

Greetings to the Shire of Dragon's Laire from Sargeant Ralg Nilsen

This article is intended to publish the Charter of Dragon's Laire, and give some history and thought behind why it was done in this fashion. All of my comments will be underlined. That should help separate them from the text.

TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE this is a COPY of the original charter of Dragon's Laire, or at least the copy I have. While we are not currently following all of this charter. I believe we are following in its spirit. Remember, as the charter states, ... are not intended to establish immutable laws.

The Shire charter was written in the second year of An Tir being a Kingdom. That is in 1983. We had just had a change in office of the Seneschal ~ from the founding Seneschal Kylar Micheal to me. The Kingdom Seneschal contacted me and informed me that we should have a charter to help guide us. I contacted the Barony of Madrone, the Barony of Wastekeep and the Shire of Blath An Oir for copies of their charters. We used them as guidelines for the drafting of ours.

Our basic theory in writing this Charter was to give us both enough stability and enough flexibility to run the Shire, and still have fun. One of the problems we had seen was Seneschals who get a death grip on the shire, only "appoint" their friends to office, and basically run the shire like a two bit kingdom. One other problem we tried to avoid was that of a small "click" getting control. I like to think we succeeded.

## THE CHARTER of DRAGON'S LAIRE

### Section One, Preface

This document is intended to be a record of the customs by which the Shire of Dragon's Laire operates, and is supersede by the laws of the Kingdom of An Tir, the Corpora of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), the laws of the city for Bremerton, Kitsap County, the State of Washington, and the Constitution of the United States. These customs are common practice and are subject to change by vote of the members of Dragon's Laire. These customs are enumerated to assist in solving practical problems, and are not intended to establish immutable laws.

This sections reference to the order of laws is based on the old Corpora that was in force at the time. Since the Corpora no longer exists, but has been replaced, perhaps this section should be changed.

At present the Greater Shire Officers are the Seneschal, Herald, Master of Stables, Minister of Arts, Minister of Sciences, Exchequer, Constable, Chronicler, and Chirurgeon. The lesser Shire Officers are the Chatelaine, Gold Key, Minister of Lists, Chief Archer, and Scribe. The Shire citizenry consists of all members of the SCA residing within the borders of the Shire who are at least fifteen years of age, and have attended at least two events or Shire meetings within the past year. The official Shire newsletter is the Flames of the Dragon.

The list of greater and lesser officers was drawn from what the Kingdom had them listed as at that time. This has changed. Should we change, I don't know. The sentence that tries to exclude non-area residence from membership is different from Kingdom CUSTOM. Which is that you are a member of the group you want to be. Should we change this? Again, I don't know.

As a side note, several of us wanted to name the newsletter DRAGON DROPPINGS, but we were overruled.

### Section Two

#### Officer Vacancies

##### 1. Resignations

When a Shire Officer resigns, he shall give notice in writing to the Crown, to his superior officer, and to the seneschal. If an officer moves his permanent place of residence outside the bounds of the Shire, but fails to give proper notice of his resignation, the seneschal shall, thirty days from the departure, request the Crown and Kingdom officer to declare that office vacant and cancel the officer's warrant.

We have mostly followed this, at least about resigning. But what of the officer that moves, but holds his office and fulfills his duties?

##### 2. Removal

If an officer misses three consecutive Shire meetings without cause or notice, or is otherwise negligent in his official capacities, the shire officers may give that officer twenty days written notice, and then request the Crown and the Kingdom officers to declare that office vacant and cancel the officers warrant.

We have used this to remove office holders before. People who take an office and won't or can't fulfill its duties.

##### 3. Filling Offices

We haven't followed all of this procedure in years. Parts just didn't work as well as what we do now.

When a Shire office becomes vacant, the Shire shall recommend to the Crown a successor as follows.

A. If the retiring officer wishes to recommend a deputy who is willing and qualified to fill the office, the Shire shall support that recommendation, except as provided in 3D, below.

The above part didn't seam to work. No retiring officer has tried to use this for at least 5 years, maybe more.

