SETTING AN AGENDA

A Guide on BMWED Ritual and Building Impactful Lodge Meetings for BMWED Lodge Officers

TENANCE OF WAY

A Joint Guide by the BMWED Secretary Treasurer's Department and BMWED Education Department



Foreword



Part of the new series of *Guides* for our BMWED Lodge officers, *Setting an Agenda* will give our Lodge Presidents, Vice Presidents, and all our members a task-focused resource they can use to organize effective, impactful, and consistent Lodge meetings.

The content of this *Guide* works alongside its companion, *Running a Lodge Meeting.* While that *Guide* focuses on parliamentary procedure, *Setting an Agenda* gives our Lodge officers a better understanding of BMWED Ritual and how they can use it, along with guidance from their General Chairperson, their members, or National Division, to put together meetings that matter to our members, get work done, and build our union's strength.

Any inquiries regarding the roles and tasks laid out in this *Guide* should be directed to your General Chairperson. Their contact information can be found at https://www.bmwe.org/directory.



BMWED B&B workers working on a through-plate girder bridge, date unknown.

Notes on Revision

Initial Version	January 1, 2024		
January 2, 2024	Various pages. Corrected typographical errors		

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Approved for Unrestricted Release

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Where to Learn More

BMWED Library https://www.bmwe.org/library

Getting Started

This *Guide* does not replace the governing documents which guide our union. While using this *Guide*, understand it supplements our BMWED Bylaws, your System Division's or Federation's bylaws, our IBT Constitution, and our BMWE/IBT Merger Agreement. The intent of this *Guide* is to offer you a useful tool that makes the information in our governing documents more accessible for day-to-day work at the Lodge level.

This *Guide* works with others as a "toolbox" our Lodge officers can use. We learn by doing, and by focusing on tasks, not titles. At the Lodge level, our officers may lend each other a hand or hold more than one job within their Lodge. Whether you are conducting a Lodge election, putting together an educational meeting for your members, or planning an informational picket, your actions matter to your Lodge and to our union as a whole.

Remember! You are not alone in doing union work! Never hesitate to reach out for assistance. We work together, we learn together, we stand together.



As we all learn by doing, it is essential that you take charge of your role and responsibilities. Find ways you can act in line with our overall mission and values. Where you need pointers or to understand our legal obligations, reach out to your elected leaders. As a Lodge officer, it's up to you to **DO** work that makes a positive impact on your Lodge and for your fellow members. It is important to know that your action matters! You are the leading edge of our strength as a union.

Know your agreement. Know our Bylaws and understand what we are here to accomplish together. Then, refer to this *Guide* as you find ways to **ACT** within your Lodge.

BMWED members in Topeka, KS as an informational Picket targeting BNSF Timekeeping, December 2021

Why Agendas Matter

We've all been to meetings where it feels like we wasted our time. Many of our members have to travel long distances to get to their Lodge meeting. The last thing we want our members to take away from a union meeting is that it wasn't worth the trip.

As a Lodge officer and leader in our union, you have the tools to make our union meetings impactful, action-oriented, and meaningful for our members. No matter how skilled any of us are, this is not something we can just improvise at the last minute.

Effective meetings take preparation.

Well prepared Lodge officers will know how to use the limited time in their meeting effectively, ensuring that key items or needs are given the priority they deserve. The best tool for that preparation is a thoughtfully prepared agenda. A written agenda, prepared in line with our Ritual and mindful of the parliamentary procedure used to actually carry it out, will ensure our Lodge officers can get the job done and send their members home feeling engaged, empowered, and stronger for having been a part of their Lodge's action.

Agendas are key to that preparation!

If we don't prepare for our meetings, and expect to "wing it," our members notice. If we end up wasting their time, and our own, we end up weakening our union and hurting our ability to build the power we need to fight and win the battles ahead of us.

This is a critical task within our Local Lodges, one that has effects that ripple throughout our Brotherhood. Where we take charge, set an effective agenda, and get to work together, we build our strength.



Register for Member Access to our BMWED Website!

bmwe.org/account.aspx

- Find information
- Order Material
- Submit Reports
- Review Records

As a Lodge officer, you will do a more effective job, and your job will be easier, if you have all the tools for the work at hand.

