemic?*

Answer: Installations are very special occasions for any Lodge, especially if the Commander Elect is going into the Chair for the first time. Every Installation is preceded by an Election and almost without exception these days the Commander is elected by 'Declaration'. This can be done at a meeting arranged under Rule 125 as shown above. If it is the same person staying in the chair the situation is very easily dealt with as at the next meeting, (which could again be arranged under Rule 125), a simple Declaration of the Commander to continue for a further year can be made, followed by a proposition that all Lodge Officers also remain in Office for the ensuing year.

If a new Commander who has never been through the chair is elected it will be rather unfortunate for the Brother in question, who will have a disappointing meeting if there are insufficient brethren present to hold an Installation. If such a Brother has been elected prior to this advice being prepared, consider using Rule 101 and put off the Installation of the new Commander for a year leaving the sitting Commander in the chair.

Rule 101 states: If less than seven days before the date of the regular installation meeting the Commander Elect should die, or become disqualified or incapacitated, or send to the Commander or Scribe a notice in writing of his intention not to accept the office of Commander, the outgoing Commander shall continue as Commander till the next regular installation meeting and shall appoint and invest the Officers. This can be done by proposition that the Officers stay in Office for the ensuing year.

This of course requires the notice in writing from the Commander Elect, but it will ensure he can be installed correctly at the following installation meeting.

Should the sitting Commander have already served 2 consecutive years, because their continuation for a 3rd year was the result of the application of Rule 101, a Grand Lodge Dispensation to serve a 3rd year as Commander is not required.

Should an Installation meeting go ahead, the Lodge must not attempt to substitute for the roles of either the Provincial Ruler/Representative or the Charity Representative. Should there be a festive Board following an Installation, Toasts to Province and Charity must therefore be formal, with no response given.

In addition to the above and the recent advice from Mark Grand Lodge dated 13th March 2020, Brethren should note that whilst meetings with reduced numbers of Brethren may therefore take place where it is possible to arrange them, it is the view of the Executive of the Mark Province of West Yorkshire that Brethren over the age of 65 with hypertension, heart disease or diabetes must not, for their own wellbeing and safety, attend masonic meetings for the foreseeable future.

If you have any questions arising from the guidance above, PLEASE DO NOT TELEPHONE, but direct your query to the Provincial Secretariat e-mail address; secretariat@westyorksmark.org.uk

(Note for RAM Lodge Scribes. Whilst the Rule No's quoted above are those set out in the Mark section of the Constitutions and Regulations, they apply 'mutatis mutandis' to RAM Lodges as set out in RAM Rule 22).