

# Federation of Victorian Film Societies Inc



INFORMATION SHEET May 2024

## ROLES OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

This is a collection of basic articles about the key roles in the running of a successful film society (they appeared in ReelNews from Issue 69 in March 2005. Because there is often little competition for such voluntary positions some people often find themselves thrown into a role and not familiar with all that it entails. Apart from imparting some basic information to assist such people, these articles may promote discussion as to what does make for a successful film society. If you wish to respond please write to the secretary as detailed at the end of the information sheet. This information is probably equally relevant to the running of community cinemas and film festivals.

### 1. The Duties of the President:

The President is responsible for the effective conduct of the Society's business. In order to fulfill this responsibility the President presides over committee meetings and as leader, helps set policy and direction.

The President may delegate specific duties to members as appropriate.

The President ensures that committee meeting agendas are planned and chairs meetings according to accepted rules – encouraging all members to participate and arriving at decisions in an orderly, timely and democratic manner.

He/she usually has the casting vote at committee meetings.

The President ensures that the Society maintains positive and productive relationships with the media and other organisations, specifically the FVFS. In this capacity, the President often serves as the primary spokesperson for the Society.

The President is often designated as one of the signing officers for cheques.

In summary form, the President's role is:

- To preserve order throughout the meeting.
- To maintain impartiality at all times.
- To conform to and explain the rules of procedure.
- To decide that a quorum is present if the meeting is one of an established concern.
- To enunciate the objectives of a meeting and to facilitate the resolution of issues.
- To call upon the Secretary to read the minutes of the previous meeting (if copies were not previously circulated).
- To put to the meeting the question of confirming the minutes and if confirmed to sign them as President.

- To announce the other business matters of the meeting in turn.
- To accept motions and amendments if in order.
- To put motions and amendments to the meeting.
- In debate to confine speakers to time limits (where established).
- To announce the method of voting.
- To appoint scrutineers.
- To decide points of order.
- To explain matters in doubt.
- To decide and announce the next speaker.
- To introduce guests or public speakers.
- At a social gathering to announce the proposers of toasts, the supporters and responders.
- To call upon movers and seconders of votes of thanks. (Except a vote of thanks to the President).
- To decide questions of adjournments.
- To close the meeting.

## **2. The Powers of the President:**

- To regulate the business and to control the behaviour of the members so that the objects of the meeting may be attained to the satisfaction of the majority of those present.
- To regulate the order in which the business is to be dealt.
- To settle points of order.
- The President has the casting vote when the voting for and against is equal.
- The President possesses the power of containing speakers to the question before the meeting, and at ordinary meetings only to permit the mover of a motion to speak twice upon a question.
- The President has the power to insist that the matters be raised through the President.
- To insist upon the withdrawal of offensive or objectionable expressions.
- The President has power to close a speech a member is making if the time limit fixed by the Rules or by a motion of the meeting is being exceeded.

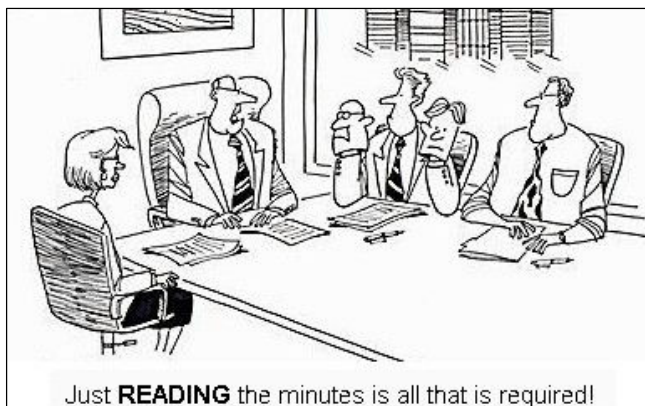
Note that the President should be careful not to abuse his powers by using the position to promote his own views nor to suppress opposing opinions. The role of President is that of a chair person and to ensure everyone has a “fair go” even to the extent of not expressing his own views.

## **3. Responsibilities of the President.**

The President of a meeting has few if any legal responsibilities, but this freedom is countered-balanced by the many moral ones that have to be shouldered. These are the responsibility for seeing that the business of the meeting is promptly carried out as outlined above.

