

# Florida Council of Chapters



# Convention Manual

# CONVENTION MANUAL

## A. PREFACE

The Florida Council of Chapters' annual convention is one of the most important activities of the council. It is the event in which the largest number of members participate and it is where the individual chapters and clubs of the council come together as one organization. Because the council is a dynamic organization so should this convention manual be reviewed continually so that it can help the council to conduct the type of convention that the members want and will attend. This book presents specific and general requirements for the convention as well as guidance to assist chapters/clubs. It represents the learning curve of over 30 conventions and the suggestions and views of the various convention chairpersons.

In using this manual the convention chairperson should keep in mind that one of its design features is to insure that there will be no confusion between what is a requirement and what is a piece of guidance. Chairpersons are encouraged to use their imaginations and to be innovative. Many of the Florida Council convention traditions were new ideas just a few years ago. On the other hand, requirements must be met in order to accomplish important tasks, such as accountability and council president/board of directors approval.

Following the actual management of the convention the next most important task of the convention chairperson is to prepare an after-action report that will help future convention host chapters. The host chapters should use the after action reports as well as this book to plan and manage conventions.

In 2006 because attendance at the annual conventions had been decreasing the council president convened a meeting of past council presidents to recommend changes to reverse this trend. The presidents felt that there were two problems: chapter members who were still working full time didn't want to take off from work for so many days and many members felt that the conventions had become too expensive. In order to increase the attendance the presidents recommended a shorter schedule that the Board of Directors approved at its fall 2006 meeting. The 2006 host chapter was the first to use the new plan and while it is too soon to determine its success it was felt by the council leadership that the convention manual should be revised at this time in order to assist possible future host chapters.

(In order to be gender neutral the term "chairperson" has been used throughout this book to refer to the individual who is in charge of the convention. The person who chairs a particular convention may, of course, use whatever term is desired. e.g. chairman, chair, chairperson)

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**FLORIDA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS, MOAA**  
**CONVENTION MANUAL**

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## **B. PURPOSES OF THE CONVENTION**

The major purpose of the convention is to conduct the annual meeting at which the delegates elect officers, consider bylaws changes and resolutions, approve the operating budget and annual dues, and conduct other council business that require members' approval. But the convention is much more than this. The annual Florida Council of Chapters Convention is the time when the council gets together, reviews its accomplishments and its objectives, decides its future leadership, strengthens its commitment to the goals of MOAA, and plans for its future activities. It also presents an opportunity to provide important information and assistance to chapters.

## **C. POLICY**

The Council Board of Directors has the overall responsibility for the annual convention, however, the council president will assign the actual tasks required to conduct the convention (contracting, planning, managing, etc.) to a host chapter/club. As part of the site selection process the host chapter will submit the name of a proposed convention chairperson to the Board. This individual then becomes the convention executive agent for the Board. The council president will provide his/her guidance concerning the convention to the chairperson who will use this information and the Convention Manual to assist in accomplishing these tasks. The convention chairperson will maintain a close liaison with the council president. For all matters requiring a decision or interpretation the council president is the final authority, unless over-ridden by the Board of Directors.

The Council Convention Coordinator position was established to assist the host chapter and to advise the Council President. He/she must be an experienced convention Florida Council chairperson and should be consulted before a chapter submits a proposal. As part of the Board approval process the coordinator should give a verbal opinion when the submission is considered.

## **D. HOST SITE SELECTION REQUIREMENTS**

Most conventions will be held at a hotel or resort but Florida Council has also held successful conventions aboard cruise ships. This type of convention presents a completely different plan because the ship's activities and the configuration of the ship itself must be considered above everything else. (The various planning factors, considerations, and management required for a cruise convention are discussed in detail in Section I.) The annual MOAA Council Presidents meeting/Storming the Hill that occurs for a week usually in March or April is one of MOAA's most important activities so careful coordination must take place so as not to interfere with this activity.---

The locations for the conventions should be throughout Florida for variety and so as not to cause an undue travel burden on attendees. Any chapter or club that desires to host a convention is encouraged to review the requirements and consider submitting an application to the council president. Selection of the host chapter/club and the location of the convention will be made by the Board of Directors, normally at a scheduled meeting of the board. In order to permit sufficient time for planning and publicity the selection should be made 18-24 months prior to the convention.

**APPLICATION PROCEDURES:** The president of a chapter that wants to host a convention should discuss this with the convention coordinator and then submit its proposal to the council president at least 30 days before the board meeting that will consider the request. The proposing chapter should also provide 15 copies (one for each anticipated attendee at the Board meeting). (The printing cost of the proposal is a normal convention expense.)

