

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EA

How do you get something on the agenda?

The President prepares the agenda with input from the Executive Board, Business Agent, and members. If any member wants an item placed on the agenda, they should contact the President at least a week before the meeting.

Sometimes issues come up at meetings that need to be discussed at length or research needs to be done in order to respond. Those items are carried over to the next agenda.

Items remain on the agenda until they are complete.

Is there a list of Committees? How do you get on committees? Can you form new committees?

Committees are usually formed on an as-needed basis (Election Committee, committee to work on social functions, etc.).

The Stewards Council is a standing committee comprised of all EA members who have taken steward training and act as stewards representing employees in grievances and disciplinary matters. The council chair is the VP for Grievances (or Chief Steward). Steward training is held on a periodic basis, and all members are invited to participate.

We currently have a Bylaws Committee which is working on updating and amending our bylaws.

Sometimes the District will request the EA to appoint individuals to serve on labor-management committees (SMART Ideas, CAPE, hiring process etc.). When volunteers are needed to serve on District committees, an e-mail goes out to all members asking for volunteers.

There is a District Safety Committee which is a labor-management committee. The EA is permitted three members and three alternates. As vacancies occur, members are recruited to serve on the committee. A subcommittee of the Safety Committee is the Safety Team. The team conducts District-wide inspections, and members serve a two-year term. Each bargaining unit is entitled to one member for every 100 members; therefore, the EA is entitled to four members. All EA members are invited to participate on the team as vacancies occur.

Prior to contract negotiations, a **Negotiating Committee** is formed; and all members are invited to participate. The job of the committee is to research and write proposals, survey members, and generally assist the Negotiating Team. The team is comprised of up to three officers and two members. The District allows release time for five members to serve on the Negotiating Team. Our Business Agent is also on the team and acts as Chief Spokesperson. In order for all of the interests of our members to be considered, we attempt to get representation on the team not only from administrative staff but from those who work in the field and at the treatment plants.

It should be noted that it's usually difficult to get volunteers to serve on EA committees or labor-management committees. The same handful of people always volunteer. We hope that with the influx of new members that problem will be solved.

We have had many discussions about forming standing committees such as political action, social, education, safety and women's issues. The door is wide open for forming such committees provided members wish to participate.

Volunteers for most committees must use their own time to handle EA business unless we have prior approval to do otherwise. District time is used for any labor-management committee or any committee where the District has requested EA participation.

Is the list of new members available? We (some of the old opposition) would like to continue to urge other people to participate).

In order to provide for the privacy of our members, we do not distribute the membership list. The best way for members (and even nonmembers) to get to know each other is to talk to each other about issues, and encourage each other to participate. A good way to get to know each other is to attend meetings and other EA functions and participate in EA activities.

Will there be an orientation?

We discussed having an orientation for new members but it never happened for various reasons.

The EA meets with new employees represented by the EA on their first day. We are also invited to participate in the quarterly new employee orientations.

It would be ideal if the EA formed a membership committee whose job it would be to put together packets and meet with new employees and to conduct a new member orientation.

At the meeting, they said the treasurer's report was confidential. Where does it say that? Where do I find that rule?

Article X of the AFSCME Financial Standards Code provides for the confidentiality of union records:

"Union Executive Board, officers, Trustees, staff and members must be prudent in the use of information acquired in the course of their duties and therefore must:

- A. *Limit requests for and use of information to that required for legitimate union business purposes.*
- B. *Restrict access to records to those with proper authorization and legitimate union business needs.*
- C. *Not disclose confidential information unless specifically authorized to do so.*
- D. *Not use any confidential information for any personal gain or in any manner which would be contrary to law or detrimental to the welfare of the union."*

<http://www.afscme.org/about/afsc11.htm>

Our concerns about providing a lot of copies of the treasurer's report are two-fold. We don't want management to have access to that information (when legally required the necessary reports are made available). Second, we must ensure that our records—both financial and membership—are only used for legitimate union business and not used to the detriment of the union or its members.

Our treasurer makes a finance report at each meeting, and all expenses authorized between meetings are reported. Any member who wishes to review a copy can do so by contacting the treasurer.

AFSCME has a very comprehensive financial standards code, and our local strictly adheres to that code. Audits are done on an annual basis and reports are filed with the appropriate government agencies.

There are MOUs, bylaws, AFSCME rules, Roberts Rule's-what is the precedence? Where do you find what rule to use when?

AFSCME has a publication entitled "Taking Part in Local Meetings" which basically follows Robert's Rules. <http://www.afscme.org/about/meettc.htm>

A newly revised version of Robert's Rules of Order says that: "The *exact* method of conducting business in any organization, therefore, depends on that organization's specific needs, legal requirements, and established rules and precedents." **and** "An organization may use the rules given here when they're appropriate and consistent with the group's own rules of order and bylaws." (The New Robert's Rules of Order, 2nd Edition, Mary A. DeVries, pages 101-102.)

Robert's Rules can be very intimidating if followed strictly. We must keep order at our meetings, but we also need to ensure that our meetings are kept informal so our members feel free to participate. As imperfect as our bylaws may seem to some, we do make an attempt to follow them in an effort to conduct business and keep order at our meetings.

Our bylaws need to conform to the AFSCME International and AFSCME Local 101 constitutions. The MOU describes our benefits and rights in the workplace. The MOU supersedes any District policies and procedures.

How do I get my political portion of my dues back?

Every year, the March/April issue of the "Public Employee" contains an explanation of the political rebate procedure. The request must be made in a timely manner and the procedure must be followed exactly.

http://www.afscme.org/publications/public_employee/2004/pema0431.htm

If I have an issue to bring up to all Union members, can I send out an email to all?

Article I, Section 6, of the MOU allows for the union's use of electronic mail for distribution of information in accordance with District policies and procedures. We generally send all-member e-mail for the explicit purpose of providing information that may be of interest to some or all of our members. The membership list (as stated above) is kept confidential so any information that is sent is sent through the president.

If any member wishes to send an announcement or provide some type of information to the membership, the member should provide that information to the president.

We are also able to use the District mail to send information to the membership. The EA is billed for all copies we make.

The best way to bring up information to members is to attend meetings.

Are there any times for general forums or debates outside of the general lunch meeting?

There is nothing to preclude any type of gathering outside of general meetings. The MOU provides for release time to conduct business of the union, and that is strictly enforced. Any meetings or gatherings longer than a normal break or lunch period should be done on the employee's own time. Occasionally the District will allow time for the EA to meet with members to discuss various issues or to conduct a ratification election. We always receive prior approval from Employee Relations.

For many years we've been able to conduct our meetings during the lunch period. Because there are more members attending meetings and there doesn't seem to be enough time to conduct business, the EA will begin holding many of its monthly meetings before or after work hours.

How do you determine new business?

New business comes from different sources. At times, information from management that needs to be discussed with the membership will be placed on the agenda. Information brought up at a previous meeting that needs further discussion would be new business as would any item a member requested be placed on the agenda.

Could we put a general discussion-type running dialogue thing on the website? Then discussions wouldn't be limited to the lunch meetings.

This could certainly be discussed. However, the District policies and procedures concerning use of the internet and e-mail would have to be followed.

Could the officers sit together with placard (with name and positions) so we can tell who is being referred to? Maybe we could make permanent nametags for all members so we can get to know each other?

We can try either or both of these suggestions. It could be difficult having permanent nametags because people would have to keep track of them and remember to bring them to a meeting. We currently have, and for several years have had, the officers sit at one table if space allows.