

Great War Historical Society By-Laws

The following organization by-laws were established by the Great War Historical Society (GWS) Board in 1994 and revised by Board action on March 21, 2008, January 31, 2009, and September 7, 2009.

I. Mission

The mission of the GWHS is to preserve the memory of the Great War (aka First World War) Era of 1914-1918 and educate the general public through study, collecting, living history presentations, battle recreations and other varied activities.

II. Membership

Membership in the GWHS is open to people interested in the Great War Era and there are no membership dues for joining. There are two categories of membership:

- a. Honorary Membership: Honorary members are not required to attend any events nor join a particular unit. Honorary members may not run for GWHS Board offices, be appointed to GWHS appointive positions and may not vote in GWHS elections.
- b. Full Membership: Full members are required to join an active unit.

III. Organization and Governance

A. Governing Board

1. The GWHS shall be governed by a Board (Hereafter referred to as "Board"), consisting of representatives from each nationality grouping of active units.
2. The Board shall have the power to determine overall policies of the GWHS by a majority vote.
3. The Board shall consist of the following positions:
 - a) President
 - b) Vice-President
 - c) Treasurer
 - d) Secretary

e) Member at Large

4. In the event that an individual holding one of the positions as detailed above in A. 2 is unable to function in that position, the Board shall designate an alternate Board member by a vote of the board; such a vote shall be by simple majority.
5. A Board member may resign from the Board at anytime.
6. A Board member may be ejected from the Board for failure to carry out the duties of their position or gross misconduct on the affirmative vote of four other Board members or simple majority plus one abstention.

B. Board Positions and Duties

1. The duties of the Board members are as follows:
 - a) President: The President of the Board shall be responsible for rendering decisions affecting the day-to-day operations of the GWHS. Additionally, the President will have the authority to make policy decisions for the GWHS of an immediate nature in the absence of a quorum of the Board, subject to the subsequent ratification by a majority of the Board members.
 - b) Vice-President: The Vice-President shall be responsible for assisting the President in executing the duties of his office. The Vice-President will also carry out the functions of the President if the President is unable to carry out the duties of the Office. Additionally, the President may delegate duties to the Vice-President as necessary.
 - c) Treasurer: The Treasurer shall be responsible for making appropriations of funds from the treasury and the management of said funds by a majority vote of the Board. Additionally, the Treasurer shall be responsible for the keeping of club funds; maintaining a record of expenditures and credits; preparing any and all necessary forms and documentation as required by law and/or banking authorities.
 - d) Secretary: The Secretary shall be responsible for maintaining a record of the Board's proceedings and maintain the GWHS' membership list. Additionally, the Secretary shall maintain any and all organization records as needed.

- e) Member-at-Large: The Member-at-Large shall act in an advisory capacity to the Board on all matters and assist the Board as necessary to ensure that its functions are carried. In order to hold this position, the individual must be a member of the GWHS in good standing who has attended at least ten battle events prior to January 1, 2004 or who has attended at least ten battle events after January 1, 2008.

C. Appointive Positions

1. The following positions shall be filled by majority vote of the Board:
 - a) Webmaster
 - b) Election Commissioner
 - c) Trenchmaster
 - d) Safety Officer
2. Individuals holding appointive positions serve at the pleasure of the Board are filled at the pleasure of the Board and an individual holding an appointive position may be replaced at anytime by a majority vote of the Board.
3. The duties of the appointive positions are as follows:
 - a) Webmaster: The webmaster shall design, create and maintain the GWHS website. Additionally, the webmaster shall be responsible for updating the GWHS website on a periodic basis to ensure that all information is up to date and timely. The webmaster shall have the authority to appoint one or more individuals to act as his assistant in carrying out the above duties.
 - b) Election Commissioner: The Election Commissioner shall be responsible for conducting an orderly and fair election of GWHS Board officers as further described in these bylaws.
 - c) Trenchmaster: There shall be two trenchmasters, one for the Central Powers and the other for the Allies. Each Trenchmaster shall be responsible for ensuring the orderly and safe development of all trenches, fieldworks, bunkers, emplacements, barbed wire installations et al. ("trenchworks") for their respective sides. Each Trenchmaster will also be responsible for maintaining a written master plan of their

respective trenchworks. No trenchworks will be installed without the express authorization of the Trenchmaster and a record of improvements shall be maintained by the Trenchmaster.

