

Lodge Consolidation Guide and Checklist

The loss of any lodge, whether by surrender or consolidation, is a sad occasion. That said, there are actions which can alleviate many problems which occur during the process. This document attempts to note some of those actions.

The consolidation of lodges or surrender of charter of a lodge is defined and explained in the Constitution and Code, sections U106 and U107. All decisions regarding the Constitution and Code are the prerogative of the Grand Master, and questions regarding interpretation of such are to be referred to him.

Before the formal process

1. Why is the lodge pursuing this course? Is this really what the members of the lodge desire? Are there too few members showing up for meetings? Has the lodge done anything to get more participation – calling brothers to attend, letters to membership?
2. Are there conflicts within the lodge membership which have caused the decline of the lodge? Can the conflicts be resolved?
3. Is the lodge facility obsolete, too expensive to maintain or dangerous? What would it cost to repair?
4. Are there other masonic groups such as Eastern Star or York Rite meeting at the lodge? Are there youth groups? If there are, they need to be informed of the troubles in the blue lodge, since if the lodge closes, they will be forced to move their own charters – all subordinate bodies must meet in a chartered lodge.

They may or may not consolidate into the same lodge as the blue lodge. Their process may take as much or more effort than the blue lodge. Be understanding of their processes.

5. What is going to happen to the property? When consolidated, the lodge receiving the members will take over all property, items, monies, as well as debts. If surrendered, the property, items, monies and debts revert to the Grand Lodge.

If the furniture of the lodge is in good shape, especially the wardens chairs and pillars, please let the Grand Secretary know, as we often have requests from lodges for these items.

6. Notify the Grand Lodge, Grand Master and the DDGM for the district when you start contemplating the consolidation or surrender of your charter. They can help you with advice or information to consider during the process.

The formal process as per Constitution and Code – comments follow in italics

SECTION U 106. CONSOLIDATION OF LODGES: When two (2) or more lodges shall desire to consolidate and form one (1) lodge under the name and charter of one (1) of said lodges, it may be consummated in the following manner.

1. The Master of each lodge shall at a stated meeting appoint a committee of three (3) members of his lodge to meet with a like committee of the other lodge or lodges.

Both the lodge consolidating and the lodge receiving the members must have a committee. A lodge cannot be forced into receiving another lodge by consolidation.

2. Said committee shall form what shall be known as a general committee on consolidation. The general committee shall arrange a report to the lodges desiring to consolidate. This report shall show:
 - a. the financial condition of each of such lodges,
 - b. its property (real and personal),
 - c. its debts and obligations,
 - d. its membership and
 - e. all matters in any way affecting such lodges.

The general committee shall make its report to the lodges at their next stated meeting.

Lodge's often have poor records regarding these items. It may take a while to pull the information together. If a lodge is considering consolidation or surrender, the time to gather the necessary materials is before the formal process begins. It is improper to hide or disguise assets or debts of the lodge.

3. When the general committee has made its report, the Master shall, at the stated meeting at which such report is made, direct that action will be taken thereon at the next stated meeting.

It shall be the duty of the secretary to notify each member of the lodge of the question and the date when action will be taken. Such notice shall be by personal service or by mail to the last known post office address of each member.

4. The Master of each of said lodges, at the stated meeting mentioned in the notice, shall submit the question to the lodge as follows: "Shall this lodge consolidate with _____ Lodge number ____?"

- a. Should two-thirds (2/3) of the members vote yes the proposition shall be declared adopted.
- b. Otherwise, the Master shall declare the same rejected and order the secretary to record and report the vote to the other lodge or lodges.

Both lodges then need to send a letter to the Grand Lodge stating the date of the meeting and the outcome of the vote as soon as possible after the meeting (sample letters are provided at the end of this document). The letter with the latest date will be used as the consolidation date. For example if AB lodge votes to consolidate with CD lodge, and the letter from AB lodge to Grand Lodge is dated January 1, and the letter from CD lodge accepting the consolidation is dated February 1, then the official consolidation date is February 1.

5. Should such proposition be adopted by the lodges, the charter of the lodge or lodges agreeing to surrender their name and charter shall be forwarded to the Grand Secretary to be cancelled. The members of such lodge or lodges shall become and be members of the lodge whose name and charter are assumed as fully as though they had petitioned and been elected members thereof.

The Grand Lodge will send the lodge that is receiving the (consolidated) lodge members a current list of members and their addresses.

6. The books, property and furniture, money on hand and due or to become due to the lodge or lodges so surrendering its charter, shall become and be the property of the lodge, the name and charter of which have been assumed. Said last mentioned lodge shall become liable for all debts of said lodge or lodges so consolidated with it.

SECTION U 107. SURRENDERING OF CHARTER: A lodge may voluntarily surrender its charter.

1. A proposition to surrender the charter of a lodge shall be made at a stated meeting and the consideration of the same shall lie over until the next stated meeting. All members shall be notified by the secretary of the proposed action.
2. If upon submission of the question a majority of those present vote to surrender, and if there is a less number than 15 (fifteen) negative votes, the charter shall be surrendered. If there are 15 (fifteen) members who vote not to surrender the charter, though they are in the minority, the charter shall not be surrendered.
3. When a charter is surrendered or has been arrested by the Grand Master and his action approved by the Grand Lodge, the members of such lodge shall thereafter hold membership in the Grand Lodge.
 - a. Such members on written application therefore, shall receive a Certificate of Good Standing from the Grand Secretary.
 - b. After the Charter is surrendered, the Grand Secretary shall notify each member of the surrendered lodge of the status of his membership and the necessary procedure to become an affiliated Mason. Said notification shall be based upon the knowledge of the member's post office address.
 - c. Such member shall pay dues to the Grand Lodge at the rate of \$100 (one hundred dollars) per annum, until such certificate is obtained and he has affiliated with a constituent lodge.
 - d. When such members are owing one (1) years dues or more to the Grand Lodge they shall be automatically suspended on the 31 (thirty-first) day of December without notice of such suspension.

Sample consolidation letter – Lodge receiving the consolidated Lodge

Lodge Letterhead or
Lodge name and address

DATE: _____

TO: Oklahoma Grand Lodge

SUBJECT: LODGE CONSOLIDATION

1. After consultation with the Grand Lodge staff and on a vote of the members of _____ Lodge # _____, we have voted to accept consolidation with _____ Lodge # _____, located in _____, Oklahoma.
2. Effective date of consolidation will be _____.

We request that Grand Lodge provide new membership listing to our lodge secretary at earliest convenience.

Fraternally,

<signed>

_____, Worshipful Master

Sample consolidation letter – Lodge closing (being consolidated)

Lodge Letterhead or
Lodge name and address

DATE: _____

TO: Oklahoma Grand Lodge

SUBJ: LODGE CONSOLIDATION

1. After consultation with the Grand Lodge staff and on a vote of the members of _____ Lodge # ____, we have voted to consolidate with _____ Lodge # ____, located in _____, Oklahoma.
2. Effective date will be based on final vote of _____ Lodge # ____, approving consolidation. Once effective date is established, charter will be returned to Grand Lodge.

Fraternally,

<Signed>

_____, Worshipful Master