

The background is a complex, abstract geometric pattern composed of numerous triangles in various shades of purple, magenta, and teal. In the center, there is a large white circle with a thin, multi-colored border that matches the background's color palette. Inside this circle, the title is displayed.

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Guide

Developing an IBEW Women's
Committee at Your Local Union

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Congratulations for taking part in laying the foundation for the women's committees throughout the IBEW. Your readiness, energetic spirit, and commitment will help set the course to advance our organization.

Women have always played an important role in the labor movement. Their participation and leadership at all levels is important. Women help build a diverse and healthy union by going outside the union hall and into communities, taking part in town hall meetings, political campaigns, organizing campaigns, community service projects, and more. They fulfill a unique role by bringing a greater understanding of gender issues to our local unions.

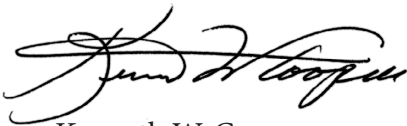
The IBEW encourages each local union to establish a women's committee as resolved at the 2016 39th International Convention in Resolution 42, IBEW Women's Committees.

This guide is designed to help you create and grow a successful women's committee at your local union. Within these pages you will find step-by-step instructions to start a new committee, guidelines for establishing an organizational structure, best practices to make your committee effective and successful, tips on recruiting new members, and sample mission statements, bylaws, and letters to help you along the way.

It is important to work closely with your local union's leadership to develop relationships, rally support, and show how your group can be key to labor activism. Local leaders are a great source of valuable knowledge and expertise to help guide you.

Congratulations again for all your hard work and for taking on an active role in the future of your union. I look forward to all the innovative and exciting ideas that you will bring to the IBEW.

In solidarity,



Kenneth W. Cooper
IBEW International President



NOTE FROM THE COMMITTEE

In 2016, International President Lonnie R. Stephenson saw the importance and value of having women more involved within the IBEW and established the IBEW Women's Committee (IWC). This committee comprises one representative from each of the international vice presidential districts and one from the IBEW Civic and Community Engagement Department. The mission of the IWC is to educate, engage, and empower the women of the IBEW. Women have led the charge on civil rights and played a vital role in the organizing of unions since the early days of the labor movement. Women have starved to death in the fight for the right to vote, been murdered in the fight to organize, and held their ground when asked to move to the back of the bus.

In the years that followed women showed their true strength. They came together for the Women's March where more than 5 million people around the world marched in solidarity, showing that women will not stand for attempts to roll back progress. Courageous women stepped up during the #MeToo campaign to call out sexism, harassment, and violence. But our struggle continues. Today we are still dealing with these issues and many others, including affordable child care, workplace harassment, job isolation, work-life balance, proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for women in construction, and balancing elder care and child care. Although women in unions face a much lower gender pay gap, women are still not given equal work opportunities, and are often underrepresented in leadership roles as well as on job sites.

It will take thousands of women within the IBEW to make this initiative a true success. It depends on strong women like yourself to get the ball rolling and push for a women's committee within your local union. We must show up, be present, be persistent, and be of service. For many years, women before us have fought to make change happen—now it's our turn to step up and show that we are not only members of our unions, but vital assets in building a more inclusive, stronger, and diverse organization. This will in turn build strength within our local unions and give the international a stronger foundation.

The women of the IWC are committed to giving IBEW women the resources they need to develop women's committees within their local unions. While it's important to know that what might work for one may not work for all, these instructions and tips will assist you in trying to make change happen. It is the small changes we make today that will build a brighter future for the women and the IBEW of tomorrow.

2019 International Women's Committee

1st District	Nicole Biernaczyk	nbiernaczyk@ibew258.bc.ca
2nd District	Kenell Broomstein	kbroomstein@ibew103.com
3rd District	Erin Sullivan	esullivan@local3ibew.org
4th District	Ann Peek	apeek72@yahoo.com
5th District	Theresa King	FBT.tking@gmail.com
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10th District	Kim Sansom	Ksansom@ibew429.org
11th District	Sarah Faber	sfaber@ibew499.com



MISSION STATEMENT

The IBEW Women's Committee is committed to increasing the participation of women in every aspect of the union, including apprenticeship training, mentoring, leadership, and union, community and political activism. The committee strives to achieve the following:

- To encourage, educate and uplift our female sisters to take on activist and leadership roles within their communities and the IBEW.
- To educate and inform our industry on issues related to gender equality, gender opportunity and gender discrimination.
- To assist in the development of mentoring programs, formal and informal, that support women's leadership and promote gender opportunity.
- To assist in the establishment of programs and educational materials to further educate our members and employers on diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- To aid in the elimination of sexual harassment, violence against women, sexual discrimination, and exploitation in IBEW union halls and workplaces.
- To advocate for employment equity and civil, human and women's rights.