B. If the retiring officer has no recommendation, the Seneschal shall have published in the Flames of the Dragon a Notice of Vacancy, a job description, and a request for written applications for at least one issue.

C. All applicants shall be interviewed by the Seneschal and the retiring officer. An appropriate officer appointed by the Seneschal shall attend if the retiring officer is not available. All greater officers and those lesser officers who wish to attend shall interview applications for Seneschal. This screening board shall decide on a recommendation to put before the citizenry.

The screening board idea has not been used in several years, except for the Seneschal. Also, we now work it that the board is open to all members.

D. All recommendations must be put before the citizenry, and approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority before being put before the Crown. If necessary the Seneschal may appoint a pro-tem officer to carry out the vital services of an office until a permanent successor can be chosen.

The two-thirds (2/3) vote never really worked. It was hard to get that high a vote.

E. Any individual remains free at any time to recommend to the Crown his own choice for officers, apart from any Shire recommendation, but such a suggestion shall not in any way represent the Shire as a whole.

### Section Three

#### Disbursement of Funds

##### 1. Authority to Disburse Funds

The only officers who may approve expenses and write checks are the Seneschal and the Exchequer. Minor expenses under fifteen (15) dollars in an emergency may be approved by either the Seneschal or the Exchequer and reported at the next Shire meeting. Expenses over fifteen (15) dollars must be approved by both the Seneschal and Exchequer and reported at the next Shire meeting. Major expenses over fifty (50) dollars shall be approved by a simple majority of the citizenry present at the Shire meeting prior to incurrence. Any citizen of the Shire may seek in writing the use of Shire moneys, but only for SCA purposes, and all, proceeds must be returned to the Shire.

This part we have been using, except for some emergencies, as a standard practice. I would like to see one change here though, giving Autocrats the authority to draw up to \$100 for their event without going to the shire.

##### 2. Reporting of Funds

All officers must submit an annual financial report to the Exchequer. Household within the Shire may raise, hold, and disburse monies as they see fit, but must submit an annual financial statement if they wish to use the SCA tax number and tax exempt status. All official Shire events must submit a financial report to the Exchequer.

### Section Four

#### The Wyvern Service Award

The Wyvern Service Award is awarded to citizens of Dragon's Lair for exceptional service to the Shire. The award is given at the discretion of collected holders of the award. The frequency and number of awards are determined by the holders. Recipients of this award will retain the honor for life, and it cannot be removed by any process within the shire. Holders of the award are allowed to wear the medallion of the award, an Argent Wyvern couchant, wings adorsed.

Currently there are four members living in the Shire, only three are very active. But all four do attend some events every year. There is a fifth member who lives in the Middle Kingdom.

### Section Five

#### Shire Meetings

1. Shire meetings are open to the public. The date, time, and location of Shire meetings must be published in advance in the Flames of the Dragon. If a last minute change occurs, a sincere effort must be made to notify all of the populace.

In part this is due to the early history of the Shire, when we never knew when the next meeting would be. Something that caused us many problems.

2. At least four Greater officers must be present to take any votes. A simple majority of the citizenry present should be sufficient in most cases to resolve policy decisions, but certain cases call for a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the entire citizenry of the Shire (see above). Any vote can be required. If necessary the Seneschal may appoint a pro-tem officer to carry out the vital services of an office until a permanent successor can be chosen.

3. Any individual remains free at any time to recommend to the Crown his own choice for officers, apart from any Shire recommendation, but such a suggestion shall not in any way represent the Shire as a whole.

I think this method will work better than the original. But it is still a little different than what we do now. Please note the requirement for an absolute majority. Let us say that there are three people running for some office. One gets 4 votes, one gets 5 votes and one gets 6. The third person did not win by one vote, maybe none of those 10 people want him in office.

### Section Three

## Disbursement of Funds

### 1. Authority to Disburse Funds

The only officers who may approve expenses and write checks are the Seneschal, the Exchequer and one other officer designated by the Seneschal and Exchequer. Minor expenses under fifteen (15) dollars in an emergency may be approved by either the Seneschal or the Exchequer and reported at the next Shire meeting. Expenses over fifteen (15) dollars must be approved by both the Seneschal and Exchequer and reported at the next Shire meeting. Major expenses over fifty (50) dollars shall be approved by a simple majority of the citizenry present at the Shire meeting prior to incurrence. Any citizen of the Shire may seek in writing the use of Shire moneys, but only for SCA purposes, and all proceeds must be returned to the Shire.

