

GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS



GFWC BYLAWS COMMITTEE AUTUMN 2022 NEWSLETTER

Barbara D. Whitaker, PRP, Chairman

THE 2022-2024 GFWC BYLAWS COMMITTEE

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- Diane Addante, RP, GFWC Parliamentarian, serves as advisor. daddante@GFWC.org

SEND BYLAWS

A copy of the current bylaws and standing rules of each club and state federation should be submitted to the GFWC Parliamentarian, Diane Addante, RP, and GFWC Headquarters.

STUDYING CLUB/FEDERATION BYLAWS

When was the last time your club or Federation reviewed the bylaws? If it has not been done in the last three years, then now is the time. Does every member have a current copy? All members should have access to their Club and State Federation bylaws and standing rules. It is even a good idea to “study” the club bylaws at a meeting or over a series of meetings so that the members know what is included. Incorporate them as part of the club yearbook or directory and place them on the club website for easy access.

ARE THESE IN THE BYLAWS?

We can all agree that life has changed in the 21st century. Almost everyone has a cell phone and computer. Fuel prices are up. Communication that took weeks by postal mail can now be sent electronically in seconds. Bylaws should reflect the changes in society, as well. Remember that the bylaws are a broad overview of the organization's governance. The details of what should be done should be in the standing rules, procedure manuals/toolkits/committee notebooks. As the bylaws are reviewed, consider these items, to name a few.

1. Name – GFWC should be in the name. Is the club “Woman’s” or “Women’s”?
2. Members – Is there a limit on the number that may belong? When meetings were held in the home, such limitations were common. Many clubs now meet in a public place, hybrid, or electronic forum. Limits are probably no longer needed. The outdated practice of prospective members being voted into club membership is no longer required in most instances.
3. Officers – Is it time to combine a couple of offices due to a drop in membership? Is it time to change some of the duties of the officers? Does each office have a statement that they are to perform “such other duties as assigned”? Is the treasury large enough that the treasurer should be bonded? Is the president the statutory agent?

4. Committees – Are the correct Community Service Program Chairmen listed? What about the other standing committees? Maybe there has been a yearbook chairman for several years. Is that committee listed? Are there bylaws, budgets, and audit committees? Are any special committees needed, and if so, who appoints and approves them?
5. Meetings – Does the club or Federation still meet at the same time or place? Are electronic and hybrid meetings allowed in the bylaws? If not, perhaps they should be, even if for emergencies only. Is there a provision for electronic voting, even for emergencies only? Does the time and place of the meetings still meet the needs of the members? Does the club need to alternate a few sessions to accommodate those who work or do not drive at night? Is the club having trouble meeting quorum around the end or first of the year? Perhaps the meeting is too close to a major holiday, or the weather interferes. Maybe it is time to change the date or eliminate a meeting that month.
6. Quorum – The quorum should be slightly less than the usual number of attendees. If the club's quorum is established at 20 and only has 23 members, there may be too many meetings where business cannot be conducted if a quorum isn't met.
7. Parliamentary Authority – This should be the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, which is the 12th edition.
8. Amendments to the Bylaws – There should be a provision in the bylaws allowing for its amendment. The vote on an amendment should be higher than a majority with notice and higher for an amendment without advance notice. The bylaws define members' rights, and a change affects those rights.
9. Publications – Do all members have access to a copy of the yearbook or directory, the governing documents, newsletters, and other club communications? Have print costs become prohibitive? Do the bylaws allow for electronic formats? Do the bylaws allow for websites, Facebook pages, Instagram posts, or other electronic media?
10. Dissolution – No one wants to see a club end its years of service. Should a club need to discontinue, there should be a provision in the bylaws allowing the distribution of its assets. The details can be in the Standing Rules, as the members can change their minds over what group receives the items over time.
11. Distributions – is there a timeframe for the incoming officer or chairman to receive the materials from the outgoing person? Is there a timeframe for the dissemination of information to the membership?
12. Nominations and Elections – Do the bylaws state the current practice? Is a voice vote allowed if only one candidate for office exists? Is there a means of voting in case of an electronic or hybrid meeting?

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

The GFWC Bylaws Committee does more than review the GFWC Bylaws and Standing Rules. If you have questions about your state or club bylaws that your state parliamentarian cannot answer, you may contact the GFWC Bylaws Committee Chairman or the GFWC Parliamentarian. The best way is by email. In addition to your question(s), please attach the entire set of the constitution (if any), bylaws, and standing rules for the state or club in question. Often the answer is found elsewhere in the document.