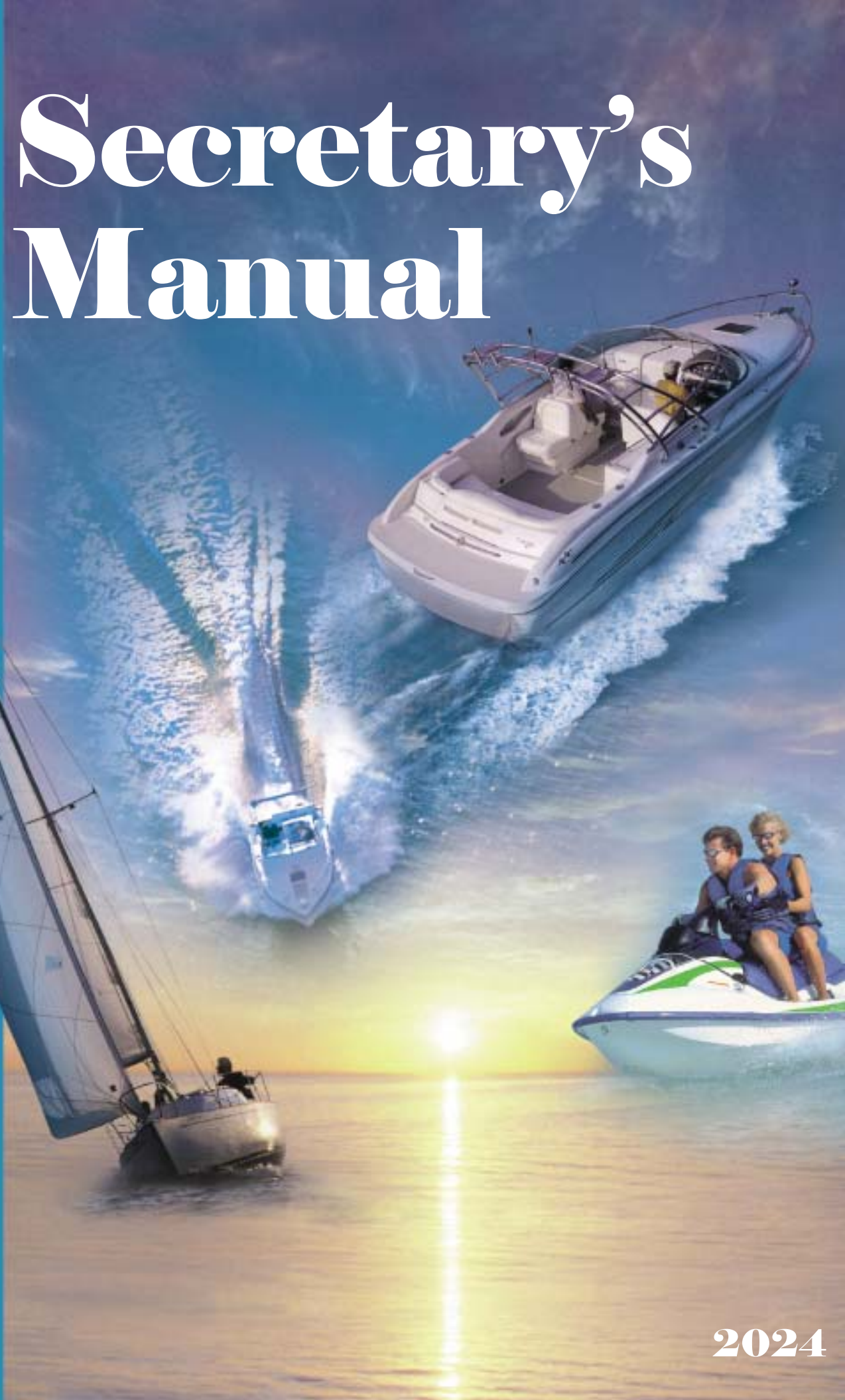


United States  
Power  
Squadrons®



# Secretary's Manual



dedicated to  
making boating  
safer and more fun

2024

# Secretary's Manual



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2024

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Charts of the National Organization and typical District and Squadron Organizations are located at the end of this manual.

## Preface

This version of the Secretary's Manual supersedes all previous editions. It contains detailed guidelines and information for all members of America's Boating Club | United States Power Squadrons® (USPS) who have been elected to the position of either District or Squadron Secretary. It is important that the secretary be familiar with the procedures, programs, duties, methods of operation, and timetables so that the organization functions more efficiently.

The Secretary's Manual is available on the USPS website and may be downloaded, printed, or viewed on-screen. Topics of interest may be found by using either the Chapter Table of Contents or the "search" function of the PDF Reader software utility used to access the contents of this manual. Check Appendix A in the Operations Manual for more detailed information on locating information in our suite of manuals. Every effort has been made to ensure that this manual is as current and complete as possible; however, due to the organizational differences that may exist between the various districts and squadrons, there may be some material that may not apply to all.

This manual is sponsored and published by the National Secretary and maintained by the Operations Manual Committee. Questions concerning the information in this manual may be addressed to either as we will work in concert to resolve those questions.

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Any word denoting gender used in this manual applies equally to any gender as the context may require. National department heads and committee chairs are encouraged to forward updated information to the Operations Manual chair or the National Secretary. Changes relating to policy or procedure must be approved by a department head, if applicable. Comments on perceived errors or omissions and recommendations for future editions are solicited from all members.

# District Secretary

**S.1 Preface.** Immediately after his nomination, the new district secretary should become familiar with the duties as shown in the district bylaws. As well, he should seek the advice and assistance of the previous district secretary. He should also consult the USPS Operations Manual and district bylaws and use them as a constant reference, [Refer to *Operations Manual*, 4.8.5].

This section summarizes the duties and responsibilities of the district secretary. However, the duties of any office can and do change with time.