- d) Safety Officer: At least two safety officers will be appointed at the ratio of one per side, Allied and German. In the absence of formally appointed Safety Officers, Board members will function in this role at the ratio of at least one per side. The Safety Officers shall be responsible for ensuring that all events and battle re-creations are conducted in a manner so as to provide a safe environment for all participants and to ensure that the event or battle re-creation is conducted in a safe manner and in conformance with the organization By-Laws. Safety Officers will conduct the inspections of weapons and pyrotechnics as detailed in Section III of these By-Laws. Any item found deficient will not be utilized.

D. Fees

1. A battle fee will be collected from all participants at each battle reenactment. Non-combatants, owner-operators of approved machineguns, and mortars are not required to pay the battle fee. The Treasurer will collect the battle fee.
2. Battle fees will be set by action of the Board at least 30 days prior to the date of the event.
3. No membership dues will be charged to GWHS members.
4. The Board shall have the power to set battle fees, raise money for GWHS activities, accept donations and otherwise manage the financial affairs of the GWHS by a majority vote.

E. Participation in GWHS Events

1. All individuals participating in a GWHS battle reenactment event must be at least 18 years of age. Exceptions can be made for those are at least 16 years old when they are accompanied by an older sponsor (18 years and above).
2. The Board reserves the right to limit or bar an individual's participation in any GWHS battle reenactment or public event if it deems that individual to have not adhered to the GWHS Bylaws and/or applicable safety rules (Section IVB).

3. During any GWHS battle reenactment event or public event, a Safety Officer shall have the power to eject any individual who violates the GWHS safety rules (Section IVB).

F. Election of Board Officers

1. Board officers shall be elected each year at the Fall battle event.
2. The term of office shall be for one year.
3. GWHS members who desire to run for an office may submit their name for consideration for a particular office through the GWHS forum or a written communication to the Board during the period from October 1 through October 31. A postmark (for written communications) or electronic time stamp (for submission to the forum) shall constitute the official submission date. Only full members may run for office and they must be an eligible GWHS voter, as detailed below in F5, at the time of their candidacy.
4. A candidate may only run for one Board office in a particular election.
5. Only eligible GWHS members may vote. Eligibility is based on the following:
 - a) The individual has participated in two GWHS battle events since January 1, 2008; or has participated in two GWHS-sanctioned public events since January 1, 2008.
6. The Election Commissioner shall prepare the ballot based on nominations submitted as detailed above in No. 3. Ballots shall not contain any marks or writing that would serve to uniquely identify the ballot.
7. The Election Commissioner, or their appointed representative, shall distribute one ballot to each eligible voter at some convenient time at the GWHS Fall battle event. Marked ballots shall be deposited in a sealed container of some type and remain in custody of the Election Commissioner, or their representative until they are counted.
8. Ballots shall be counted after the conclusion of the GWHS Fall Battle event and the election results transmitted to the Board by no later than seven days after the GWHS Fall Battle. The Board shall announce the election results and the Election Commissioner shall validate said announcement.

9. Those eligible voters who will not be attending the GWHS Fall battle may submit an absentee ballot by written communication transmitted through the US Postal Service to the Election Commissioner. There is no prescribed ballot form and the voter shall simply indicate their preferences on paper. Absentee ballots are due by no later than ten days prior to the Saturday of the November event with United States Postal Service postmark serving as proof of timely submission. The Election Commissioner shall be responsible for verifying the eligibility of absentee voters.
10. If there is only one nomination for a specific Board position, the nominee will have been considered to have won by acclamation and such fact will be noted on the ballot.
11. Any election disputes shall be resolved by the Election Commissioner.

