

# NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## Arrangements for BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETINGS

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Thank you for your interest in hosting an NSS Board of Governors (Board) meeting. This information should make it much easier to plan for the meeting as well as provide a kind of checklist for the items and facilities needed. Once you have your weekend package outlined, send or e-mail a copy of your bid to the NSS President and to the Board Arrangements Committee Chairman at least 45 days before the next scheduled meeting so the motion to get your bid approved can appear on the Board of Governors agenda.

The NSS Board of Governors welcomes invitations from Internal Organizations to host Board weekends at various venues around the United States. Acceptance of a bid not only provides a site for a formal business, but also gives an opportunity for informal exchange of ideas among officers, directors, volunteers, host grotto members, and other NSS cavers. The most successful Board meeting weekend allows for the greatest opportunity for communication between local members and the national board members.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The NSS Board of Governors holds three meetings each year. One meeting (usually consisting of two sessions) is held each summer during the annual NSS convention; one meeting is held in the fall and another one in the spring. The Board invites bids from the Internal Organizations and these should be sent to the Board Arrangements Chairman with a copy also sent to the NSS President. All bids received are voted on at a board meeting. Should your bid not be accepted the first time it is presented; the I/O should not be discouraged. There are often multiple bids competing for the same meeting. Two questions frequently asked by the board are whether the I/O would consider another Board meeting, or in the case of scheduling conflicts, would the I/O consider an alternate date. Persistence and flexibility is often a factor for future choices.

### WEEKEND SCHEDULE AND LOGISTICS

#### FRIDAY

**Arrival and Transportation** - Board members and other guests will arrive from various parts of the U.S. by car, train, bus or air, usually beginning late Friday afternoon and on into the evening. Members arriving by commercial transportation appreciate it if they can be met on arrival and ride with a grotto member to the various events. Some members may prefer to use rental vehicles and will need printed directions.

For the convenience of those coming by automobile, it is essential to provide good travel directions, complete with distances, landmarks and maps. They should show the location of each event. It is a good idea to have someone check the route, noting distances, signs and other landmarks (“turn left 1.8 miles from intersection of I-95 and US 18 onto Foxchase Road..”) to verify that the names and turning movements are correct. An exit may be known locally as the “River Road Exit” but the sign may not display this. If there are multiple exits with the same or similar wording try to make clear which is the correct one. Directions giving shortcuts that might be confusing to follow, especially after dark, should be avoided.

Because of the time required to travel from one location to another, it is best to keep distances between meeting rooms, lodgings, parties and eating places as short as possible.

If some unforeseen development makes it necessary to change the location of some event on Saturday or Sunday, copies of directions to the new location together with maps should be prepared and distributed to everyone. Copies may be handed out at the Friday evening party and/or at the Saturday meeting.

**Friday Evening Party** - By scheduling a Friday evening get-together at a caver's home or another meeting place, hosts and Board members can meet and discuss plans for the rest of the weekend, organize their sleeping accommodations and in general shed the rigors of traveling. Board members will enjoy meeting local grotto members as well as having an opportunity to discuss agenda items. It helps if the "contact" telephone number for arrivals for the weekend is at this location.

A local person willing to be near a telephone as a relay center for messages, especially about arrivals, can render a great service. This is particularly vital on Friday evening and slightly less so on Saturday morning. The telephone for your selected contact should be included in your advance mailings, in case of missed connections. It would also be helpful if someone kept a log of the whereabouts of each Board member during the weekend.

Cavers appreciate it if mixers, soft drinks, beer and snacks can be provided as people will be arriving from some distances on Friday and would appreciate some refreshment. (See COSTS)

**Sleeping Accommodations** - Sleeping arrangements for Board members for one or two nights are very welcome, and the Friday evening location will allow Board members to meet the cavers who are planning to host them overnight. Accommodations can range from a bed to floor space for a sleeping bag. Those coming by air may not find it convenient to bring a sleeping bag. Your reservation form should allow for space to request bagless or other special sleeping needs. To confirm where a Board member will be sleeping, it is a good idea to E-mail or otherwise inform him/her of the host's name, address, and phone number (It's even a better idea to be certain the host knows).

Some Board members may prefer to stay at a local motel, and it is helpful to provide in advance maps and directions to/from the local commercial hosts and some idea of the price range for the rooms. **Board members will make his or her own arrangements.**

In addition to the Board members, there will be committee chairs and other cavers who will also come from some distance to attend the Board meeting. Some space for these folks with sleeping bags is also appreciated. Some cavers may need only a space to park a truck or camper.

## **SATURDAY**

The room for the Board meeting must be large enough to seat the directors and officers (see diagram) as well as any other members of the NSS who might like to attend. Observers may number from 20 to 100. Visiting cavers may speak during the meeting if recognized by the President. An open discussion is also provided at each meeting.

The business meeting usually begins at 9:00am and lasts all day, ending usually about 5:30 pm. In order that the meeting may begin on time (and they do), the following facilities would be needed by 8:30 am:



## **SATURDAY LUNCH**

A working lunch at the location of the meeting is preferred by the Board, in order to avoid a long lunch break. It is appreciated if arrangements can be made to supply a simple buffet at a set price or a carry-in lunch. If a simple buffet is planned, it should be for the 17 Board members, the recording secretary and for a possible two or three others who will contribute to the ongoing business. All others will find their own way to food, unless the meeting site is too isolated or the host desires to provide food for all. It should be noted here that lunch begins the “closed” session of the board meeting, a session that usually lasts until about 2:00 pm, at which time the “open” meeting is resumed.

Board members and all others provided with lunch will pay for their individual orders. Sometimes meetings have been held at colleges where a cafeteria can be used. If such is not available, observers will need a list of nearby restaurants and directions to the dining locations.