## The Role of Secretary

It is often argued that the role of the secretary of a voluntary organisation is as important a role as that of the president. In many cases the job of secretary of an organisation is a labour of love for the cause. If gratitude is not occasionally expressed it is often sincerely felt.



Where the duties of the secretary are seen to be particularly onerous the role is often shared with other positions such as minute secretary, publicity and membership officer who take responsibility purely for those specific tasks leaving the more general duties to that of the general secretary.

The secretary is, in effect, the General Manager of an organisation. Punctuality, organising ability, energy, carefulness, tact, orderliness, education, and last but not least, a knowledge of the work are important qualities required of a secretary.

- Punctuality - The Secretary should be at the meeting place well ahead of time to ensure that everything is ready.
- Orderliness - The Secretary should be systematic in everything that is done. Writing and storing the minutes, attending to correspondence, liaising with the President and keeping tabs on various other issues are matters that need to be attended to regularly and thoroughly. Maintaining order makes for an easier job and allows for matters to be dealt with more effectively.

The duties of the secretary may vary according to the nature of the organisation. However, the basic set can be fairly extensive.

Duties before a Meeting include:

- Receive correspondence - sort, summarise if necessary and communicate with the president as appropriate.
- Notify members of the meeting (sometimes performed by another office bearer)
- Contact members regarding reports or matters arising from previous minutes.
- Anticipate and obtain relevant information.
- Set out matters in a preliminary draft.
- Prepare for other occasional matters e.g. ballots, elections etc.

#### Duties during a Meeting:

- Read the minutes of the previous meeting (unless otherwise circulated).
- Read the correspondence (or summaries).
- Record the proceedings.
- Have all relevant documents, papers and ballots ready.

#### After a meeting the Secretary will need to:

- Write up the minutes.
- Carry out directions regarding the correspondence, etc.
- Furnish information as directed.
- Update standing orders, membership records, committees, etcetera.
- It is important to attend to matters at the earliest opportunity, particularly minutes and correspondence whilst details are readily recalled.

#### Secretary's responsibility regarding Minutes:

- All minutes should be kept. If recorded electronically, an annual storage for archiving purposes to CD or other permanent storage such as printout should be carried out.
- If hand written, all entries should be in ink, neat and easily read. Computer recorded minutes should be easy to read in plain font of reasonable size.
- It is preferable to number pages and items for easy reference (also sometimes indexed).
- Matters to be entered into the minutes:
  - Organisation name, kind of meeting, venue, date.
  - Name or number attending, apologies.
  - Record of acceptance and signing of the previous minutes.
  - Matters arising from the previous minutes.
  - Exact words (particularly if given in writing) of resolutions carried.
  - Notices of motion, reports (or summaries) and recommendations received and adopted.
  - Financial statement and recommendations adopted by the meeting.
  - Correspondence received and matters arising.
  - Matters referred to sub-committee for action.
  - Outside transactions authorised by meeting.
  - Details of adjourned meeting or debate.
  - Appointment of officers or other persons.
  - Contracts accepted.
  - Exact words of directions given to Secretary.
  - Relevant details of next meeting.

#### Keeping of Records:

- It is essential to have a good filing system (suspension or similar if possible).
- Matters should be filed promptly and correctly.

- Files should be reviewed every six/twelve months (with incoming Secretary if possible).
- Secretary should have a case for relevant records/information/items to bring to the meeting.

Co-operation between the president and secretary and appreciation of each other's roles goes a long way in enabling an organisation to function effectively.

### **The Role of Treasurer.**

The occupant of the position of Treasurer should be a person of unquestionable trust and one who is careful and methodical. If the person is otherwise, the possibility of suspicions, accusations and recriminations could create a situation to wreck an organisation, despite the probability of the case being only one of a muddle. It is desirable that this trustworthy person also be familiar with bookkeeping and accountancy methods.

Handling Finances.

#### a. Monies Received.

Receipts should be issued for all monies received (with perhaps the exception of competitions, concerts, etc.) on the proper official machine numbered form. As soon as possible, all monies received should be paid into the appropriate account or accounts at the bank approved by the Club, Society, etcetera, for that purpose. Duplicate pay in slips should be kept in proper date order so that entries may be checked.

