

## ***“Competition is for Testing Pigeons, not Relationships”***

### **A Well-Run Club is The Key to a Successful Club.**

Herb Cartmell, AU Constitution and Bylaws Advisor.

We all hate to have disagreements occur in our clubs that often end in ill-feelings, lost friendships and many times can even cause a flyer to leave our sport. Member dissatisfaction from these conflicts is one of the top reasons that a member quits our sport. Far too often it causes a set back in our clubs. We have to constantly remind ourselves that the reason we got into this Sport in the first place was to enjoy our birds and have some friendly competition and camaraderie. In short, have Fun!

I am often surprised by the seemingly lack of operating procedures, common sense and “protocol” that many clubs seem to try and operate with. Most of the conflicts and problems a club has arise simply because of poor communications and a full understanding of how the club should operate. Sometimes even the officers don’t seem to be informed.

One thing that stands out with the stronger clubs is that the members all have a clear understanding of their purpose as a club and how they have agreed to treat their members and themselves. This is more than just camaraderie and friendship. It’s the understanding by all the members that the club operates with fairness and has a purpose and plan: The club’s **Constitution and Bylaws.**

The C&BL establishes ground rules that will reduce dissatisfaction with rules and race schedules, the formation of cliques within the club, and encourages beginners in the art of racing pigeons.

Your club’s Constitution and Bylaws is after all, the guidelines, policies and rules that your club has agreed to use and live by. It is the agreement the club has made with it’s members that defines how it will be organized, and what responsibilities the clubs elected officers have. Most importantly, it describes how the club will deal with problems or disputes when they arise.

Here is a brief outline of some of the main elements that your club’s Constitution and Bylaws should encompass.

**A preamble or statement of purpose** which describes the objective and purpose of why the club exists. This can be a simple sentence or two which will help “set the stage” and can be used to re-focus the club on its true objective, such as: *“The Purpose of this club is to engage in the friendly competition of racing registered Homing Pigeons. To promote the hobby of breeding and racing Homing Pigeons, and to foster a positive social environment for members and their families.”*

It should include a statement as to its’ affiliation with local concourses, state and national organizations (AU) and may even include a Motto like the Burns,OR RPC has: ***“Competition is for Testing Pigeons, not Relationships”***

**What is a member.** Who can be a member and what, if any, requirements need to be met. Some clubs have different levels of membership such as probationary and junior members. Some clubs are by invitation only. An active member, for instance, might be described as *“Any Homing Pigeon fancier who has participated in at least one race during the prior year, are current in all dues and fees of the club and affiliate organizations and are of good character.”*

Some clubs have a probationary period for new members. During this probationary period, the new member should have full entitlement to participate in races and other activities sponsored by

the club, but may not have voting privileges during this period. Usually at the first club meeting following completion of this probationary period, the member would be voted into full active member status.

One of the most important areas of your club's Constitution and Bylaws is that of how and when you elect your officers, what officers are elected and what their duties and responsibilities are. Far too many times a member is elected to a position with very little idea as to what the office requires. Your club needs a well-informed "team" of officers to be effective and keep the club viable. Every office is important and time should be spent with each new officer to be sure they understand the duties and responsibilities of their new office. Here are the traditional ones.

**President:** The President presides over all meetings and business transactions. In many cases he is the spokesman for the club, and may be the one to meet the public should the need arise. The President will break all tie votes and is automatically on all committees in an advisory capacity. The President is your leader and the "cheerleader" for creating enthusiasm and participation.

**Vice-President:** The Vice-President will preside at all meetings in the absence of the President, and heads up special committees as appointed by the president, (i.e. publicity or Race committee) It is recommended that this officer be your Constitution & Bylaws advisor which is the one to make sure your club operates as intended. He is back up for the President.

**Secretary:** The Secretary is the cornerstone of the club. He or she will send notices of all club meetings, keep the minutes, and conduct the general correspondence of the club. It is the Secretary that will order and issue the bands, and keep the records, in accordance with the policies of the AU. The Secretary is responsible for keeping the By-Laws and Race rules current and issues all revisions to the members. It is the Responsibility of the Secretary to make sure the AU secretary kits with band orders are returned to the AU in a timely manner. Essentially he is the one that keeps the records and writes it down so there is no misunderstandings down the road.

**Treasurer.** The Treasurer is responsible for the financial assets of the club. He will submit a financial accounting to the membership quarterly, or as directed by the President, and keeps the president informed as to any delinquent (member) accounts. He is responsible to pay the club's bills, usually with the president's co-signature on check exceeding certain amounts. (i.e. \$500.) The Treasurer keeps in his custody the books and records pertaining to the club and deposits all monies received for dues, bands, surplus received from shipping or any other sources into the Club's official bank account.

To protect the integrity of this position and avoid problems it is recommended that at the end of his office, or even yearly, the Treasurer request an audit be made by the incoming Treasurer and two (2) members of the Club as appointed by the President.

**Race Secretary:** The Race Secretary is, in my opinion, the most important job in the club. This is the person responsible for the conduct of all the club's races.

**The Race secretary is your event director.** He/she chairs the race committee, which usually includes other elected or appointed members. This committee will resolve all questions and disputes regarding the racing competition. The Race Secretary is also responsible for conduction and maintaining the records of all loft surveys and ensures that the racing supplies are adequately maintained. The Race Secretary coordinates the liberation and makes provisions for notifying club members of the release times. He shall manage all race-figuring activities, and is responsible for publishing race results and the distributing of diplomas and awards.

The Bylaws are the club's policies and operating procedures. This is the How, When, and Why, things are done part of the Constitution. The Bylaws will define the club's policy as to rule changes, voting, dues, when to hold elections, and what happens if the club dissolves, should that ever occur. It is designed to keep everyone all on the same "page" and eliminate misunderstandings. Participation and harmony is always improved when all the members understand how things are supposed to work.

Many club members seem to have little or no interest in their club's rules or bylaws until a conflict occurs and for the uninformed club this can be a disaster. This is when the club can be "Rail-roaded" or intimidated into something that may either be improper, poorly conceived or thought through. If the club has a strong set of Bylaws and refers to them regularly, you should already have a procedure for handling most situations that will occur. (You also should have a procedure for adding things that are not covered, and may want to include a built-in "cooling off period".)

Every club should invest a few minutes at their annual meeting to review their Constitution, Bylaws and Race rules and make copies available for the members to take home and review. It is your responsibility as a member to be familiar and understand how your club operates, and what is expected of you and the rest of the members.

We need to remember that people join pigeon clubs to fly and enjoy their birds, but it is everyone's responsibility to make the club run smoothly and fairly. Should dissension occur in your club, remember the motto that the Burns, OR RPC uses: "***Competition is for Testing Pigeons, not Relationships***" to re-focus on your clubs purpose and the discussion. With a good Constitution and a set of Bylaws a stronger, more harmonious club can almost be guaranteed.

So when was the last time you reviewed your club's Constitution, Bylaws and Race rules?

For a copy of AU Guidelines for a Club Constitution & Bylaws with Club Race Rules, contact the AU Headquarters.....