1

SO YOU WANT TO START A WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Learning the framework of the IBEW and knowing how your local union functions is key in developing a women's committee. Your local union's women's committee should work within the IBEW Constitution, your local union's collective bargaining agreements, and your local union's bylaws. Each committee within the local union is approved and processed by the local union's president and business manager. The term length of the committee officers shall be determined by your local union's president or your local union bylaws.

First Steps

- Gather consensus on building a women's committee. Find out who in your local union is interested, their interest in taking on potential roles within the committee, and the group's commitment to follow through.
- Once you have a sense of their interest and commitment level, approach your local union leadership about your interest in forming a women's committee. Be prepared to present the advantages of a committee, including how it can assist members in understanding workplace issues and increase your union's visibility in the community, which makes for a great organizing tool for the IBEW. (You can find a sample letter to local union leadership in the "Resources" chapter.)

Recognition

After the committee is established, ask your business manager to forward a letter requesting a women's committee certificate of recognition to your international vice president to ensure that the committee is officially recognized (a sample letter can be found in the "Resources" chapter). Including a sentence detailing upcoming plans or the most recent work of the committee is always helpful.

Once your international vice president receives the request, they will make their recommendation to the International President. Once approved, a certificate of recognition will be sent by the International Office to the local union. Additionally, the Women's Committee Kit can be ordered through the Local Union Supply Store on Local Connections on the IBEW website.

2

STRUCTURING YOUR COMMITTEE

When you have a group of interested people, it's time to plan the first official meeting. Talk about what would work best with everyone's schedules. There is no right or wrong way to begin. A social gathering could be the first step in getting contact information from those interested. Use this information to confirm a first official meeting.



Choose a Model

You'll have to decide how you want your committee to be structured. Although there are many different organizational models to consider, the nontraditional and traditional models are the most commonly used around the country. New groups often opt for the flexibility of a nontraditional committee, but once your group grows it may be helpful to transition to a traditional model that fits within your local union's existing structure. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to organize your committee; what's most important is finding the model that allows you and your members to work best together.

Model 1: Nontraditional

The nontraditional committee-based model can be customized to best fit you and your members. This structure is predicated on finding out what your members are interested in and empowering them to take on active projects related to their interests. This kind of structure requires more consensus-building, but its strength is that everyone has a voice. Most groups have some sort of leadership team, whether there is a formal structure or not. Some have co-directors, and others govern all matters by popular vote. The main thing to consider when using a nontraditional model is that there needs to be a designated person, or a small group of people, to plan the work around a shared vision and ensure that the work gets done. Because nontraditional groups have a horizontal leadership structure, it is beneficial to divide tasks into subcommittees. This allows your committee to get a lot of work done while keeping people accountable for a manageable amount of work.

Model 2: Traditional

The traditional model closely reflects the existing union structure. This model lends itself to a group that has been established for some time and has enough members to fill the various leadership roles. It is defined by a hierarchical leadership structure, including an executive board, officers, and subcommittees. If your local union leans toward well-defined structure and relies heavily on rules, the traditional model can be an easier one to adopt and can help your group gain acceptance with the local union membership more quickly.

In this model, the executive board is composed of every elected officer, along with the chairpersons from each subcommittee. (For more on subcommittees, see the "Organizing the Work" section.) There also can be "at-large" executive board positions to include more opportunity for members to hold leadership roles.

