



PAUL D. HELSEL
Past Grand Exalted Ruler

A Fraternal Organization
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Officers/Leadership
Lodges of the Pennsylvania Elks State Association

During these difficult, stressful, and often confusing times - it is a given that our Elks Lodges are closed to the public and members from a business/social/service standpoint - bars, kitchens (food service), all gatherings, meetings, etc. of non-members and meetings in excess of 10 members (this number started at 250, went to 50 and I believe today is 10 and it could change again). Food take out service for our members can be an exception for lodges that are equipped to do it and conducted within all the health and safety requirement of today.

Traditional lodge meetings cannot be held in the lodge, and probably no where during these shut down, stay at home Orders. A number of lodges are thinking outside the box and using Zoom, Go-To Meeting, and other computer/phone based programs to hold meetings with Officers, Board of Directors and even the membership in an effort to keep folks engaged and to conduct the business necessary to keep the lodge current, and operating from an administrative standpoint. These meeting do not and are not required to have the Ritual portions that we perform during normal lodge meetings, such as the Opening, Closing, and a rigid order of business - there is no alter, jewels etc. These meetings are simply the ER following an abbreviated agenda (prepared by him/her) of items/issues that need to be addressed, discussed, and possibly voted on - business necessary to the lodge moving forward.

There continues to be many questions about who, if anyone can physically be in the lodge during this shut down. Lodge officers, specific members, contractors, and specific employees can be in the facility (in proper numbers and with proper precautions) to insure the facility is safe, secure, and sound - as well as to perform general and required maintenance, administrative tasks and duties, and things necessary to keep the lodge current with it business, financial, reporting, requirements relative to the Elks and Local, State and Federal Governments. Lodges can't simply shut the doors and everyone walks away and the State of Pennsylvania doesn't expect or require that to happen. Lodges are in fact a business and as such certain duties/tasks/functions must continue on a routine basis. Lodges must stay current with their financial operation (collecting dues, issuing membership cards, payroll, bill paying, yearend closing, reporting - including the FRS), charity reporting, annual report, etc ,etc. March and April are two of the busiest months with one lodge year ending and the next beginning. Granted, some of these tasks may be possible to do at home on personal computers, but if that is not possible - working in the lodge is acceptable as long as the appropriate social distancing and safety precautions are observed.

As best it can the work to end one year and begin the next must go on - when this crisis ends lodges must be up to date/current with everything they can and be ready to hit the ground running and not playing catch up on things that should and could have been done.

I recognize that there is a major difference between our Elks lodges and the other businesses down the street. For the most part our leadership and most of those that carry the load are **"VOLUNTEES"** - not paid help, a totally different dynamic.

We are an Order of volunteers from bottom to top and our volunteers do what they do for love of their lodge, love of their fellow members, love of our Order and what it stands for, and love of our communities and who we serve. Without volunteers we have no lodges, we have no Order, we have no ability to serve others.

During these unprecedented and difficult times we desperately need our volunteers, while perhaps physically apart, still pulling together - staying on course and doing what they routinely do so well - taking care of their individual duties and responsibilities and ensuring that their lodge remains a vital and prominent part of our Order and the communities within which they reside.

Notice I used the words "pulling together", it is certainly not a time for petty and/or personal differences to surface. We must treat each other with respect and in the same manner we expect to be treated, no personal agendas, and the philosophy that everyone has something to contribute, even if it's from home or afar. Fortunately on a daily basis, I see leadership, members, volunteers routinely thinking out of the box, doing things differently to adhere to the imposed restrictions, pulling together and getting the job done.

Thank you to every Elk, every volunteer who remains in the trenches (no matter where the trenches are), who are carrying the load, and who are getting the job done. Through your continuing and dedicated efforts your lodge, our Association, and our Order will come through these difficult times with flying colors - stronger, wiser, better equipped and most definitely ready to take on any challenge the future may throw at us.

Best wishes to each Elk, volunteer, and lodge of our Association - be smart, be safe and stay well!!!! If I can help in any way don't hesitate to give me a call or send me an email.

Sincerely and fraternally,



Paul D. Helsel, PGER & Sponsor