At the beginning of the district's watch year, the district secretary should prepare a calendar with dates annotated for calls to Councils and Conferences.

**S.2 Responsibilities.** The district secretary is responsible for the following committees and activities:

- Historian
- Publications... if so assigned
- Newsletter editor... if so assigned
- *The Ensign* correspondent
- Computer Systems
- Ship's Store... if so assigned
- District Roster

The secretary's duties are usually outlined in detail in the district bylaws. The following itemizes the basic duties:

- 1) Keeping the official attendance at conference and council meetings;
- 2) Keeping minutes of the conference and council proceedings and conducting the correspondence of these bodies;
- 3) Maintaining an up-to-date mailing list for meeting notices and other district communications. Including the Chief Commander, the National Executive Officer, and the National Secretary on the mailing list;
- 4) Receiving written certifications from squadron commanders for delegates to the district conference;
- 5) Putting the agenda of conference and council meetings in final form and mailing to members;
- 6) Having custody of the official copy of the district bylaws and keeping it correct to date.

- 7) Preserving important motions that might otherwise become buried and lost in the minutes of past meetings of the Council or Conference in a convenient and readily accessible form (codified standing rules). These include operational matters and decisions such as those pertaining to district publications, memorial expenditures, responsibility for conferences, terms governing educational and attendance awards and trophies as well as any other items appropriate for preserving in permanent form;
- 8) Maintaining a file of all documents, records, and communications of the district;
- 9) Making a report to each conference and council meeting;
- 10) Effective the USPS Annual Meeting conducted 01/28/2012, the district secretary is no longer required to send district meeting minutes to any national officer. He should send a copy of amendments to district bylaws to the chairman of the National Committee on Rules;
- 11) Reporting to the National Secretary (using DB2000 if possible or form OD-1) the names and addresses of newly-elected district officers for incorporation in the Directory of National, District, and Squadron Officers, which is published annually. This report is due at Headquarters by 01 February of each year. If there are changes past this date, the district secretary should send by electronic mail the changes from the original certification;
- 12) Maintaining and publishing a roster of all district and squadron officers within the district; and
- 13) Turning over to his successor all records, reports, communications, and documents of the district.

**S.3 Calls to Meetings.** As a bridge officer, the district secretary is obliged to attend all Council meetings and all Conferences. As well, the district secretary is responsible for issuing a call for each Conference and Council within the time frame specified in the district bylaws. At the beginning of the district's operational year, he should prepare a calendar with dates annotated for calls to the Council and Conference. The time required for a call varies whether the call is for a Council or Conference and what material is included in the call. The call should be mailed first-class to members of the Council or Conference and/or the approved district mailing list. The call should include:

- The date of the call;
- The date and time for the meeting;
- The location of the meeting;
- The host squadron;
- The uniform of the day or recommended dress, and

- The agenda, which should include the anticipated order of business and mention time-sensitive reports, such as the Nominating or Finance Committee report.

The minutes for any Conference or Council should include the following:

- An announcement indicating that the document represents the minutes for a specific meeting;
- The date and location of the meeting;
- The name and status of each person making an official report to the body;
- The specifics on all motions, including the names of members making and seconding the motion, any amendments and the outcome, and
- The name of the person responsible for recording the minutes.

**S.4 Custodial Responsibilities.** The district secretary is the custodian of the official copy of the district bylaws. He receives the bylaws after a major update or revision from the chairman of the Committee on Rules. The secretary, based on the applicable action of the adopting Conference, adds minor changes, revisions, or amendments to the bylaws. The amendment action can be inserted into the applicable article or section or can be an attached amendment. The exact text of the intended bylaw amendment must be included in the call for any Council or Conference at which the amendment is to be discussed. If the text of the amendment is lengthy and will not reasonably fit in the call, it is permissible to include the text as an attachment, provided that the call itself mentions the bylaws amendment and has a note stating that the attachment contains the complete text.

**S.5 District Organization.** Organizational charts are typically based on the model bylaws for district and common practice. The organizational structure may differ from other districts.

A typical district organization chart is in the *USPS Operations Manual*. [Refer to *Operations Manual*]

## Squadron Secretary

**S.6 Preface.** Immediately after nomination, the new squadron secretary should become familiar with the duties as shown in the squadron bylaws and seek the advice and assistance of the former secretary. The current *USPS Operations Manual* should also be used for reference.

**S.7 Responsibilities.** As newly elected squadron secretary one should become familiar with the general order of business at USPS meetings. This order normally proceeds as follows:

- Meeting called to order;
- Request the secretary to determine whether there is a quorum;
- Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance;
- Roll call;
- Request the secretary to read the minutes of the previous meeting and obtain acceptance from the membership;
- Reports of officers;
- Reports of committees;
- Unfinished business;
- Elections (when appropriate), and
- New business.

It is important that accurate minutes of all squadron meetings and meetings of the Executive Committee are kept. Copies of the squadron bylaws, the *USPS Operations Manual*, a current membership roster, and the minutes of previous meetings should be at hand. The secretary should use the full names of persons and committees in transcribing the minutes. Meetings should be recorded for future reference if necessary. Whether adopted or rejected, every principal motion placed before the assembly should be entered in the minutes.

**S.8 Annual Report.** At meetings of the Squadron and Executive Committee, the secretary reports the current membership status (including resignations, transfers, and deaths) and any correspondence affecting the interests of the Squadron. He must make an annual report in writing at the end of the squadron year. This report should include statistical summaries of membership changes during the year, a breakdown of membership according to grades, and the percentage of advanced grades held compared with the total membership. The report should also present an itemized accounting of the expenses of operating the secretary's office (such as stationery supplies, printing, postage, and clerical assistance) in addition to recommendations and suggestions for improving the handling of squadron business.