Characteristics of traditional committees include the following:

- The executive board meets monthly
- The general membership meets quarterly



- Subcommittees meet monthly
- These committees are structured to address anticipated needs, including education and communications, organizing and mobilization, political action, events, and fundraising

Under the traditional model, your committee should have a strong set of bylaws outlining the roles and responsibilities of your leadership and the overall governing structure of your group. Bylaws are written rules that control the internal affairs of an organization or group. Bylaws often define details such as:

- Your group's official name, purpose, and requirements for membership
- Officer titles and responsibilities, as well as how officers are to be assigned
- How meetings should be conducted
- How often meetings will be held

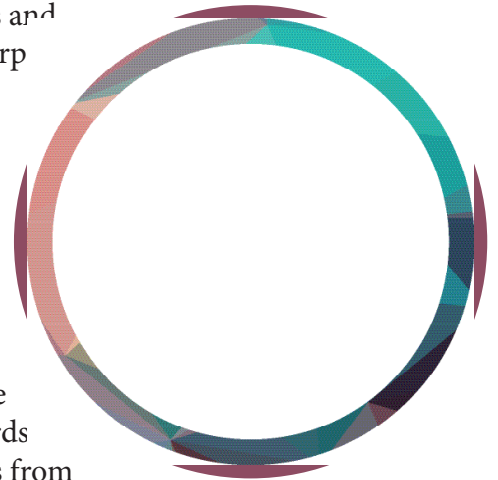
There are sample bylaws in the “Resources” chapter that are taken from existing groups and intended as a model. Some groups may want to begin with general bylaws that leave out the details and allow for flexibility, while more developed groups may have a clearer idea of what works for them and want to include those details in their bylaws. Determining exactly how your group is going to operate and putting it down on paper can help keep things running smoothly, provide concrete answers to tough questions, and save time and deliberation.

Develop Your Mission Statement

No matter which structure you choose, one of the first orders of business for your committee is to write a mission statement that establishes the committee's goals and objectives. The statement should briefly lay out your committee's purpose and plan. For examples of mission statements, see the “Resources” chapter.

Funding Structure

Any funding structure must adhere to the local union bylaws and the IBEW Constitution. Committee leaders should have clear communication with local union leadership to ensure a proper funding structure and accessible records that are organized from the outset to keep a record of your work. This includes a full set of records that should be collected and kept in one location, including minutes from regular meetings and subcommittee meetings and reports.



Meetings

Your first official meeting will determine how your group is going to operate and what your priorities as a committee will be. This is important to provide a purpose, keep interest, and establish stability. People will not continue to show up if meetings are boring or perceived as a waste of time. Make sure meetings are engaging experiences where issues are being discussed and decisions are being made. Do not use your meetings as a time for updates only—they should include actual work and discussion, so that your leaders and members have a sense of ownership in the committee.



Schedule a Regular Meeting Time

Consistency is key to building a successful committee. Having a set meeting time and location can build commitment to the program by allowing members to plan in advance, which can help boost attendance. Meetings should not be scheduled so frequently that those involved feel burdened or overwhelmed, but they also should not take place too infrequently, since you need to meet often enough to keep the momentum going. One potential system is to rotate the days of the week for meetings, so those with obligations on specific days can still attend. In this way, people with obligations such as classes or work on a Monday night will still be able to attend some meetings.

Create an Agenda

The chairperson or another designated individual should create an agenda to be sent out with a reminder notice at least one week before the women's committee meeting. This keeps committee members in the loop and allows them to come prepared with materials or ideas they wish to discuss at the meeting. The agenda also helps keep the meeting on track. If meetings are not structured and don't have an agenda, members could lose interest and attendance could decrease.

Keep Minutes

The minutes from regular meetings and subcommittee meetings, reports, and publicity announcements should be kept accordingly. This includes hard copy documents and social media tracking. Collect them and keep them together in one location. There could be an official archivist for the group—someone who keeps records for future reference.

Assign Members to Committee Roles

It is important to elect or appoint a leadership team that will have specific roles. The term of the committee leadership may be the same as those of other standing committees of your local union or the terms may be different. The next chapter explains the various roles and subcommittees your members could take on.

Organizing the Work

Subcommittees and task forces can be useful to focus and distribute the work that needs to be done and allow more members to participate and feel included. The following are some types of groups to consider:

Communications

The Communications group should be involved in informing members, community partners, and other unions about the work your committee is doing. Ideas include contributing to your local union newsletter, posting on a regional AFL-CIO website, or creating and maintaining electronic and social media accounts (like a blog, a Facebook page, a Twitter account, or a Google Group).