## **SATURDAY DINNER**

Usually there is a group dinner on Saturday evening, following the Board meeting. It may or may not be held at the meeting site. This gathering has the added possibility of attracting additional local cavers and their families who might not be able to come to a late party. Arrangements should be flexible enough to allow for a serving that is not planned too early, in the event the business runs late. It has been known to happen. The Board, however, will make every effort to meet the serving time.

Some Internal Organizations have a planned banquet served in a special dining location, followed by a featured speaker from the local area. This dinner would be arranged and paid for in advance by each person filling in a space on the meeting registration form or preregistration form. If the arrangements allow more latitude, a head count may be taken at the meeting and reservations finalized on Saturday.

On some occasions, the host grotto has catered the Saturday meals. In any event, it is best to plan ample food in caver quantities. For convenience, it may be possible to plan a Saturday dinner and after dinner party in the same location, with one merging into the other. Sometimes it means retiring to a caver’s home or other site for the after dinner party.

## **SUNDAY**

**Trips** - Sightseeing trips, caving trips, shopping tours and museum tours are some of the things the Board and others like to do before leaving. They also help the acquaintance process. Trips scheduled should take into consideration the need for allowing reasonable time for those who must get to the airports. Many will have early or mid-day flights, but some may schedule a later flight. If any trip might require special gear, the requirements should be noted in the advance mailing.

## **COSTS**

The NSS does not budget for travel or accommodations for anyone attending Board meetings. Board members travel to meetings at their own expense and expect to pay for personal expenses such as meals, beverages, rental cars, telephone calls, etc, during the weekend. For this reason, provision of local transportation and overnight hospitality are much appreciated.

An enterprising host group can cover costs for the weekend by careful advance planning, combined with payment of most expenses by those who attend the weekend. Some Internal Organizations prefer to list all the activities of the weekend on the registration form, giving a price for food and beverage for each

activity. Some place a donation cup on the snack tables. In the past, grottos have catered the meals themselves, or have arranged with a local church or other organization to provide meals. If it is decided to cater the meals, a system of tickets or a hand stamp assures that all those attending can contribute to the expenses of the weekend.

To avoid the cost of renting a meeting room, free rooms can sometimes be found, such as at a church social hall, a college or secondary school, or even a business board room. Also, for the informal parties on Friday and Saturday evenings, someone may have a large enough home to accommodate these. It is also possible that a restaurant or hotel in the area will provide space if a dinner is scheduled there. Apartment complexes sometimes have party rooms that a resident can reserve for a nominal or sometimes no charge.

## **PRESENTING A BID FOR BOARD MEETING**

If, after reading all of the above, an Internal Organization decides it would like to host a Board meeting, a written offer is sent to both the Board Arrangements Committee Chairman and the NSS President, preferably six weeks prior to the Board meeting. However, bid materials may be received at any time. When submitting a bid, some grottos have sent copies to all the officers and directors to acquaint them with the proposal.

The offer should:

1. Specify whether the Internal Organization would like to host a spring or fall meeting, or if either would be convenient.
2. Indicate any preferences or limitations regarding dates.
3. Provide a general description of anticipated arrangements (type of meeting room to be provided as well as special events, *i.e.*, grotto anniversary dinner; Halloween party, etc.)
4. Give a name, address, telephone number(s), fax number and e-mail address of the Internal Organization's contact person. Listing an alternate is a good idea.

If a representative from the grotto placing the bid is planning to attend the Board meeting and would like to present the invitation in person, please advise the NSS President and Board Arrangements Committee Chairman.

## **PUBLICITY AND ADVANCE MAILINGS**

Once a bid is accepted by the Board, the Internal Organization begins its advance chores.

1. Complete and finalize the schedule of events for the weekend with times and places (times should be cleared with the NSS President).
2. Prepare a pre-registration form with a deadline for its return. Consider both snail mail and e-mail as well as fax versions.
3. Prepare listings of area lodgings and range of costs.
4. Include a meal reservation form if advance registration is necessary.

5. Identify name, address, telephone number(s), fax number and e-mail of local contact and alternate.
6. Prepare directions and maps showing locations, addresses and phone numbers of Board meeting place, Friday night party/gathering, Saturday night party, nearby motels, eating places, etc.

**IMPORTANT:** Prepare an entry for the NSS News to place in its calendar of events. (They need at least two and a half months lead time.) The notices need not be detailed, but should include location, time, special events, contact person and address, etc., and how to make a reservation.

A list of current officers, directors, recording secretary, and Huntsville office may be developed from the *NSS Member's Manual*. It is advisable to check with the NSS office to be certain any newly elected officers / directors are included. A list of certain selected committee chairman who should receive a direct mailing may be acquired from the Board Arrangements Committee Chairman. The NSS President may also indicate certain individuals be invited. Don't forget to invite the neighboring grottos and other local people whom you feel should be there. Extra copies of the advance mailing should be available at local and nearby grotto meetings for those who might arrive without the information for whatever reason.

## **REGISTRATION FORM**

The registration form should note:

1. The location, and contact information.
2. Ask how many people are coming.
3. Arrival method (car, bus, train, plane) and arrival times.
4. Departure Times (You need to schedule pick ups and drop offs at the terminals).
5. Ask about need for accommodations (You need to plan for beds and floor space).
6. Detail any special costs and indicate who checks are to be made payable to.
7. Anything thing else you need to know to solve logistic problems
8. Develop a confirmation notice to be sent back to the registrant.

The whole process isn't much different than throwing a large party to whom you invite distant relatives. It's just that the cavers are more appreciative.

Above all, have fun doing it.

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*Revised by Mike Hood, December 2003.*