While our union has its roots in the 19th century, we work and act in the 21st century! We using online platforms and technology to be more agile and reduce unnecessary costs to our members.



Image capture of https://www.bmwe.org from November 17, 2024

All BMWED members have access to special online tools and resources, if they register. Lodge Presidents, Vice Presidents, and Secretary–Treasurers can also access unique and important tools for reviewing or submitting reports, ordering supplies, notifying their Lodges about meetings, and more.

Creating a Member account at <u>bmwe.org</u> requires a personal e-mail address (**not a railroad-provided account**). You can create a free e-mail address for yourself with Gmail, Yahoo, Outlook (Hotmail) or other services.

BMWED	-IBT #	
Members	Welcome BMWED MEMBER	
Арр	B Change My Password	
Home	🛚 My Membership Info	
Lodges/Members	■ My Contact Info	
Louges/Members	■ My Payment History	
Logout	■ My Lodge Officers	
	■ My System Officers	
	🛛 My Web Messages	

With your Member access account set up, you can access the part of our bmwe.org website shown above.

Here you can review personal information, update your own contact data with our union (your phone number, mailing address, or email) and find information about your own Lodge officers, your System Division or Federation officers, and other information.

Our Lodges should encourage all our members to sign up for this access. It's quick, easy, and helps our members stay informed.

As a Lodge President, VP, or Secretary-Treasurer, more tools are available to you by clicking the Lodges/Members link in the left-hand column.



Tools available to our Lodge officers on bmwe.org!

Form Downloads

Member Search

Lodge Officers

Order Labels/Cards

Order Supplies

Picket Locations

Print Labels/Cards

Quicken

Submit Election Results

🛚 Training

Find ways to order Meeting Cards or Print Labels/Cards at your own printer!

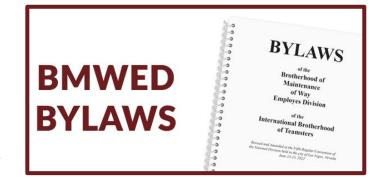
You can find or verify contact information for your Members in Member Search.

Find additional Training resources on OLMS reports, officer manuals, and more.

Other tools available here are covered in separate *Guides*. To learn more about using Quicken for Lodge finances, updating Lodge Picket locations, submitting election results, or other tasks you can perform from this site, refer to the appropriate *Guide*!

For additional guidance on using these tools, look for an Ed. Dept. training event!

While online tools will help you perform your work, it's important to remember that they do not replace our governing documents. You should always have these accessible for your Lodge's business!



For conducting any Lodge business, you should always have access to:

- Our BMWED Bylaws
- Our BMWED Ritual
- Your System Division or Federation Bylaws
- Your Lodge's Rules
- Your Lodge's Meeting Minutes
- Your Lodge's Committee Reports
- Financial Records and Reports
- Bank Statements

You may also want to refer to:

- Functions and Structure of the BMWED
- BMWED Lodge Elections Guide
- BMWED Secretary-Treasurer Instructional Video Collection
- BMWED Ritual and Parliamentary Motions Guide
- BMWE/IBT Merger Agreement
- IBT Constitution
- BMWED ACTS! Guide
- Robert's Rules of Order

Find these at bmwe.org/library!

So, What's My Job Here?

Article XVIII of our BMWED Bylaws establishes how our Local Lodges are governed. As a BMWED Local Lodge officer, you should take time to read and understand the provisions within our Bylaws and in Article XVIII.

The Lodge *President* is the responsible officer for many of the tasks laid out in this *Guide*. A full description of the President's responsibilities is provided in Article XVIII of our Bylaws. These responsibilities include:

- **Preside at all Lodge meetings**. The President builds the meeting agenda, maintains order, and ensures Lodge business is conducted effectively.
- **Decide all questions of order.** When there are concerns about how to do something, the President makes the call. This can be appealed to the Lodge as a whole.
- **Oversees Lodge officers.** Each of your Lodge officers has an important contribution to make during your meeting. It's your President's job to ensure they are prepared to do their part and make your meetings more effective and meaningful for your members!
- Enforce our Bylaws, the IBT Constitution, and the BMWE/IBT Merger Agreement. The Lodge meeting is an official union function, and the Lodge President ensures all members follow our union's laws.



