DUTIES OF THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OFFICERS

DUTY OF THE ASSEMBLY IN REGARDS TO ITS OFFICERS

The Assembly must ensure that all of its responsibilities are carried out satisfactorily by its officers. In a letter of July 30, 1972, the Universal House of Justice states that an Assembly should "hold regular meetings and ensure that all its members are currently informed of the activities of the Assembly, that its Secretary carries out his duties, and its Treasurer holds and disburses the funds of the Faith to its satisfaction, keeping proper accounts and issuing receipts for all contributions."  

SECRETARY

Generally speaking the Secretary of an Assembly must be careful to convey exactly what the majority decision or advice of the body was. There can surely be no objection to his putting it in proper terms and clarifying the matter according to the decisions or instruction of the Assembly. But he should of course not introduce his personal views unless endorsed by the Assembly.  

Generally, the functions of the Secretary include the following;  

- Prepares agenda for the Assembly meetings, usually in consultation with the Chair  
- Records all minutes of the Assembly meetings and of the annual meeting  
- Receives mail for the Assembly and presents communications of all kinds to the Local Spiritual Assembly at the next meeting  
- Answers correspondence, under the direction of the Local Spiritual Assembly  
- Maintain a steady flow of communication  
  
  o The proper growth of a community is possible only when the National Spiritual Assembly, through its office and secretary, is able to maintain a steady flow of communication to the believers in its jurisdiction, offering guidance and encouragement to them.  

- [I]ts Secretary is its chief executive officer, and as such acts ...  
  
  o as liaison with  
    - the national committees,  
    - the Local Spiritual Assemblies and  
    - all the friends

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1 Compilations, NSA USA - Developing Distinctive Baha’i Communities  
2 Shoghi Effendi, Unfolding Destiny, p. 448  
3 Ibid  
4 Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 29)
generally represents the National Spiritual Assembly and the Faith itself to the non-Bahá’í world, a duty becoming ever more important as the Cause becomes more widely known.”

**Chair**

In regards to the Assembly meeting, the Chair has the responsibility to:

- Guide the course of the discussion
- Ensure that there is free and open discussion during the meetings,
- that it is kept to the point, and
- that all members are given the opportunity to contribute to the consultation
- Clarify decisions or motions so that they are fully understood and can be accurately recorded in the minutes
- Call for a vote when appropriate
- Consult with Secretary about agenda
- Call the meeting to order

**Vice-Chair**

The Universal House of Justice has asked us to advise you that the appropriate procedure would be for the Vice-Chairman of the Assembly to chair the meetings in the absence of the Chairman. If the Vice-Chairman happens to be also absent, then the Assembly should decide who among the members present should chair the meeting.

**Treasurer**

Some Guidelines for Treasurers

"In general terms, however, the House of Justice feels that there are certain matters to which National Treasurers should give particular attention.

1. There is the relationship between the National Assembly and the individual believers and local communities. Through whatever correspondence he conducts with contributors to the National Fund and with committees which are drawing on the Fund for their work, the

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5 Ibid
6 All the points with the exception of the first one are in Compilations, NSA USA - Developing Distinctive Bahá’í Communities.
7 Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, October 10, 1936, in Lights of Guidance, pp. 28-29
8 Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated February 10, 1987, in Lights of Guidance, p. 29
National Treasurer can be a powerful influence in establishing links of loving unity within the community.

2. The Treasurer must be sure to render regular and accurate financial statements to the National Spiritual Assembly so that it can properly plan its work within the means available to it.

3. It is the Treasurer's responsibility to prepare the annual financial report in time for the National Spiritual Assembly to consider it before presenting it at Convention. He also has to prepare the annual budget for the consideration and approval of the National Assembly.

4. The Treasurer should carefully monitor the use of the Fund so that he can warn the Assembly in good time if there is danger of over-spending.

5. In book-keeping, a system must be adopted to insure that earmarked funds are kept absolutely distinct from those that are at the free disposition of the and there should be safeguards to prevent the spending of earmarked funds to matters other than those which they are intended.

6. In addition to keeping accurate records of income and expenditure, the Treasurer should see that the assets of the Assembly are protected and that both assets and liabilities are carefully recorded.

7. The Treasurer should advise the Assembly to set aside sufficient sums on a regular bases to provide for the repair and maintenance of properties owned by the Faith, so that these can be kept in good condition and so that the normal work of the Cause is not interrupted by sudden requirement of large sums for repairs. Usually the task of maintaining the properties is assigned to a special committee or committees, which should be consulted by the Assembly and can suggest a suitable amount to be set aside annually.

8. While it is within the discretion of a National Spiritual Assembly to require only one signature on cheques drawn on the National Fund, experience has shown that it is better practice to require at least two signatures. The funds of the Faith are a sacred trust, and Assemblies should be meticulous in handling and accounting for them.\(^9\)

**RECORDING SECRETARY**

"The purpose of the minutes is

- to record the action of the Assembly with sufficient back-ground information so that one reading the minutes will understand the reason for the action.
- National Assemblies may find it helpful if the background and the action are separated and not typed together.

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\(^9\) Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 257
• On the other hand, minutes should not be a verbatim report of the National Assembly meeting, and it is not the purpose of the minutes to record the views of individual members. Names of individual making motions need not be recorded. Names should be included, however, whenever required to make clear the assignments of persons responsible for actions.

• Each set of minutes should reflect the time and place of the next meeting.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{10} Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 30