IV. Authenticity

A. General Guidelines

1. The authenticity of the equipment and uniforms used by the membership shall be enforced by an appointed authenticity officer. Each nationality (or related nationalities, such as Great Britain and Commonwealth) shall have its own authenticity officer elected by the members of that group. Uniform standards shall be determined by a majority consensus of each nationality.
2. All uniforms will meet with the standards agreed upon by the club as discussed above in Section IIA1. Failure to meet with these standards will result in a warning on the first occasion. If a second offense occurs, the individual will not be allowed to re-enact at any club sponsored functions until the problem is corrected.
3. During the designated active time period of an event, all persons must be in appropriate uniform or period civilian clothing in order to be admitted on to the battlefield.

V. Weapons

A. Firearms

1. All firearms used must be legal within federal and state law. All "machine-gun" type weapons must be legal and owned by a person with an appropriate federal and state license, or be a weapon capable of firing only blanks or gas and meet with the BATF definitions of such a device. (Violations of this rule jeopardize the club's existence.)

2. All weapons and ammunition will be inspected by appointed safety officers before each battle. Late arrivals shall not be allowed to participate until they pass a safety officer's inspection. The safety officers will inspect the opposing sides' weapons before an event can begin.
3. Rifles can only be fired at a target when a minimum distance of at least 30 feet is maintained. Pistols and revolvers shall have a safe minimum firing distance of 20 feet. Avoid aiming directly at a re-enactor at closer ranges. If there is any doubt, fire straight up or not at all. Use common sense.
4. During nighttime activity, each individual should use moderate caution. When it is dark, all shooting will be done at a 45-degree angle. Individuals must not fire into enclosed spaces such as trenches and bunkers, and avoid firing blindly when vision is impaired by smoke or flash.
5. Firing up into the air while in a trench is permitted but individuals must ensure that someone is not standing directly above the trench.
6. The Board may restrict or prohibit the use of specific types of firearms as it deems necessary.

B. Hand-to-Hand Weapons

1. No bayonets or trench knives will be removed from their scabbard in the battle area during an event. Fake clubs, knives, or similar props, can be used in simulating hand-to-hand fighting provided they are approved by a safety officer. These objects must be soft, non-rigid materials such as rubber or soft plastic.
2. The Board may restrict or prohibit the use of specific types of hand-to-hand weapons as it deems necessary.

C. Pyrotechnics

1. The reloading of pyrotechnic devices is prohibited within 20 yards of the front line trench. All reloading supplies for devices, such as grenades, shall be kept at least this distance from the front line. The area in which these supplies are kept shall be made known to all members at each event. This storage and reloading area shall be a no combat area and should be ideally have a 10-foot buffer zone around it. All black powder and similar explosive materials must be kept in a sealed container, such as an ammunition can, when not in use.

2. Simulated hand grenades, cup launched grenades, and mortar rounds must weigh less than 16 ounces. All projectiles, thrown by hand or launched, must be made out of light-weight material such as wood, plastic or cardboard.
3. The charge in these projected devices must not exceed 20 grains of black powder.
4. All launched projectiles must be fired at a minimum of a 45-degree angle. Hand thrown devices should also be projected at least a 45-degree angle.
5. All pyrotechnic devices must be approved by a safety officer. A device that has not been approved may not be used.
6. Pyrotechnic devices must not be thrown directly into front or rear area bunkers.
7. Pyrotechnic illuminating devices (aka "flashers" or similar devices) are to be used for illumination only and are not to be used offensively (i.e., thrown directly at personnel or used as hand grenades against personnel). Abuses of flasher use may result in flashers being banned at a particular event by a safety officer.
8. Raiding/assault parties on either side will utilize flashers in the ratio of one flasher for six grenades.
9. The Board may restrict or prohibit the use of specific pyrotechnic devices as it deems necessary.

VI. Units

A. Guest Units

1. Units from other recognized clubs will be allowed to participate in GWHS events.

B. Active Units

1. All units formed between 1992 and 1994, and have participated in at least two consecutive events, are considered active.