Organizing and Mobilization

Without a conscious effort to organize, people will not show up to events, meetings, or actions. This group may identify topics that would attract members, plan events, or create educational materials.

Community Service

Union members are known for community work. It's always important to connect with your community by helping others and building local allies. A community service group can devote time to addressing needs in your area.

Political Action and Civic Engagement

It is important for women to be aware of and get involved in their local, state, and national governments. Getting out the vote, volunteering for a political campaign, or lobbying a government official are all important and worthwhile ways to engage your membership.

3

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE

Once your women's committee has started meeting, the following steps will help ensure continued success.

Communicate With Union Leadership

Your women's committee should give periodic reports to your local union business manager, president, or executive board on its activities and make recommendations when appropriate. Keeping the leaders of your local union informed about your activities and goals will open communication lines and increase your committee's visibility. Another way your committee can connect with your local union leadership is by working in close cooperation with other committees to advance policies and programs for the union, with the needs of women in mind. After your committee is up and running, please periodically send an email to the Civic and Community Engagement Department at civcommengage@ibew.org describing the work being done by the committee.

Plan Training Sessions and Guest Speakers

To be effective, your committee must have a sound working knowledge of your collective bargaining agreements, the IBEW Constitution, your local union's bylaws, and any other provisions that might affect your agenda. If necessary, set up some training sessions to familiarize your committee members with this essential information. Having guest speakers is also helpful in educating, informing, and empowering your committee members.



Divide Tasks

It is important to build solidarity within your committee. No one person can build a committee on their own—it takes a commitment by many to make it successful. Dividing up tasks is an efficient way to research and obtain information before your committee takes action. When members feel they are part of the committee, they will have a vested interest in its success.

Take Action

The committee should discuss activities for your group to participate in outside your local union. These activities should be diversified so that as many people can participate as possible. Developing committee activities can be a conduit in building solidarity. Things like volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, clothing drives, or informative workshops on issues women face can give women an opportunity to come together and build bonds. Some activities you want to get involved in might already be taking place within your local labor movement, so try to communicate and collaborate with the broader union constituency when possible. One of the great advantages of your women's group is that you can bring new and creative ideas and perspectives to the movement as a whole.

Foster Diversity

It is important to make sure that your committee is inclusive and represents your local union in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, age, and job classification. Having a diverse committee will help everyone to gain knowledge from people with different backgrounds and experiences. Keep in mind that your group is not a separate bargaining committee for workers who may experience discrimination. By participating in union activities that promote equality for all workers, your committee can become a valuable resource in unifying and strengthening your local union membership.

4

RECRUITING STRATEGIES

Recruiting is a fundamental element of building and sustaining a strong women's committee. Recruiting for volunteer organizations requires a commitment of time, energy, and resources; however, the rewards can be highly satisfying. Developing a recruitment plan can help to focus your efforts and improve results:

Find Your Targets

Determine strategies for recruiting and developing your women's committee, such as using your local union's Facebook page, Twitter account, and website. Speak to all who might be interested in supporting or joining the committee.

Set Your Goals

Determine a recruitment goal and create a statement of purpose that will encourage sisters to join the women's committee.



Make Connections

Talk to members who are interested in getting involved with issues that affect female members. Reach out to other committees in your local union and apprenticeship program (if one exists). See whether you can meet with new members to recruit them to join your women's committee. You can build the membership of your committee by creating personal and working relationships with your sisters.

Use a Personal Approach

Have one-on-one conversations with your sisters about the women's committee, invite them to a meeting, and stay in touch with them.

Be Available

Make sure the leaders of the committee are reachable and provide multiple ways for people to get in touch with them.

Variety Is Key

Meetings and events should cover diverse topics, which will in turn diversify the interest and knowledge of your members. Don't be afraid to embrace issues that are new or fall outside the realm of "union work."

Market the Committee

Consider developing a logo or a look for your committee's communications, within the acceptable use guidelines of the IBEW logos. This can help brand your committee and make an impression on potential members.

Communicate Success

People want to be part of something that gets things done. If your fellow members and potential recruits can see energy, commitment, and willingness to follow through, they'll be more likely to join the cause.

Get Local Union Leadership Involved

Ask your local union leadership to send a letter to all the female members who might be interested in getting involved in the committee. As the committee's programs develop, ask local union leadership to attend to make connections with members.