#### b. Payment of Monies.

Payment of money should only be made if authorised by organisation (or delegated committee).

Dockets for material supply should be certified by the person authorised and making the purchase on behalf of the organisation

Cheques for payment, once authorised, should be countersigned.

Receipts for goods should be carefully preserved.

#### c. Investment of Monies.

Treasurers should be extremely wary about investing money with institutions that have other than trustee status.

#### d. Books to be Kept.

Normally for most organisations bookkeeping would be of the simplest form. All that is required is some form of a cashbook.

For larger and more complex organisations a number of accounts may be kept e.g. capital account, general account, trust account, etcetera.

#### e. Statements.

The Treasurer may be required to supply statements to the finance committee (if such exists) from time to time.

The Treasurer is normally required to give a statement of finances at each normal meeting of the organisation. These statements should be derived from the cashbook and not bank statement.

Books of the Club/Society would not normally need to be audited unless the organisation has a large income stream. However, the annual financial report should be prepared by the Treasurer, endorsed by a fellow committee member and accepted by the committee. It is the duty of the Treasurer to compile all documents (e.g. butts of receipt books, pay in slips, receipted accounts, statements, etc.) available and prepare the Statement of Receipts and Payments and the Balance Sheet.

The Treasurer may be required to explain any matters which the auditor(s) require clarifying and generally facilitates their investigations. Books of the organisation should be properly packaged and stored after each annual audit and kept from four to seven years.

### 3. Change of Treasurer.

It is advisable if the outgoing Treasurer liaises with the person taking on the position to arrange such matters as transfer of authorities and to generally familiarise that person with the operation of the finances.

### **Other Office Bearer Positions.**

The President, Secretary and Treasurer are the key office bearers, often referred to as The Executive, in a club or organisation.

Other positions that may exist are:

#### 1. Vice President(s).

The Vice President(s) can play an important role in assisting the President in special projects or events and can stand in for the President when absent. A Vice President can be in a good position to later take on the role of President.

#### 2. Assistant Secretary.

This position, sometimes referred to as the Minute Secretary, can free the secretary to attend to other tasks during a meeting. The person undertaking this position must be able to understand the nature of the discussion, listen carefully and distinguish the important points. Brief notes that contain the names of the speakers, the main points they make and the text of all motions are usually the best. Note taking can be made easier if special preformatted sheets are prepared.

The Assistant Secretary can act as Secretary during the latter's absence, can assist the Secretary in the issue of circulars to members and generally help in other matters. The Assistant Secretary is in a position to gain experience to become Secretary at some future time.

#### 3. Scrutineers.

When it is necessary to have an election scrutineers are appointed by the Chair, or by the Meeting at the request of the Chair.

Their duties are:

- Distribute the ballot material.
- Collect the completed ballot paper from each voter.
- Determine the valid votes.
- Allot the votes.
- Sign the result slip of the voting and deliver to the Chair

If the election is a major task a Returning Officer can be appointed as overseer.

The work of the scrutineers is finished when they deliver the result of the election to the Chair. If eligible to vote they should cast their vote at the same time as the other voters.

#### 4. Immediate Past President.

The Immediate Past President in some organisations fulfils an important role, giving advice, contributing ideas and experience. Such a person is often ex-officio on the Executive, and may assist as an intermediary in delicate negotiations and so on. It is usual that the Immediate Past President position, if recognised, be occupied for one year only.

#### 5. Membership Officer.

Even though membership of many organisations is the concern of every member the role is important in the following:

- Seeking new members and replacing dropouts.
- Assisting new members to settle in.
- Encourage regular involvement by existing members.
- Seek publicity for the organisation (although this can be the province of a separate portfolio).

Other positions such as Technical, Programming, Promotion, Social etc. to head special projects and convenors of various committees may exist depending the nature of the organisation.

All committee members including the Executive, are obliged to identify to the meeting any conflict of interest if and when it arises. If such conflict occurs the member should (subject to the meeting's wishes) not participate in discussions or perhaps leave the meeting for the duration. They should also refrain from voting on the issue.

For feedback or more information [admin@fvfs.org.au](mailto:admin@fvfs.org.au)