C. New Unit Establishment

1. In order to establish a new unit, the following steps must be completed:

- a. A brief description of the proposed unit's history, uniform and equipment standards, and a roster of at least 6 members must be submitted to the Board.
 - b. The prospective new unit must attend a minimum of two club events with an established unit with a minimum of four members at each event.
 - c. The proposed unit must be sponsored by an existing unit.
2. The proposal for the new unit will first be voted on by the Board. If the outcome and the reasons behind it are unsatisfactory to the proposed unit leader, the decision can be appealed to the club membership, which will make the final decision through a simple majority vote.

D. Inactive Units

1. Units that fail to field less than four members at two consecutive events will be deemed to be inactive.
2. Individual members of inactive units will be allowed to attend organization events but they will be required to be attached to an active unit.
3. Inactive units will be reinstated as active units if they attend two consecutive events with at least six members at each event.
4. Individuals who are members of an inactive unit who wish to participate in a GWHS battle event will be assigned to an active unit for administrative and tactical purposes for the duration of the event.

VII. Safety

A. Safety Officers

1. At least two safety officers will be appointed at the ratio of one per side, Allied and German as detailed above in Section IC.
2. The Safety Officers will be responsible for ensuring that all events and battle re-creations are conducted in a manner so as to provide a safe environment for all participants and to ensure that the event or battle re-creation is conducted in a safe manner and in conformance with the organization By-Laws.

3. The Safety Officers will conduct the inspections of weapons and pyrotechnics as detailed in Section III of these By-Laws. Any item found deficient will not be utilized.

B. Safety Rules

1. Cease Fires: If a member observes an unsafe condition to include fire or injury, they are to immediately call "CEASE FIRE - REAL WORLD". Upon hearing this, all members are to immediately stop what they are doing and stand by for further instructions.
2. Weapons: Weapons are to be utilized as detailed in Section III.
3. Intoxication: Individuals who are intoxicated, whether from the consumption of alcoholic beverages, medications, or other substances, shall be removed from the battle area and not be permitted to participate in any battle re-creation or other organization activity until such time that they are no longer intoxicated.
4. Unit leaders are responsible for ensuring that their unit members adhere to the organization safety rules.
5. Individuals violating the safety rules can be asked to leave the event and in extreme cases can be expelled from the organization by a vote of the Board.

VIII. Intoxication

1. Any battle participant found to be intoxicated or otherwise under the influence of alcoholic beverages or other substances will be removed from the battlefield area and not re-admitted until they are no longer in such a state of intoxication.
2. Battle participants who are intoxicated will be asked to remove themselves from the battle area. If they fail to do so, the battle will be stopped until they are no longer present in the battle area.
3. The Board reserves the right to refuse admittance to the battle area if, in its judgment, an individual is intoxicated or otherwise unable to conduct themselves in a safe manner consistent with these bylaws.

IX. Prisoners of War (POW)

1. Any battle participant is subject to being captured as a POW if they venture out into no-man's land or into the enemy trenches/defensive positions.

2. No Physical Handling/Restraint: No actual physical force or restraint is to be used on individuals involved in any POW scenario.
3. Personal Property: Equipment and personal effects can be removed from the POW but they are to be secured in a safe location within close proximity of the POW.
4. Personal property of the POW is not to be damaged or destroyed whatsoever.
5. Duration: No POW scenario is to last more than 30 minutes.
6. Good Judgment: Because of the intensely personal nature of any PW scenario, all parties are to exercise good judgment in preventing injuries or loss, damage, or destruction to property. Also, all parties will make every effort to communicate to each other what is “real world” and what is for the scenario to avoid any misunderstandings between the parties.
7. Incidents: If any injury should occur or there is loss/damage/destruction of property, the POW scenario will immediately cease. If need be, the battle in general will also cease, depending on the nature of the incident.
8. Safety: All GWHS safety rules are to be followed at all times.
9. The GWHS Board reserves the right to modify, limit or prohibit any POW scenario at any time and for any reason.

X. Revision of Bylaws

1. The Board shall have the power to revise, change, or modify these Bylaws from time to time as needed by a majority vote.