The point in adding a third Shire officer is to help protect the Shire from the unauthorized withdrawal of funds.

### Section Five Shire Meetings

1 Generally, all Shire meetings are open to the public. Meetings include, but are not limited to: business, social, fighter practice, workshops, heralds, arts and sciences. Where ever possible these meeting will be held at public locations. When held at private homes the owner may deny entrance to whom so ever they wish, except as noted below.

The point here is to define the Shire meetings, and try to ensure that they are open to the public. But still respect the right to deny entrance to a private home. We all have someone we can't stand. As an example in the 9 or so years I have been running the workshop at my house I have had to deny entrance to only one person.

2. All Shire business meetings are open to the public, no matter where they are held. The date, time, and location of all meetings must be published in advance in the Flames of the Dragon. If a last minute change occurs, a sincere effort must be made to notify all of the populace.

The business meeting MUST be open to the public, regardless of any personal feelings.

3 At least four Greater officers must be present to take any votes. A simple majority of the citizenry present should be sufficient in most cases to resolve policy decisions, but certain cases call for a super majority (being 60%) of the citizenry of the Shire (see above). Any vote can be called to a re-vote at the next Shire meeting. Any decision of the Seneschal may also be called to a vote, and the Seneschal shall abide by the results of that vote.

I can't recall any time we checked to see if there where four officers present, though I do recall times when there weren't. I can't recall any time the Shire has over ruled as Seneschal's decision, but I'm glad it's there.

### Section six Amendments to this Charter

This Charter may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the citizenry. All proposed amendments must be published in the Flames of the Dragon for at least one issue before being put to a vote. Any part of this Charter found to be in conflict with any higher laws will be immediately and automatically void.

The wording could be clearer here. Is it 2/3s of all members? Or 2/3s of those attending a regular meeting? I think we meant attending a regular meeting.

Now for some "what if-ing". If I currently lead the discussion that drafted the charter, what would I change. The biggest part I would change is the selection of new officers. Here's what I would do...

### 2. Removal

A. If an officer misses three consecutive Shire meetings without cause or notice, or is otherwise negligent in his official capacities, the Shire officers may give that officer twenty days written notice, and then request the Crown and the Kingdom officers to declare that office vacant and cancel the officers warrant.

B. Any member of the Shire may call for a vote of no confidence on any officer at any regular business meeting. If a simple majority of those present agree that such a vote is warranted a notice shall be caused to appear in the next issue of the Flames of the Dragon. At the following regular business meeting a vote shall be held, a super majority being required. That is; 60% must vote no confidence. If such a vote is passed a request to the Crown and Kingdom officer to declare that office vacant and cancel the Shire officer's warrant.

Currently there is no method to remove an officer if the Seneschal or other major officers do not wish it to happen. An additional check and balance that we didn't think of before.

### 3. Filling Offices

When a Shire office becomes vacant, the Shire shall recommend to the Crown a successor as follows.

A. If the retiring officer wishes to recommend a deputy who is willing and qualified to fill the office, the Shire shall support that recommendation upon a super majority vote, that is 60 percent.

- B. If the retiring officer has no recommendation, the Seneschal shall have published in the Flames of the Dragon a Notice of vacancy, a job description, and a request for written applications for at least one issue.
- C. All applicants shall be interviewed by the Seneschal, the retiring officer and members of the Shire. An appropriate officer appointed by the Seneschal shall attend if the retiring officer is not available. Applications for Seneschal shall be interviewed by all officers and those Shire members as wish.
- D. All applicants are then voted open by the Shire, an absolute majority, being more the 50 percent, of those attending the meeting is
4. Any decisions of the Seneschal may also be called to a vote, and the Seneschal shall abide by the results of that vote. Failure to sustain a decision of the Seneschal shall initiate a vote of confidence, see section Two.