**S.9 Additional Duties.** In addition to taking, recording, and archiving minutes and reports, the secretary should:

- 1) Retaining membership records for at least five years;
- 2) Reporting at each meeting on resignations, transfers, deaths, and correspondence;
- 3) Verifying squadron membership records against Headquarters' records; notifying Headquarters of any discrepancies;
- 4) Acting as Supply Officer where there is no supply officer;
- 5) Providing affidavits of banks used as depositories with forms furnished by the bank;
- 6) Sending to USPS Headquarters certification of delegates to USPS annual or special meetings and proxies for delegates to USPS annual or special meetings with forms supplied by USPS, and
- 7) Following up with committee chairs before Executive Committee meetings.

The secretary sends the following to USPS Headquarters:

- 1) Changes of address, resignations, and deaths (use form HQ-102 or DB2000);
- 2) Transfers, as approved, using form HQ-110;
- 3) Reinstatements, with a check for the current year's USPS dues, assessments if any are required, and a reinstatement fee using form HQ-103. (No reinstatement fee is required for those returning to membership from duty in the armed forces of the United States.);
- 4) Requests for replacement of lost certificates, with a check and with a letter of transmittal;
- 5) Orders for stationery with USPS Ensign imprinted, record sheets and binders, lapel buttons, and other miscellaneous items as available, and
- 6) In concert with the Commander, report to National any members who may pass away during the watch year to be included in the "Last Horizon" section of *The Ensign*.

The secretary writes to the National Secretary in care of Headquarters for information and advice on any matters not covered in the *USPS Operations Manual*.

In the event of the death of a member or someone in a member's immediate family, he performs such acts as have been determined to be appropriate by the Commander or Executive Committee (flowers, letter of sympathy, and/or donation to USPS Educational Fund).

Important documents to be kept for Squadron reference:

- *USPS Operations Manual*
- *Squadron and District Bylaws*
- *District Operations Guide*
- Membership Directory/Roster
- *Robert's Rules of Order* (latest edition)

**S.10 Records Retention.** Important material to be kept for squadron reference includes:

- Auditing and Financial Reports;
- Budget Process, Budget Spreadsheet, Budget Analysis and Previous Budgets;
- Operations Manual;
- Bylaws: National, District and Squadron, and
- District Operations Guide

District and Squadron officers are sometimes puzzled about how long to keep records. The answer can be rather complex. No single listing can be entirely satisfactory; however, the schedules on the following pages may be helpful.

The retention period begins at the end of the fiscal year during which the document was created, not from the date on the face of the document. For items supporting tax returns, the retention period would begin on the filing date of the return or its due date (with extensions), whichever is later.

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act addresses the destruction of business records and documents and turns intentional document destruction into a process that must be carefully monitored. Nonprofit organizations should have a written, mandatory document retention and periodic destruction policy. Policies such as this will eliminate accidental or innocent destruction. In addition, it is important for administrative personnel to know the length of time records should be retained to be in compliance.

The following table provides the minimum requirements. This information is provided as guidance in determining your organization's document retention policy. It is duplicated with permission of the National Council of Nonprofit Associations.

Type of Document	Minimum Requirement
Accounts payable ledgers and schedules	7 years
Audit reports	Permanently
Bank reconciliations	2 years
Bank statements	3 years
Checks (for important payments and purchases)	Permanently
Contracts, mortgages, notes and leases (expired)	7 years
Contracts (still in effect)	Permanently
Correspondence (general)	2 years
Correspondence (legal and important matters)	Permanently
Correspondence (with customers and vendors)	2 years
Deeds, mortgages, and bills of sale	Permanently

Depreciation Schedules	Permanently
Duplicate deposit slips	2 years
Employment applications	3 years
Expense analyses/expense distribution schedules	7 years
Year-end financial statements	Permanently
Insurance policies (expired)	3 years
Insurance records, current accident reports, claims, policies, et cetera	Permanently
Internal audit reports	3 years
Inventories of products, materials, and supplies	7 years
Invoices (to customers, from vendors)	7 years
Minute books, bylaws, and charter	Permanently
Patents and related papers	Permanently
Payroll records and summaries	7 years
Personnel files (terminated employees)	7 years
Retirement and pension records	Permanently
Tax returns and worksheets	Permanently
Timesheets	7 years
Trademark registrations and copyrights	Permanently

Withholding tax statements	7 years
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**S.11 Job Descriptions and Responsibilities.** The job descriptions for district secretary and squadron secretary are similar. This section combines the descriptions; where a portion of the job pertains only to the squadron or district secretary, that fact is noted.

The squadron secretary is encouraged to attend district meetings. The secretary should be familiar with the appropriate sections of the *USPS Operations Manual*.

The secretary shall:

- 1) Keep the official log of attendance and minutes of general, executive, and special meetings;
- 2) Maintain an up-to-date mailing list for meeting notices and communications;
- 3) Have custody of the official copy of the bylaws and keep it up to date;
- 4) Keep up to date the standard operations procedures and have them revised periodically for deletion or addition to bylaws;
- 5) Maintain a file of all documents, records, and communications;
- 6) Handle such official correspondence as the Commander designates;
- 7) Report to the National Secretary on forms provided by Headquarters (DB2000 may be used to submit OD-2) the names and addresses of the newly elected officers;
- 8) Cooperate with the Squadron Treasurer in processing information and forms relating to new members, transferring members and reinstatements, and
- 9) Send the list of delegates and alternates for Conferences to the district secretary at the appropriate time.

An Assistant Secretary may be elected or an assistant to the secretary may be appointed to work with the secretary as required. This person should be capable of assuming the office of secretary when required.

**S.12 Secretary's Department Committees.** Committees organized under the secretary's department are:

- Historian;
- Roster;
- Squadron Newsletter ... if so assigned;
- *The Ensign* Correspondent;
- Ship's Store, and
- Information Technology (IT).

