

Responsibilities of a Local Group Seneschal

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1. Maintain the Official Status of the Group

This starts with understanding what the requirements are for your group to maintain its status. You should read Corpora, Kingdom Financial Policy, and Kingdom Law to become familiar with the requirements for your branch (Barony, Shire, College, Incipient Group). Ask questions of the Kingdom Seneschal if you are unsure.

Then be sure you:

- a) **Get your own warrant signed and report each month.**
- b) **Have the correct number and type of officers** in place for your size Branch. For example, a Barony must have a Seneschal, Exchequer, Chronicler, Herald, and A&S Officer to maintain group status. A Shire or College must have a Seneschal, Exchequer, and one of the following: Herald, A&S Minister or Marshal.
- c) **Ensure all the group officers are warranted and maintain their memberships the whole time they are officers.** Even though you do not sign the warrants for all officers in the group, you must be sure all of the group's officers get warranted.
- d) **Ensure officer transitions are handled correctly:**
 - You do not need to advertise an officer position at the end of the warrant if a warrant is being renewed. Warrants can be renewed if the officer wishes to stay in the position and the people who sign the warrant wish them to stay. It is your job to make sure the renewal is done when it is supposed to be
 - Vacancies in a Great Office (Seneschal, Exchequer, Chronicler, Herald, A&S Officer and Chirurgeon) must be advertised for three months before they are filled. This should be done BEFORE the outgoing officer steps down. If that cannot be arranged, you must be sure an Acting Officer is appointed (and sends in reports) while the position is advertised. An Acting Officer can apply for the position during this period if they wish.
 - Vacancies in all other group Offices must be advertised for 30 days before they are filled.
- e) **Ensure all officers are reporting and sending their reports to the right people.** All officers in the local group should copy you on their reports. Remember that two missing reports is grounds for removal of an officer (and they need not be consecutive missed reports). Missing reports from Great Officers is grounds for a group status to be questioned by the Kingdom.
- f) **Ensure the group maintains the required number of sustaining members residing in your group's zip codes.** If membership falls, start a membership drive.
- g) **Hold regular Officer Meetings for the group,** and make sure they are advertised and open to the populace.

2. Serve on the Group's Financial Committee

Once a group advances beyond Incipient status, they must have a Financial Committee of at least three officers who determine how the group's money is spent. This financial committee is responsible for making sure the group follows SCA financial guidelines and reporting requirements.

The Financial Committee for a group must include the group Seneschal and the group Exchequer. In the case of a Barony, the Baron and Baroness cast the third vote. In a Shire, another officer holds the third vote. You should read Corpora, Kingdom Financial Policy, and Kingdom Law to become familiar with the financial guidelines for handling SCA funds, and know what signators must be activated (and maintained) on the group's bank account. Ask questions of the Kingdom Exchequer if you are unsure.

Then be sure the group's Financial Committee:

- a) **Meets and approves all group expenditures as a committee.** Meetings must be open to the populace, and decisions of the committee must be made known to the populace.
- b) **Has an event budget submitted by the autocrat, and approved by the committee, 30 days before the group holds any Kingdom Calendar or Locally Publicized event.** The budget must reflect expenditures that are approved uses of SCA monies. Reimbursements above the budget must not be approved unless the committee approved the non-budget expenditure before the money was spent.
- c) **Receives a post event financial report from the autocrat and exchequer within 30 days following each Kingdom Calendar or Locally Publicized event, including Non-member surcharge reporting.** These reports should be available to the populace for review.
- d) **Does an annual budget for the group in the fall of each year (required for Baronies, recommended for other groups).** This allow officers to have an annual budget for expected expenditures like rental of lights for fighter practices, upkeep of regalia, storage units, group PO Box rental, etc. so they do not need to have the Financial Committee meet every time one of these checks is needed by the officer.
- e) **Retains enough funds in the group account to support operation of the group.**
- f) **Completes all required monthly, quarterly and Domesday financial reports required by the Society.**

3. Ensure SCA event guidelines are maintained

Read the Atenveldt Event Guidelines document on the website. Then be sure you:

- a) **Meet with the group before the annual Kingdom Calendar Meeting to decide what Kingdom Calendar and Locally Publicized events your group wishes to hold in the next calendar year.**
- b) **Work with the Kingdom Calendar Officer and attend the annual Kingdom Calendar Meeting to get your group's events scheduled for the following calendar year.**
- c) **Recruit autocrats and assist in finding sites for your group's events.** Remember that autocrats must be paid members of the SCA.

- d) **Sign site and vendor contracts for the group.**
- e) **Ensure event forms and publication/advertising guidelines and deadlines are met for all events.** It is your responsibility to make sure the autocrats of an event get these tasks completed on time.
- f) **Ensure the proper officers are onsite to keep an event legal and the SCA insurance in force.** For example, SCA insurance requires that a warranted marshal be onsite for an SCA fighter practice or tournament; only the Exchequer (or persons designated by the Exchequer) may collect site fees; etc.,.
- g) **Ensure SCA waivers are collected at the troll booth and at the entrance to all fighting fields (including fighter practices).** Also ensure the waivers are sent to the Kingdom Waiver Secreatry within 30 days of the fighter practice or event.

4. Encourage membership

In a Barony, the Seneschal shares this task with the Baron and Baroness. In a Shire, College or Incipient group, the Seneschal of the group handles this task. In each case, they serve as the primary contact with new members in the SCA.

It is the Seneschal's name, address, phone number and email address that people find first when they go looking for a new group. So you will receive lots of inquiries from people who are just finding the SCA. Be receptive, warm, encouraging, and try to make them comfortable. It helps a lot to have others in the group (Officers, Peers, White Scarves, seasoned fighters, archers, skilled artisans) who you can refer the newcomer to for more information. Remember, the health of your group is maintained by the energy and enthusiasm of new people. Look at each newcomer as the possible-next Seneschal of the group, and you'll make everyone feel welcome!

You should also lead your group (and group officers) in planning regular activities for new members – swap meets where they can trade for costumes or feast gear, classes in armor making, tabard construction, “how to camp at war”, etc. Make sure you're teaching new people how to enjoy the Current Middle Ages.

5. Maintain peace and harmony in the group

Of all of your tasks, this one is the hardest. In a Barony, this is one of the primary jobs of the Royalty. But you must be part of the Baron and Baroness's team in this effort. Never oppose them publicly, and support them in all efforts they make to maintain peace in the group, and make the SCA an “inclusive” (not “exclusive”) place. In a Shire or College, you must bear this responsibility without Royalty near-by.

A Seneschal must be first and foremost in delivering this message to the group:

- There is a place in the SCA for everyone.
- Keep it fun -- we need to strengthen what we share, and we are all here to find the things that we enjoy doing.

- You do not have to like everyone in the group, but you need to be able to camp near them, and play near them without rancor or unpleasantness.
- If you have issues with someone, deal with the person face-to-face, and keep the disagreement private. Do not speak to the whole group about your problem, and do not try to (or expect) everyone to take sides. You cannot (and will not be allowed to) disrupt the rest of the group with a private disagreement.
- Bullies and offensive people are not tolerated in our group.

These can be hard messages to deliver with sensitivity and kindness. But you must try. Chivalry and Honor are not dead – they live in the SCA. And the way you deal with controversy is an example to the rest of the group.

Conclusion

Being a Seneschal for a local group is incredibly rewarding, and opens you up to all sorts of new experiences. You become part of building and making the Joy of the Current Middle Ages available to existing members, and you help new people discover what we're all about. Most importantly, you get to make service in the SCA a fun and rewarding experience.