BMWED Lodge 1108 Meeting, Alliance, Nebraska, November 2017

The President may be supported by the *Past President* for matters pertaining to our BMWED Ritual, traditions, or initiating new members.. The *Vice President* should also be ready to fill in whenever the President is unavailable or cannot perform their duties, so it's important that your Lodge's Vice President is up to speed on all your Lodge's business and procedures!

Who Else Can Help?

Your **BMWED Secretary-Treasurer's Department** has subject matter experts that can help you understand the legal and administrative work you need to get done at the Local Lodge level. When building an agenda, it's important to know what work needs to be accomplished and what must take priority. They can also help you navigate special work like Lodge elections, properly filing reports, or other follow-up work from your meeting.

Your *System Division or Federation* and your *General Chairperson* are vital resources in helping you learn your role as a Lodge officer and to help you get an idea of the work that you need to include in your Lodge's agenda! Special authorizations, reports, news updates, and more can come from reaching out to your General Chairperson.

Within our National Division, our *Departments* are great resources for more information or calls to action you can bring to your members! Whether it's informing our members on *Legislative* issues and building up our *DRIVE* fund, gathering information for a *Safety Department* project, reviewing the latest *Arbitration* cases and awards, or building solidarity with our *Organizing Department*, reaching out to National Division will give you a lot of great topics to include in your Lodge's meeting agenda!

The **BMWED Education Department** works with all parts of our union to build tools we can use to sharpen our skills and teach one another. *Guides* like this one, online or in-person training, or specialized tools are all available by reaching out to your Education Department.

- **Bank Accounts**
- Lodge Election Reports
- Permitted versus non-permitted uses of Lodge funds.
- Status Updates
- Campaigns,
 Actions, or Sys/Fed business
- Leadership
 Expectations
- DRIVE
- Organizing campaigns
- Major news items
- Special projects
- Safety Department information gathering
- Training Tools and Support

Doesn't our BMWED Ritual Cover This?

RITUAL

of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes Division

of the International Brotherhood Of Teamsters



Our **BMWED Ritual** is an important tool to help our Lodge President in their work, to offer a "golden thread" of tradition and meaning that ties us to our past, and to add decorum to the work we do.

Our Ritual also offers a great framework to build your meeting, giving your officers guidance on what items to include, what order to proceed through business, and what ceremonies may be included within a meeting.

However, think of our Ritual like ties and ballast. We won't have a working railroad track without the rails! Ritual sets a foundation for your Lodge meeting, but it's your ability to set an effective and meaningful agenda that will make your meeting worthwhile to your members, to you, and to our union as a whole!

Our Ritual, and the use of effective parliamentary procedure using Robert's Rules of Order, are covered in another *Guide.*

Ritual and parliamentary procedure can tell us "how" to run a meeting, but not "what" we actually do within our meetings that serve our members or our mission.

The bottom line is NO! Your Lodge's agenda is still up to you, your fellow officers, and your members.

It's not "the" meeting. It's YOUR meeting!



BMWED members in St. Louis, MO at a BNSF mobile production gang (RP06) startup in 2018.

Union meetings should never be "check the box" events! If you are meeting just for the sake of holding a meeting, you aren't doing any good for your members, yourself, or our union!

Every Lodge has issues it can address locally, matters it can report on from its System Division, Federation, or National Division, issues it can develop and raise to their General Chairperson, or events it can plan for. Many of these will depend on the goals you and your members set for yourselves, or those campaigns and projects our larger union conducts for all of us.

Understanding these issues, as well as our core mission and values, will help you take ownership of your meeting, understand the "why" behind it, and make it worth your time!

Remember! When in doubt, our union exists to ACT on behalf of our members. Your meeting can help set the stage for a successful action, follow up on action already being taken, or keep members informed about actions that affect them across our union and our country.

You won't get a script from anyone on how to fill up your meeting agenda. This *Guide* will offer tools to help you do that for yourself and take ownership of the most effective way to get our members engaged in our union—**your Lodge meeting!**

The "Pre-Meeting"

Your Lodge officers should come to your meeting prepared to report on their work, educate your members, or respond to important news or concerns.

While some of our members may enjoy improv comedy on their own time, seeing our leaders "wing it" through important union business can cause members to feel like their time is being wasted at their union meeting!