**S.13 Historian.** Both the District and Squadron historians are assigned to the National Heritage and Protocol Committee in the secretary's department. If a historian has not been

appointed by the district or squadron commander, the appropriate secretary is responsible for completing the yearly historian's report. This report is due within 60 days after a Change of Watch. It summarizes various district or squadron assignments and statistics for the previous watch year. Normally, the historian uses a single computer to enter and forward historical data using DB2000 to the electronically maintained history file at USPS.

**Locating the Historian's Form.** The Historian's form, H-701, can be located in the USPS Squadron Management system, DB2000. DB2000 can be downloaded from the IT Committee pages on the USPS website. Users will first have to acquire the appropriate password from the district or squadron commander and populate the database. The Historian's form is located on the DB2000 main menu under Forms.

Data can be entered on the form intermittently and saved until the entire form is complete. Upon completion, the form is transmitted electronically to USPS for archival purposes using the Report option on the H-701 form.

**Paper Reports.** Paper reports are no longer used to submit history data. The Historian will need to collate all the requested data, for instance, officers, chairpersons, educational statistics, those holding squadron, district and/or national assignments, et cetera, to complete the history report. It is recommended that districts and squadrons keep paper reports; however, these are NOT forwarded to National. All paper historian reports that were sent to national until 2007 can be retrieved at <http://usps.org/php/historian/historysearch.php>. The electronic historian reports forwarded to USPS using DB2000 after 2007 can be retrieved at <http://usps.org/php/hap>.

**Other Responsibilities.** The Historian should advise the commander of significant anniversaries and solicit help from all members to collect information and photographs pertaining to district and squadron activities that may be retained as part of their respective history.

The Historian's records should include:

- 1) Details of squadron formation and list of charter members and honorary members;
- 2) Squadron Charter (safe storage, proper care and security of Squadron Charter);
- 3) Minutes of executive committee, member, and annual meetings including names of district officers attending, and officer and departmental annual reports;
- 4) Copy of bylaws including amendments;
- 5) Legal documents and records (that is, Incorporation Files and State Exempt Organization Certification);
- 6) Member records (that is, courses completed, merit marks earned, and contributions to Squadron or District);
- 7) Honors and special awards given or received (that is, District, National, or other organizations);
- 8) Biographies and photos of present and past officers and those attending squadron activities;
- 9) Rosters of members (that is, joining, active, inactive and leaving);
- 10) Publicity clippings and photographs;

- 11) Records of hosting or participating in meetings and events (that is, inter-Squadron, District and National);
- 12) Complete file of publications, such as newsletters and special announcements, and
- 13) Important correspondence (that is, U.S. mail, email, faxes).

**S.14 Roster.** The roster represents one of the best historical records concerning members. It should be kept current and up to date by the secretary's department.

Rosters are now available for download from National Headquarters through the USPS website. Roster information is accessed through a username and password and delegated use. Questions regarding the process should be directed to the Rear Commander of the Information Technology Committee. This information should be passed from watch to watch.

A roster request can be made online via DB2000, via the Information Technology Committee home page on the USPS website, or by contacting Headquarters. Only the Squadron or District Commander is authorized to request a roster. He can request a roster only for the respective Squadron or District. This authority, however, can be delegated to the secretary or other squadron members as deemed appropriate by the Commander. The respective commander or secretary (that is, District or Squadron) must initiate the request by phone in the event of a lost password.

Approximately 15 May the Information Technology Committee generates and releases new passwords. District Commanders receive the district passwords; Squadron Commanders receive the squadron passwords. The passwords are delivered to the respective commanders by mail. They are delivered with sufficient lead time so that users are not inconvenienced when old passwords become invalid. The Commander may distribute the password as deemed appropriate.

If DB2000 is used to obtain a roster, it is strongly suggested that the user have the MQSeries client installed on his machine. This enables immediate downloading and uploading instead of depending on email as a transmission medium. Note that if using email the "sqdXXX.ex\_" file will be returned as an attachment to a reply email, generally within a few hours, during normal business hours. Please refer to the operating system and email program documentation for methods to extract and save attached files. All changes to the squadron or district roster database files must be made using DB2000. Please refer to the DB2000 installation and the DB2000 update help files for more information on the DB2000 program. The changes will be made to the national database, and a complete and updated roster file can be requested at a later date. If the squadron is not able to use DB2000, any changes can be faxed or mailed to the national office, using the appropriate forms available from Headquarters.

**S.15 Newsletter Committee or Squadron Editor.** This chairman and the committee produce and edit the squadron newsletter to keep the membership fully informed of coming events, announcements, and review of recent events. Among those serving on the committee may be a photographer, a publisher or printer, an advertising manager, and reporters.

The squadron newsletter is the main vehicle of communication within the membership. Although the publication may vary from one page photocopied monthly to an elaborate magazine, the important consideration is communicating all essential information accurately.

The duties of the chairman and the committee are:

- 1) Determine the contents and plan each issue;
- 2) Request material from officers, committee chairs, and other members;
- 3) Proofread the copy, working in as many pictures as the photographers may furnish;  
and
- 4) Distribute the finished issues to the membership.

It should be noted that is perfectly satisfactory to distribute the newsletter via either postal mail or electronic mail. The important consideration is that it is received in a timely manner so that the events advertised in the newsletter can be planned by each squadron member.

