

## Edict #2 – Coronavirus (COVID-19) Recovery Provisions

- Governor Hogan has implemented Phase 2 of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Recovery Plan for Maryland; however, formal Council Assemblies and other in-person gatherings of Companions are still prohibited. As restrictions are lessened, Councils are authorized to implement all guidelines for in-person meetings/gatherings that the Grand Lodge issues for Lodges, in accordance with State and local restrictions. All guidelines/restrictions should be followed, including use of masks, social distancing, and limitations on number of attendees. Shaking hands is discouraged.
- Once in-person meetings are allowed, a Council may still choose not to hold in-person Assemblies.
- Councils may take advantage of more liberal restrictions on outdoor events by utilizing “Low Vale” or other types of outdoor Assemblies/events.
- **Modifications to Ritual** – To eliminate physical contact, the following modifications to the Ritual are in effect through the remainder of this Grand Council’s Cryptic Year:
  - Instead of conducting the Chaplain, officers to be installed, or Candidates, they shall be instructed to follow the conducting officer at the appropriate social distance, with the addition of any verbal instructions necessary so that the Candidate is properly placed and positioned.
  - The TIM shall not kneel at the Altar during Obligations, but will stand while maintaining the appropriate social distance. He shall not place his hand on the Candidate’s.
  - Candidates and elected officers to be installed shall be informed that they may bring their own Bible (Volume of the Sacred Law) to take and seal the Obligations.
  - Grips shall not be given. They should be explained to the Candidate, but only demonstrated by pantomime, without physical contact, while maintaining social distancing between all Companions.
  - The Candidate will not carry in a piece of work at the beginning of the Royal Master Degree. It shall be explained to him that one of the items already on the desk/table for the PCW’s inspection represents the piece he has just “symbolically” carried up.
  - The Cherubim may be omitted; if used, there is no physical contact between them.
  - The Conductor of the Council will not tap the PCW on the shoulder in the Royal Master Degree.
  - Social distancing must be maintained while “whispering” Passwords.
  - TIM will make the deposits in the Select Master Degree instead of handing the items to the DIM, then to the PCW for deposit.
  - The TIM, DIM and PCW shall use separate gavels in the opening and closing ceremonies.
  - Any other modifications which have not been specifically delineated that are necessary to eliminate physical contact between Companions.
- As provided in the Edict on “Suspension of Cryptic Meetings” issued March 16, 2020, Dispensation is granted to permit any otherwise eligible Companion elected as the TIM for the term beginning in the spring of 2020, who has not previously received the PTIM Degree, to be installed without the Conferral. It is expected that such

Companion should participate as a Candidate at the next Conferral of the PTIM Degree; tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 24, 2021.

- **Virtual Gatherings** – Councils are encouraged to use current technologies such as Zoom, Go-To-Meeting, and other platforms to hold virtual gatherings to keep in touch. Councils with a large overlap of membership with other York Rite Bodies (Chapter and/or Commandery) should consider combining their efforts and hold joint virtual gatherings. Educational program presentations are encouraged in addition to informal discussions and social time.
  - An open installation of officers may be done in a virtual setting. Grand Council maintains authority for all installations; so even in a virtual setting, it must be conducted by the MIGM or his representative.
  - Ritual practices and instruction are permitted in a virtual setting. The meeting organizer must ensure that all participants are entitled for the Degree being covered; and each Companion is responsible for the security and confidentiality of the content respecting anyone in his surroundings who might be able to see his screen or overhear the discussion.
  - **Conferral of Degrees in a virtual setting is prohibited. Candidates' Degrees must only be conferred in-person.**
  - A Council may hold its election of officers and conduct other business in a “closed” virtual Assembly.
    - All participants must be Select Masters.
    - A closed virtual Assembly must be opened with the Pledge of Allegiance and an opening prayer.
    - Due Guards and Signs are omitted.
    - For any questions being decided, the TIM must ensure that only those who are entitled to vote in the Council are counted. Questions may be decided by voice vote, “show of hands” (for participants using video), or platform supported polling; but no vote requiring anonymous balloting by Ballot Box may be taken. For election of Candidates, the TIM may allow a motion to dispense with the Ballot Box and use one of the other voting methods, but this motion must be unanimous to be approved.
    - Minutes must be taken and maintained for the closed portion of the virtual Assembly.