When your officers come with a game plan, prepared to talk about what's been happening and what's coming up in a way where you can all reinforce one another, it adds value to your meetings, makes them more effective, and sets a tone that your Lodge means business!

One of the best ways to set this standard is to have a "pre meeting" with your Lodge officers a week or so prior to your full Lodge meeting. This doesn't have to be a formal event. It can be a discussion over a couple beers, a quick huddle over lunch, or however it works for you to have a solid conversation with your Lodge officers. In the "pre meeting," you should cover:

- What latest events need to be discussed in your meeting.
- Any major developments on local claims, grievances, or work-related issues.
- Any news on bargaining, System Division or Federation events, National Division events, or other unions.
- Any rumors, bad information, or hearsay you need to address in your meeting to chase out gossip with good facts.
- Reminders on information officers should include in their reports to the Lodge at your upcoming meeting.
- Other informal discussion to get your officers on the same page, able to work toward the same goal.

Meeting beforehand can identify any hot items to prepare before your meeting and help you "fill in" the agenda you're building!

The "Pre-Meeting"

Pre-Meetings	Pre-Meetings
ARE	AREN'T
 An optional tool to	 A place you can
help you and your	approve Lodge
Lodge officers	spending,
prepare.	reimbursements, or
 Useful to help you	any other business
prepare notes or	that needs a vote
items you will bring	from the Lodge.
 to your meeting. A simple, informal gathering with your fellow Lodge 	 A mandatory event with specific rules or forms to complete.
 leaders. A way to identify	 A place to gossip. An effective
issues or problems	gathering for large
you can address in	groups.
 your Agenda. Used effectively by leaders in our 	 A substitute for your regular or special Lodge
union and other organizations.	meeting.

It may be helpful to keep your own informal notes or use a "worksheet" to track projects, ideas, or issues you want to include in your Agenda. There is no defined form or method for this, but you can see an example on the next page.

Remember! The idea is to have an informal way you can work with your fellow officers to put together a working gameplan.

Example Pre-Meeting Worksheet

Upcoming Meeting Date: 02-22-24 Upcoming Meeting Location: SHENANIGANS RESTAURANT

"No Later Than" date to send Meeting Cards: <u>02-01-24!</u>

USPS First Class Mail delivery is 1-5 days, so expect to mail out cards 16-20 days ahead of time!

News from System Division/Federation:

General Chairman asked for renewal of strike

authorizations.

Tent. Agmt. reached on 4-10s for HQ gangs. Vote to go out by end of Feb.

Fed. will hold a 2-day training this May for Local Chairmen. Details will be out first week March.

Local Issues:

Retirement party for Zeke? He's done March 15th.

Roadmaster Hogg has quít. New Roadmaster will meet with Local Chairman and Vice March 4th.

Fencing contractor seen around territory. Need more info. from members!

Upcoming Events:

Federation Local Chairman training in May Lodge picnic approved for June. Need to put together planning committee.

Section 6 notices out in November!

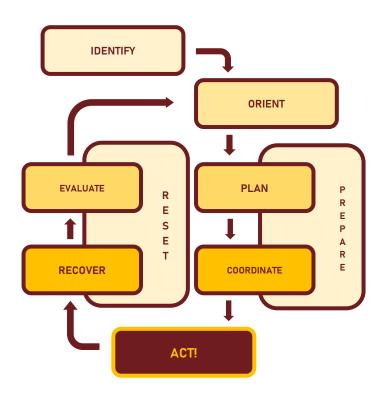
Follow-Up Items:

Re-approve "flower fund" for memorials at meeting. Re-approve meeting budget for refreshments.

Officer Reports (S/T always reports!):

Local Chairman has info. on RailPros claims. Legislative Rep. has a report for a national paid sick leave bill.

Setting Agendas and the BMWED Action Model



While it may seem routine, your Lodge meetings are one form of action with our union, and you can use many of the same tools for setting up effective union meetings as you would for any rally, picket, or event you want to take on!

In setting an agenda, you offer space and time to consider issues that identify potential work and orient your members to it. Within your agenda, build space to make plans, assign roles, coordinate work, review progress, and reset your Lodge for future campaigns!

Check out our BMWED ACTS! Guide to learn more!



PLAN YOUR ACTION AND THE TASKS NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN!