The photographer should be familiar with the operation of a camera, work with the editor, and attend all Squadron or District functions as well as interface with the National Publications Committee. The photographer furnishes photographs to the PRO chairman, editor, historian, and *The Ensign* correspondent and displays the pictures whenever possible. Pictures are worth a thousand words and everyone likes to be in pictures. Some events to be covered are:

- Change of watch
- Special awards
- Special activities
- Special guests
- Special presentations
- Social events such as rendezvous and raft-ups

**S.16 *The Ensign* Correspondent.** This person will act as a reporter of squadron or district news with the following duties:

- 1) Originate, solicit, and forward to *The Ensign* editor or the district correspondent articles of newsworthy squadron activities such as cruises, rendezvous, public relations, cooperative charting efforts, and other information of national interest;
- 2) Work with the squadron or district photographer to obtain pictures to accompany such articles and promote submission of photos suitable for *The Ensign* cover pages;
- 3) Assist with the promotion of advertising for *The Ensign* (the squadron may earn commissions for advertising secured for *The Ensign*);
- 4) Review the squadron publication and forward any articles or photographs of general interest to the district *The Ensign* correspondent, and
- 5) Be familiar with and understand *The Ensign* deadline schedule.

**S.17 Ship's Store.** National has a Ship's Store. Due to the extensive array of items available from it and the timely manner in which items can be procured, many districts and/or squadrons do not maintain one. As well, many squadrons do not include the Ship's Store as a responsibility under the secretary. This section is intended for those that maintain a Ship's Store be it under the secretary or another department.

The National Ship's Store is a member benefit with an inventory of items including clothing, safety items, travel items, bridge gifts, and Vessel Safety Examiner and Certified Instructional materials. Most carry the America's Boating Club | United States Power Squadrons ® logo. Ship's Store maintains a current website at [www.shopusps.org](http://www.shopusps.org) at which all merchandise may be seen and ordered. Ship's Store provides incentives for Squadrons and Districts to sell their merchandise in the following ways:

- 1) Squadrons may order specific material at members' request for resale. A minimum of \$250 worth of merchandise must be sold (no returns) for a profit of 20% to the squadron.
- 2) Districts can arrange to have material sent to their semi-annual conferences for viewing and sale. The District can earn 20% of the amount that is sold at the conference. Two months in advance, a responsible person should contact the headquarters warehouse manager at 888.367.8777, extension 214, to request an updated Ship's Store order form and information on how to conduct a Ship's Store at a District meeting. The requested order form may be received via USPS mail or electronically in Excel format. The order must be submitted to headquarters six weeks before the intended date of sale. Requests must include the name of the responsible member, date of sale, and shipping address. Districts may order up to \$3,500 worth of material.

Headquarters will prepare and ship the merchandise at no cost to the District. Included will be a "USPS Ship's Store Sales Event Control Sheet" listing the items, starting count, and selling price. There will also be columns for the end count, number sold, and gross sales. 20% of the gross sales may be taken off and the District is responsible for the final amount.

Orders may be taken for items not included in the merchandise sent. The price of such items can be included in the gross total, subject to the 20% commission. Order forms will be enclosed with the kits. The shipping charges of less than 20% must be included with the cost to the customer. These orders with the individual's name and shipping address must be included when the unsold merchandise is returned to headquarters.

All items that are not sold must be properly repacked and returned to headquarters correctly identified along with the completed Sales Event Control Sheet together with the check covering the net total. This must be within ten days of the sale. The returning mailing expense is the responsibility of the District.

- 3) Members can access the Ship's Store website at [www.shopusps.org](http://www.shopusps.org) or phone Customer Service at 888.367.8777, extension 210, to place an order from Ship's Store.
- 4) It is important to set up Ship's Store sales so that the local unit is the seller and simply a sales agent of USPS. Mistakes in this area could subject USPS to liability for conducting business in a state and to collecting sales tax. Ensure you check with all local and state regulations in this regard.

Another option for districts is the creation of a Virtual Ship's Store (Virtual SS) for district conferences.

Advantages include:

- The Virtual SS allows USPS members to use a 20% off code for Ship's Store merchandise purchased from the online Ship's Store website during a prearranged period of the district meeting. Purchaser pays shipping costs;
- The Virtual SS eliminates back and forth shipping costs for districts and the need to secure space for a real Ship's Store, and
- The district Ship's Store chair can provide the pre-arranged code to district members at the meeting and/or work together with members to complete orders using a tablet or laptop and enter the code for them.

Disadvantages include:

- It does not provide actual merchandise for members to see, touch and try on;
- It does not create the gathering and social contact environment of an actual store set up;
- It does not provide a sales venue for district specific merchandise, and
- It does not provide a profit for the district;

The process for setting up a Virtual SS is as follows: The district Ship's Store chair contacts the customer service representative at Headquarters at 888.367.8777, extension 210, no later than two weeks in advance of the meeting and requests that a code be established for a given district conference. The time frame and any other parameters for discount code eligibility are established at this time.

**S.18 Information Technology.** This person or committee is responsible for the research, development, and implementation of planning, training, and operational guidance for IT applications used by Headquarters, District, or the Squadron.

IT applications are used at Headquarters for all phases of accounting and fiscal control, membership records, warehouse inventories, educational records and examination grading,

typesetting, and mailing labels for *The Ensign*, a USPS personnel information bank and headquarters correspondence.

Information Technology also supports, promotes, and develops computerization projects for the membership. These projects include squadron and district record-keeping, data transfers between Headquarters and Squadrons or Districts, merit mark preparation, conference registration, and any other USPS endeavor that would benefit from computerization.

**S.19 Communications.** Communications are essential to smooth functioning of a Squadron or District. This area includes the work of the telephone committee, roster committee, correspondence committee, and an Internet communications committee. Many Districts and Squadrons have Internet home pages intended to be sources of information for the members and visitors to the site and to provide a conduit for modern-day communications. Information regarding the requirements for squadron websites may be found on the Information Technology section of the USPS website. The Information Technology Committee has developed and is constantly improving Standard Squadron and District websites (SSS and SDS) making web hosting much easier and cheaper. For example, educational courses are added automatically through HQ800.

