

## *Quakers have Rules?!*

*Committee Membership and Appointees Process  
by New York Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee*

To serve as a member of a committee or as a yearly meeting officer or appointee or as a representative to other bodies, Quakers have rules. Or, perhaps “good order process and procedures” is a more palatable way to put it. And, yes, the rules can be flexible, and we can change any of them as appropriate, whenever we decide as gathered Friends to do so.

Critical committee and appointee service – administrative, witness, ministry, nurture, representation – is where so much of the rubber hits the road in Friends’ important good works, and yet many Friends are not sufficiently aware of the process rules. That absence of awareness of good order process can lead to breakdown of good order, so nominating committee of NYYM is providing this process article for your information as we all go forward with our important good work in the world.

For starters, any Friend can take part in any open committee, and most committees are open. The few that are not open are closed for obvious reasons. Examples of closed committees are Conflict Transformation, Personnel, Nominating. Taking part in a committee, however, does not mean you are an appointed member. It is the committee’s *membership* that makes the committee’s basic decisions. If you express interest in a committee, you may be asked to consider serving when a vacancy occurs.

Certain key positions should be filled only by Quakers, people who have become members of the Religious Society of Friends, but most committee appointments can include attenders as well as those who are members of another Yearly Meeting with permission of gathered Friends. Those who participate in Friends Meetings and have not gone through the membership process are considered attenders and are welcome to serve. Some attenders choose to become members as a result of service to the Yearly Meeting.

*Becoming a committee member or an appointee can occur only:*

- 1. By our regular nomination process*
- 2. Ex officio*
- 3. By co-opt process (by decision of the committee, not the committee clerk)*

To serve as a member of a yearly meeting committee, a person – Friend or otherwise – must be nominated by NYYM’s nominating committee and approved by gathered Friends in a meeting for worship with a concern or business, with the exception of co-opts. For nominating committee to function well with the hundreds of positions under its care, it seeks recommendations, especially from the committee clerks, but also from any other available source. In addition, any individual can advise a nominating committee member that they themselves are led to serve in a specific position and wish to be considered. Nominating committee and the prospective Friend are likely to discuss service, including committee or appointee expectations, possible ex officio expectations, and “class”, which reflects a term of service, most commonly three years for committees and one year for individual appointments such as recording clerks, although there are variations. There are also sometimes openings in classes that have fewer than three years left. Each class term ends at the rise of the summer session of that class. It begins whenever appointed, most often at a summer session, but possibly at another gathering.

A committee has the freedom to co-opt a new or continuing member, but that is also a process with specific guidelines.

- Term extension: asking a Friend who has served on a committee for the maximum term limit to serve an additional year to respond to a particular need of the committee. This is for one year only, currently not renewable.

- Filling a vacancy: The committee clerk, after consultation with committee members, may ask an individual to fill a vacancy that arises. In this case, the committee may recommend to YM Nominating Committee that they nominate that Friend at the next Yearly Meeting session and designate a class.

*Ending committee membership or appointee service can occur only:*

1. *By the term coming to an end*
2. *By request for release*
3. *By resignation*

If a committee member or appointee wishes to step down or must resign, there is an important process for that step as well. If Friends can no longer continue or are no longer led to the work of the committee, they can resign or request release by advising 1) the committee clerk, 2) the yearly meeting clerk, and 3) the nominating committee, in written or digital form, or arrange with the committee clerk to pass on the request to the other two. The purpose of this step is to alert the clerks and the nominating committee in order to update yearly meeting records that there will be an opening to be filled. The Nominating Committee will advise the clerk of the coordinating committee of which the committee is a part. Resignations/requests for release are reported to gathered Friends. Historically, requests for release were presented to gathered Friends for approval, but that practice was discontinued.

- *Re-appointments*
- *Rotating off*
- *Terms*
- *Committee annual re-organization*

A nomination for **Re-appointment** is usually encouraged at the end of a first term by way of the same nominating clearness process as for the first time appointment to a committee or to an individual appointment. For most committees and representative appointments (such as to other Quaker bodies), service is normally expected to end after two terms. This is known as **rotating off** and is to make room for others and to avoid the development of dependency of a committee on an individual. After a year off a committee, the same Friend may be re-nominated. This process is flexible, with co-opting permitted, usually for a specific skill set. Most one year appointees, such as yearly meeting officers, may be re-nominated any number of times, as appropriate.

All committee clerks are responsible to hold an **annual committee re-organization** meeting around the time of summer sessions. If the existing clerk is going off the committee, an organizational committee meeting should be held before or during summer sessions, if at all possible, in order for the committee to select a new clerk as well as any other officers. If the clerk will be remaining on the committee, the clerk may prefer to meet toward the end of summer sessions or shortly after in order to include new members in the deliberations for committee clerk and other officers. Another option for a retiring clerk is to ask the assistant clerk or other committee member to serve as convener for the re-organization meeting. ***As soon as the new committee officers are appointed by the committee, that information should be sent by the new clerk to the yearly meeting office for yearly meeting records and to be printed in the new Yearbook, which is normally published in time to be distributed at fall sessions.***

If you have a question or concern about appointments or releases or committee service, you are welcome to contact any member of NYYM's Nominating Committee. Any time there are interim changes in committee membership, the clerk should be in touch with the Yearly Meeting Clerk and the Nominating Committee clerk so records are always as current as possible.