COORDINATE THE WORK ON THOSE TASKS WITH YOUR TEAM TO GET READY FOR YOUR ACTION!

Setting Agendas and our Ritual's Order of Business

The **Order of Business** in our **BMWED Ritual** offers you "handrails" to use in thinking through what topics or work you need to cover as you build your agenda.

Your Lodge may not have new members to introduce or initiate, new officers to install, or new committees to appoint in each and every meeting. Your Local Chairman may have a report from the Grievance Committee for each meeting, so where would that go? Knowing (from your pre-meeting) that you have something to discuss, you can see how it fits into an overall Order of Business that flows logically, maintains decorum, and keeps us consistent across our union.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Introduction of visiting members.

- Roll Call of officers.
- Reading minutes of previous meeting.
- Introduction of new members.
- Initiation of new members.
- Secretary-Treasurer's Report:
 - (a) Report of suspended or expelled members
 - (b) Communication, bills and notices
 - (c) Receipts and Disbursements since the last meeting
 - (d) Financial Report of Lodge since last meeting
 - (e) Application for Transfer or Withdrawal Cards
- Report of Committees.
- Unfinished business.
- New business.
- Health, welfare and sickness benefits.
- 10. Is any Brother/Sister deceased, sick or otherwise distressed?
- Political discussion.
- Safety discussion.
- Debate good and welfare of the Brotherhood.
- Appointment of Committees.
- 15. Election of officers, delegates, Board members, etc.
- Installation of officers.

Use all your tools to take the guesswork out of your work!

Remember, these are **"how"** and **"when."** Your own notes and prep. work will tell you the **"what"** for each of these items, and whether they can or should be left out in your upcoming meeting.

Knowing what you have to discuss or do helps you know how to manage your time during your meeting!

Setting Agendas and Parliamentary Procedure



We use *Robert's Rules of Order* to conduct meetings and ensure necessary business receives the appropriate care and consideration, that all your members at the meeting can participate in debate and voting, and that disputes are resolved swiftly and fairly.

Parliamentary procedure can be an involved process and the way we use it in Lodge meetings is covered under another *Guide*. However, knowing your Lodge's agenda, what business you must conduct, can help you identify where you will have a lot of debate and, possibly, where routine business items can be moved through swiftly.

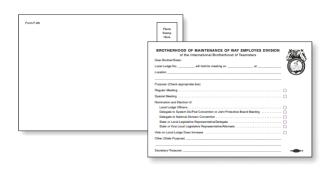
Since effective meetings don't waste time, using your agenda as a roadmap lets you know where parliamentary procedure can push down the gas pedal, or hit the brakes!

For example, when setting your meeting's agenda, you will know what reports to expect at your meeting (apart from the Secretary-Treasurer's Report required for every meeting). If you have several reports on your agenda, you can advise your officers to keep them short and to the point.

Understanding parliamentary procedure, you also know you DON'T need to open debate or make a motion to accept each report, simply note for the record they are received. This saves time in your meeting for other issues which D0 require a motion or debate.

Your agenda works to inform your procedural work and manage your time!

Setting Agendas and Informing Your Members



Our Bylaws require written notification for regular or special meetings. This written notification is to be provided by using Lodge Meeting Cards (Form F-86). These are postcards, so there isn't a lot of room to inform your members about the full agenda for your meeting.

However, you can still highlight key agenda items on your Meeting Card (Elections, Dues Adjustments, or other reasons). Adding this information to your Meeting Card will help emphasize its importance to your members.



Many of our Lodges supplement (not replace) their Meeting Cards with posts to a Lodge social media page, Facebook Group, Discord, or other accessible place. Some Lodges also send out emails for upcoming meetings to an internal distribution list, or use the BMWED Membership Services **System Messenger** to generate emails or text alerts to your members regarding the upcoming meeting!

Once you have an agenda built, use whatever methods you have to share your agenda with your members! Highlight important business items to encourage members to take part. If they aren't at the meeting, they can't vote on the issue!

Using Your Agenda

Plan your work, then work your plan. It's as simple as that.

A thoughtful agenda will help you keep your members focused on business you need to do. Having something written down you can all refer to will give you a tool to get back in gear if a conversation during the meeting gets you all bogged down.