Some of the information that should be found on the home pages includes:

- Education calendar to include courses offered from all squadrons;
- A schedule of district and squadron events, including special meetings, dinners, rendezvous, changes of watch and whatever else the squadron wants to announce, including USPS boating course information and class schedules with a map of squadron locations with individual squadron contacts;
- Home pages and Internet links for all squadrons (contact the district webmaster for how-to, design, and maintenance information);
- Links to USPS, Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons / Escadrilles Canadiennes de Plaisance (CPS-ECP), and other boating sites, such as USCG, BoatUS, and yacht clubs;
- District information and district newsletters, council and conference information, boat shows, and activities of general interest to members and the local community, and
- Email directory for member-to-member communications.

# Appendix A

## Guide to Taking Minutes

This Guide is not a complete compendium on taking minutes nor is intended to be. It is not a summary of *Robert's Rules of Order* nor is it a quick reference to parliamentary procedure. It is intended to be and should only serve as a quick guide to those who need a terse and pithy guide to taking better minutes at USPS events. It should also be noted that contradictions abound in the literature and references used to generate this guide. As well, local policy may dictate a policy that may conflict with the procedures in this guide. If necessary, the reader should consult other reference material as necessary for more detail on parliamentary procedure.

The national, district, or squadron secretary is responsible for recording minutes of any meeting which entertains motions on which there will be votes. This is especially important if the unit is incorporated as these records help protect the rights of the individuals involved. This appendix will help those current and future secretaries understand the significance of what function they perform but also provide guidance on the necessary and unnecessary details to record in the official minutes of their respective meetings. There may be other items to record and items unnecessary to document. This appendix will be updated over time when provided input from those who submit changes to it.

**Taking minutes is a key role at any meeting.** But it's often a function that's taken for granted. Meeting minutes play a key legal function, and it's important to take them correctly. Minutes should be a synopsis of business decisions and actions taken, not a detailed record of who said what. With the advent of ubiquitous convenient electronic devices such as smartphones, the audio recording and archiving of meeting records has become simple as a backup but not as a substitute for basic written synopsis minutes.

### Before the Meeting

- Meeting minutes normally include these elements as standard: date, time, and venue; attendees and apologies from absentees; as well as key outcomes from the meeting: decisions made, actions agreed to, and open issues.
- A good meeting will have a pre-prepared agenda, and all attendees will be clear about the meeting objective and expected outcomes. Use the agenda to structure your note-taking, and be prepared to clarify points as the meeting progresses. Aim to record key themes, not verbatim comments.
- Some meetings work better if the notes taken are available for all to see, for example on flip charts or on overheads. If so, remember to take these notes with you and write up the meeting minutes while they are fresh in your mind.

- There are plenty of gadgets to help the secretary take better notes. For example, he can type directly onto a laptop, use a voice recorder such as a smartphone, or even a digital whiteboard. But beware; even the shiniest, fastest laptop is worthless when the battery life span is shorter than the meeting. Always take paper and a pen for backup!
- Formal meeting minutes formats are often governed by policy and must be recorded and communicated in a pre-determined way, such as at an annual or general meeting. If in doubt, review previous meeting minutes to establish the normal format.
- The secretary's role as minute taker can affect how he interacts during the meeting. Traditionally secretaries sat quietly taking notes, but they are now often expected to take part in the meeting AND take notes.

Here are some notable good practices and practices to avoid when it comes to taking minutes during and after the meeting.

Good practices during the meeting:

- Keeping minutes at all general meetings and board meetings. If your group is incorporated, this is one way to maintain the legal protection the corporate shield gives to your officers.
- Keeping minutes at any meeting where people vote. At committee meetings where there is no voting, you might choose to keep minutes for your records. But minutes are not required for legal purposes.
- Recording the meeting venue as well as the date and time it starts.
- Listing the number of attendees (approximate if the group is large) and whether a quorum is present.
- Ensuring that if the organization's bylaws contain an "Order of Business and Rules of Order" section, that the meeting presider requests a motion to change the order of business. This prevents any technical challenge to the meeting should the order of business deviate from the bylaws.
- Formatting notes to follow the furnished agenda. If the presider of the meeting doesn't normally create an agenda, the secretary should. It makes the meeting more orderly, lets attendees know what to expect at the meeting, and makes taking minutes significantly easier.
- As well, if any member documents his agenda, obtaining a copy and taking notes on it. This action will help create a more accurate record of that member's participation in the meeting.
- Recording all motions and the outcome of all votes.
- It is especially important to list the names of people who make and second motions as well as record the names of those who vote in the negative in the event it is needed in the future.
- Being concise. It's not necessary to be lengthy in the minutes. It is enough to record specific motions, votes, and key business.

- Detailing the debate over an issue in synoptic form. Formal notes just need to include the facts.

Practice to avoid during the meeting:

- Being shy about asking for clarification during the meeting to get a point straight in your notes.