Socialize

Meetings are important, but social events are also great opportunities for sharing what your committee is about and what you want to accomplish. Hosting meet-and-greets, potlucks, game nights, and sessions featuring prominent women in your community can get people in one place to check out your committee. Make sure people know that they don't have to be a committee member to attend these events.

Develop a Listserv

Build a list for sign-ups and email blasts to keep the members informed about committee activities and meetings. Be conscious about not abusing the list once it's established. A Google Group is a good way to get started.



Use Social Media

Start a group for your committee on Facebook and encourage members to join. Post relevant information and events as often as possible. You can publicize the committee through your district's social media sites as well as those of other IBEW and tradeswomen's groups.

Forge Partnerships

Contact your district women's committee and women's committees at nearby local unions. We are stronger together.

5 CONCLUSION

Women's committees can be extremely beneficial to the IBEW. As you carry out your work, within the community, the IBEW and the broader labor movement, we urge you to join with other groups, including the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW).

CLUW is America's only national organization for union women. Formed in 1974, CLUW is a nonpartisan organization within the union movement. The primary mission of CLUW is to unify all union women in a viable organization to determine our common problems and concerns and to develop action programs within the framework of our unions to deal effectively with our objectives.

At its founding convention in Chicago, Illinois, CLUW adopted four basic goals of action:

- to promote affirmative action in the workplace;
- to strengthen the role of women in unions;
- to organize the unorganized women;
- to increase the involvement of women in the political and legislative process.

These goals continue to be the cornerstone of CLUW's activities as members speak out for equal pay, child and elder care benefits, job security, safe workplaces, affordable health care, contraceptive equity, and protection from sexual harassment and violence at work.

With members from 54 international and national unions across the U.S. and Canada, CLUW has a strong network of more than 40 chapters. CLUW is endorsed by the AFL-CIO and its international and national unions. CLUW local chapters educate members, keep them up-to-date on a variety of issues of concern to working families, and provide a support network for women in unions.

For more information on CLUW, please visit their website, www.cluw.org or contact the Civic and Community Engagement Department.



Sample Letter for Request to Form a Women's Committee

Dear Business Manager (insert name) and/or President (insert name),

Resolution 42, passed at the 39th IBEW Convention, urges local unions to establish women's committees. Therefore, on behalf of the women of IBEW Local (XXX) we write to respectfully request your support for the establishment of a local union women's committee.

A women's committee would offer an opportunity for more members to get involved with the local union and build greater solidarity. In addition, it would serve as a vehicle for you to speak with our female members about your vision regarding the future of our organization.

We look forward to hearing from you and would like to engage you further on the establishment of a women's committee

In solidarity,

(XXXXXX) Member(s) Name and Card #(s)

Sample Certificate of Recognition Request Letter

Dear International Vice President (insert name),

I am requesting your support and approval to have an IBEW Women's Committee Certificate of Recognition granted to IBEW Local (XXX). Our women's committee plans to/participated in (insert planned or completed activities of committee. For example: "a number of local community service projects, setting up the local union picnic, and our political campaigns"). Our local union fully supports the work being done by our women's committee and understands the importance of being inclusive of all members. We look forward to increased participation and leadership from this segment of our membership.

Thank you for your assistance in securing a charter for our women's committee.

In solidarity,

(XXXXXX) Business Manager



Sample Mission Statements

Amber Light Society, IBEW Local 3 Mission Statement

The Amber Light Society is made up of Local Union #3 I.B.E.W members whose common purpose is to support our local union.

Our mission is to inform, educate, encourage and support each other in our careers in Local Union # 3 I.B.E.W. We strive to promote leadership within our membership so that we may become leaders in our industry.

As members of the Amber Light Society, we will always perform our duties in the industry in a professional manner. We are responsible for mentoring our apprentices and guiding them on a pathway of success. We will perform our task on and off the job in a manner that will promote a positive image for the Amber Light Society and for Local Union #3, I.B.E.W. We will always encourage and support all sisters in the industry.

As a Sisterhood in the I.B.E.W, we celebrate the diversity of our membership, always remembering to put the interest of our Union and the Amber Light Society before our own. Together we will accomplish great things.