An agenda is **NOT** a script, so you may need to adjust here and there, but it will make what you do more consistent, more meaningful, and give more structure to meetings. That will all help your members feel their time is being well spent in attending. Getting a "preview" of business items will also give them an idea of what they can look forward to accomplishing, which can also help build up your quorum!



BMWED members at the Burlington System Division Training Seminar, March 2022.

Remember, it's **YOUR** meeting. It's up to you to create something that works for your members, gets business done, and strengthens our union!

Sample Agenda #1

Lodge 9999 Meeting Shenanigans Restaurant 3003 South Lamar Blvd. Austin, TX February 22, 2024 7:00 PM

This option shows what you can send your members as a reminder or preview. It highlights major topics.

See BMWED Ritual Order of Business for routine agenda items.

No new members to introduce.

Reports

Report from the Local Chairman on RailPros Contracting issues and claims. Report from our Lodge Leg. Rep. on national paid sick leave bill.

Unfinished Business

Planning for upcoming family picnic approved last meeting.

Topics for potential votes

Renew Strike Authorizations for Federation. Renew our Lodge's flower fund authorization for memorial services. Renew our Lodge's refreshment fund authorization for 2024 meetings.

Upcoming Issues or Events for Discussion

Tentative Agreement reached on 4-10s Upcoming Federation Training for Local Chairmen New roadmaster on territory Zeke's retirement Fencing contractor issues around territory Section 6 goes out in November. What are our top bargaining issues?

Open Discussion (Political, Safety, Health & Welfare, Good of Brotherhood)

Anyone interested in putting together the Lodge family picnic should attend this meeting to become part of the planning committee.

Call Walter Sobchak, Lodge President, if you have any questions about the upcoming meeting.

Keep an eye out for the Lodge Meeting Cards in your mailbox! If you don't receive one, call Lodge Secretary Carl Hungus!

Sample Agenda #2

Lodge 9999 Meeting Shenanigans Restaurant 3003 South Lamar Blvd. Austin, TX February 22, 2024 7:00 PM

Order of Business (from BMWED Ritual)

- 1. Roll Call
- 2. Reading Minutes from previous meeting
- 3. NO NEW MEMBERS TO INTRODUCE
- 4. NO NEW MEMBERS TO INITIATE
- 5. S-Ts Report
- 6. Other Reports
 - 1. Local Chairman on RailPros claims
 - 2. Leg. Rep. on Paid Sick Leave bill)
- 7. Unfinished Business
 - 1. Family Picnic (approved last meeting)
- 8. New Business
 - 1. Strike Authorizations for Federation
 - 2. Yearly authorizations for meeting refreshments and flower fund
 - 3. Discussion on TA reached
 - 4. Gather information for GC regarding bargaining (Section 6 in November)
- 9. Health & Welfare discussion
- 10.Discussion for Members who are in need.
- 11. Political Discussion
- 12.Safety Discussion
- 13.Good and Welfare of the Brotherhood
 - 1. Zeke's Retirement
 - 2. New roadmaster replacing roadmaster Hogg
 - 3. Training for Local Chairman (Federation training in May)
- 14. Appointing Family Picnic Committee

15.NO OFFICER ELECTIONS THIS MEETING. 16.NO OFFICERS INSTALLATIONS THIS MEETING.

This option "fills in" items as they are listed in our Ritual's Order of Business. Plug in your topics where they fit. You can refer to this during your meeting as a checklist or share it with *your members* (or both!). Where would quest speakers go?

Sample Agenda #3

Lodge 9999 Meeting February 22, 2024 @ 7PM Shenanigans Restaurant, 3003 South Lamar Blvd., Austin, TX

URGENT ITEMS Strike Authorizations Flower Fund Refreshment Fund Gen. Chairman wants info on contract priorities This is a bare bones option that may fit a more informal style, depending on your Lodge's rules or usual method of doing business.

What works for you and works for your members?

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

New Roadmaster Fencing Contractor

Local Chairman has report on RailPros claims

Leg. Rep. has report on Paid Sick Leave bill

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tentative Agreement ballots out by end of the month Zeke is retiring next month Federation hosting Local Chairman Training in May Lodge Picnic in June Section 6 Notices out in November

NOTES

COMMITTEES Lodge Picnic _

VOTES	TO-DO
Strike Auth	
Flower Fund	
Refreshment Fund	