Good practices after the Meeting

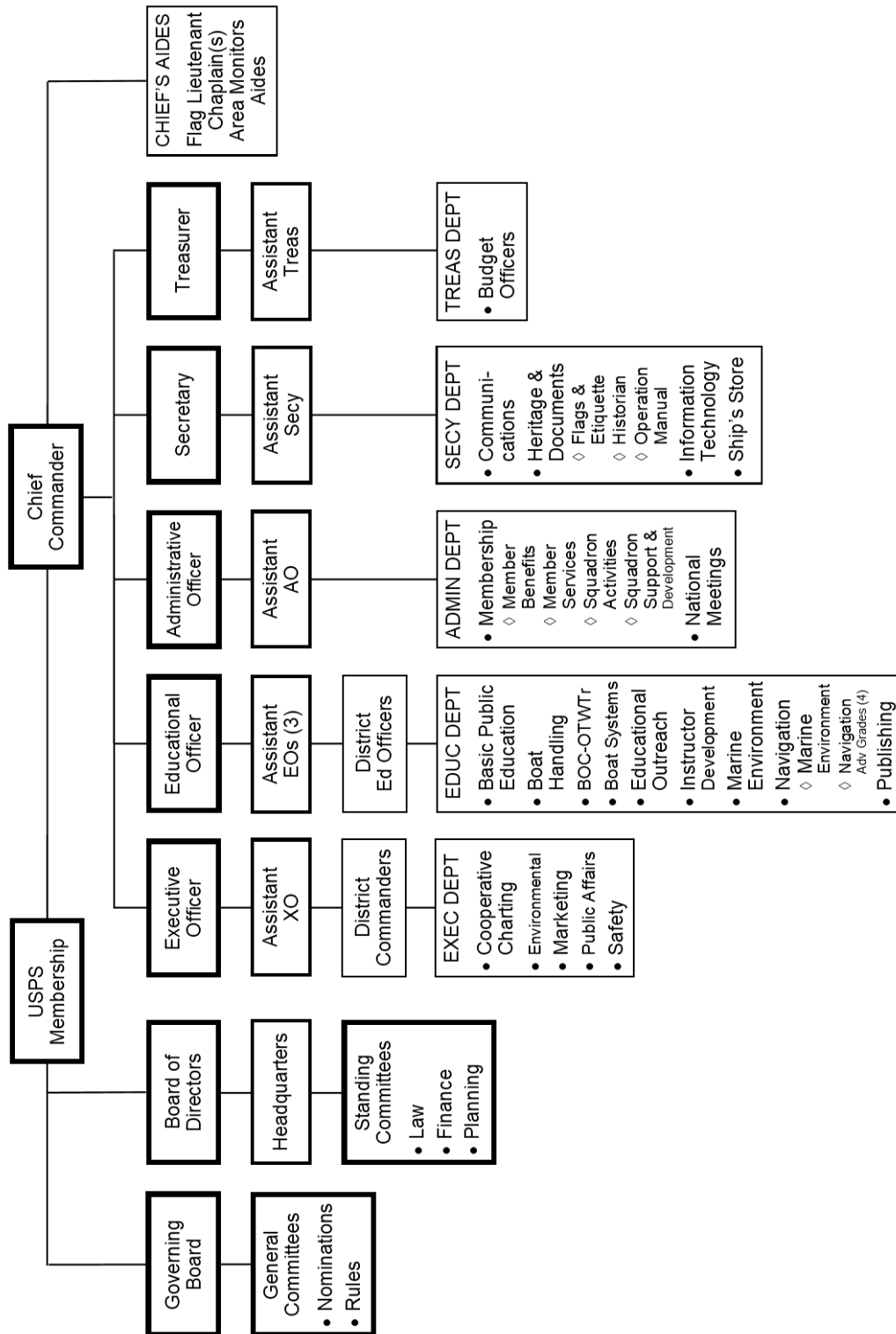
- Spell checking and asking the meeting presider to proofread the minutes before circulating them. Well-written, clear minutes, circulated in a timely manner are always well received!
- Distributing the draft copy of the minutes to all attendees after they have been keyed in, spelled checked, and proofread if necessary. This gives each member a chance to further clarify their input that might have been misunderstood. The secretary should correct the recorded minutes as necessary and then redistribute them at the next official meeting of that committee for approval.

Practice to avoid after the Meeting

- Delaying in transcribing the minutes from the notes taken during the meeting. It is best to do it the same or the next day while the secretary still remembers what occurred.

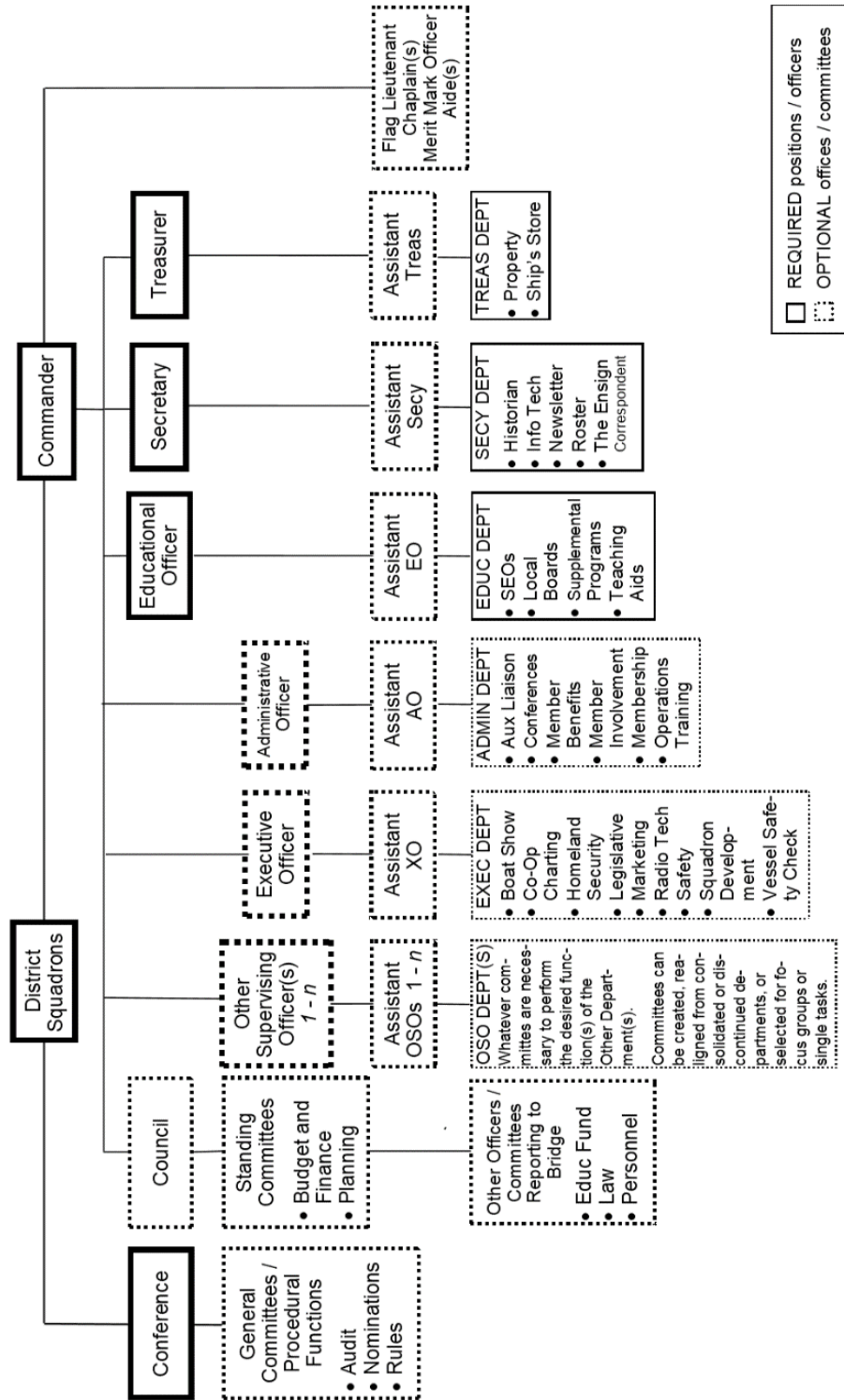
On all matters of meeting procedure, *Robert's Rules of Order* offers information on taking proper minutes. A good reference that's easier to follow than simply reading *Robert's Rules* is *Webster's New World Robert's Rules of Order, Simplified and Applied*.