Women of IBEW Local 97 Power and Light Society

We will be comprised of women from Local Union 97 IBEW members whose common purpose is to support our local union. Mission is to inform, educate, encourage, and support each other in our careers in Local Union 97 IBEW. We strive to promote leadership within our membership so that we may become leaders in our industry. As members of the Power and Light Society, we will always perform our duties in the industry in a professional manner. We are responsible for mentoring and guiding each other on a pathway to success. We will perform our tasks on and off the job in a manner that will promote a positive image for the Power and Light Society and for Local Union 97 IBEW. We will always encourage and support all union brothers and sisters in the industry. As a sisterhood in the IBEW we celebrate the diversity of our membership, always remembering to put the interests of our Union and the Power and Light Society before our own. Together we will accomplish great things.

Objectives:

- Stimulus to women's involvement in and support for union goals and activities.
- Response to women's issues on the job.
- Training for leadership roles (public speaking).
- Initiate Union and public policies relating to issues of concern to women (speakers).
- Community outreach.
- Networking.
- Support for charitable causes.
- Unity among fellow women in the workplace.



Sample Bylaws

BYLAWS

[Insert Committee Name] [Insert IBEW Local Union Number]

ARTICLE I

Sec. 1. This organization shall be known as the IBEW Local (Your Union #) Women's Committee.

Sec. 2. The purpose of this committee shall be to carry out the spirit of the Brotherhood; to aid and assist each other as necessary; and to promote the social, economic, health, and political welfare of its members.

Sec. 3. Nothing contained in these bylaws shall be interpreted or applied in any manner that is inconsistent with the bylaws of an IBEW local union in whose jurisdiction this committee is founded or the IBEW Constitution.

Sec. 4. The sponsoring local union shall maintain supervision over all committee transactions.

ARTICLE II

Sec. 1. The membership shall consist of any IBEW member in good standing in Local ().

ARTICLE III

Sec. 1. The officers of this committee shall be: 1) president, 2) vice president, 3) secretary-treasurer, 4) sergeant-at-arms, and 5) executive board.

Sec. 2. The terms of all officers shall be for two (2) years, or until their successors are qualified.

Sec. 3. The president shall preside over all meetings, appoint all committees, and act as the ex officio member of all such committees.

Sec. 4. The vice president shall assist the president in the discharge of his or her duties and shall assume the duties of the president in case of absence or disability of the president.

Sec. 5. The secretary-treasurer shall keep accurate minutes of each meeting, receive all donations, and keep accurate records thereof. He or she shall promptly deposit all sums of money in a bank approved by the Executive Board.

Sec. 6. The sergeant at arms shall act under the direction of the president at all meetings and shall assist in maintaining order.

Sec. 7. The Executive Board shall consist of five (5) members who shall elect their own



chairman. The secretary of the committee shall act as secretary of the Executive Board, with a voice but no vote. The Executive Board shall meet at least once per month or at the call of the president or chairman. A quorum of the board shall consist of a majority of its members. In the case of a vacancy of any office, such vacancy shall be filled by the Executive Board. In case of the failure of any officer to perform his or her assigned duties, such office shall be declared vacant by the president and the vacancy shall be filled by the board until the next regular election.

ARTICLE IV

Sec. 1. The donation to this committee shall be [Insert Amount] per month. However, no member shall be barred from attending the meetings of the committee due to an inability to contribute.

ARTICLE V

Sec. 1. Meetings of the committee shall be held on the [Insert Number] day of each month, at [Insert Time]. (There can be more than one regular meeting each month).

Sec. 2. Special meetings may be called by the president or chairperson of the Executive Board. No less than three (3) days written notice shall be given to all members prior to a special meeting.

Sec. 3. [Insert Number] members shall constitute a quorum for a regular meeting.

ARTICLE VI

Sec. 1. No officer of this committee shall be paid any salary or other compensation whatsoever. However, the secretary-treasurer shall be reimbursed for any expenditure for supplies upon approval of the membership or the Executive Board.

ARTICLE VII

Sec. 1. When necessary, proceedings shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE VIII

Sec. 1. These bylaws may be amended or changed by any such proposal not in conflict with Article I, Section 3, above, which shall be submitted in writing and signed by five (5) members, read at one meeting, and acted upon at the succeeding meeting.





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