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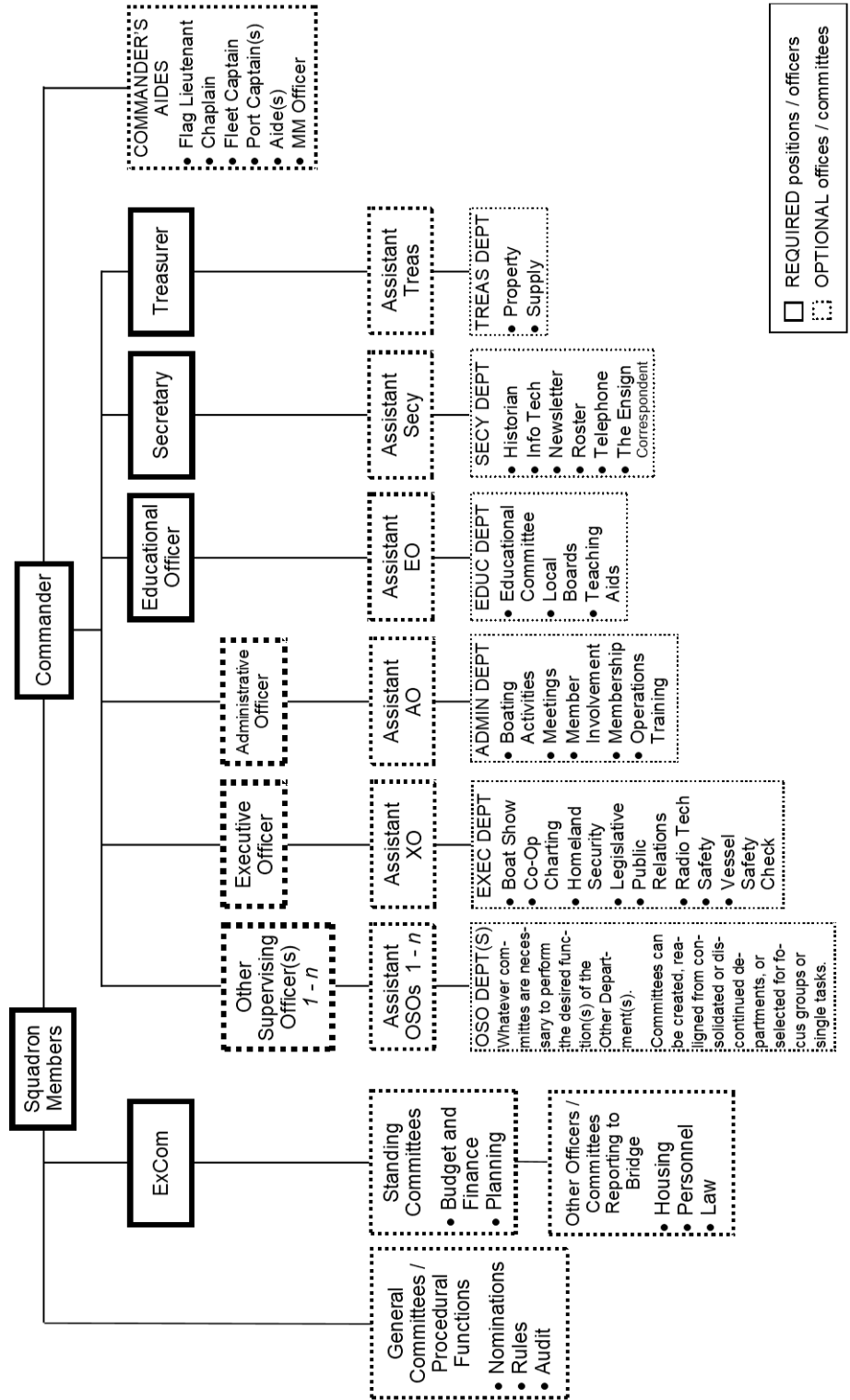
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