The proposal MUST include the following information:

1. Request to host the convention.
2. Proposed dates.
3. Proposed chairperson's name.
4. Statement that convention hotel/convention center/similar facility meets the following requirements:
  - (a) Minimum of 125 guest rooms
  - (b) Ballroom that can accommodate 250 people seated at round tables, a banquet head table, a dance band, and dance floor
  - (c) Meeting rooms for 100 (seminars and business meeting) and 250 attendees (memorial service).
  - (d) Space for convention registration, vendor tables, and hospitality room.
  - (e) Adequate on-site or provided-parking for anticipated number of convention attendees. (Anticipated number will be determined by consultation between the convention chairperson and council president.) State whether this is an extra charge and if so mention the charge.
5. Description of proposed hotel/resort/other facility, including parking, meeting spaces, restaurants, pool, other facilities, etc.
6. Copy of proposed hotel/resort/other facility contract or copy of actual hotel/resort/other proposal. .
7. Room rates\_(including taxes, extra charges, etc. offered by hotel/resort/other facility being considered.
8. Description of attractions and facilities in area and availability of golf course and tennis courts.
9. Statement on hotel/resort convention room-gratuity policy based upon registration
10. Statement that the chapter/club has a current State of Florida Sales Tax Exemption Certificate. If this has been applied for but not yet received the date of application must be included. It is essential that the host chapter has this certificate in order to avoid paying sales tax.
11. Other information that the chapter/club president thinks is appropriate to include.

**CONVENTION FACILITY:** The normal facility will be a hotel or a resort but if the area does not have a hotel or resort that is adequate for all of the activities then a convention center may substitute.

1. The facility (hotel/resort or hotel/resort and convention center) must meet the requirements set forth in "APPLICATION PROCEDURES, Item 4," above.

2. For all meals with planned programs there must be enough servers so as to be able to serve all attendees within 15 minutes of when the head table is served.

3. All rooms used for meals with speakers and rooms used for meetings and seminars must have adequate sound systems. The chairperson shouldn't be concerned that the facility will charge what may seem to be exorbitant fees for sound systems. This is normal and probably unavoidable. You should require that someone be immediately available to insure that the equipment always functions properly. (This guarantee is normally provided and is worth the cost.)

4. The hotel/resort must have an acceptable room-complimentary (comp.) policy based upon convention attendees' registrations. A policy common to most convention hotels/resorts is for the hotel/resort to provide one free (comp.) room-night for each 50 paid room-nights (accumulated during entire convention) and at least one comp. suite regardless of the number of registrations. (The comp. suite is normally provided as an incentive for contracting with the hotel/resort.) e.g. If 20 rooms are paid on Thursday, 125 on Friday, and 125 on Saturday for a total of 270 room-nights and the policy is 1 comp. room-night for each 50 paid room-nights there would be 5 comp. room-nights. These gratuity rooms usually may be used to pay for suites also. e.g. two gratuity room nights might be equivalent to one gratuity-room suite.

The established Florida Council priority for use of the comp suites and rooms is as follows: 1) Council president, 2) Convention Chairperson, 3) Military Ball speaker NOTE: In accordance with MOAA National policy if the speaker is a MOAA staff member (including the president, Chairman or member of the Board of Directors)he/she will pay his/her expenses, 4) As desired by Host Chapter/Club (e.g. the Council Vice President, the host chapter/club president. The convention chairperson will provide a list of his/her recommendations to the council president for approval.

5. The convention hotel must agree to do the following: 1) handle all room/suite reservations directly

between the facility and the individuals 2) provide instructions for registering by toll-free telephone and web site. 3) send postal mail or electronic confirmations to registrants, and 4) provide periodic reservation information to the convention chairperson.

The hotel/resort contract should include an option for convention attendees to arrive at least 2 days before and remain at least 2 days beyond the convention and receive the convention room-rate.

6. The hotel/resort contract must not include a cost-of-goods escalation clause for the agreed-upon room rate or any other agreed-upon costs. However, it is to be expected that the convention chairperson will not be able to establish food charges until approximately 9-12 months prior to the convention dates.

7. All agreements for special services, arrangements, audio-visual equipment, room-set-ups, etc. to be provided by the convention facility or its agents/vendors must be on the hotel/resort list of service charges, written into the convention contract, or in memorandums-of-agreement signed by an authorized employee of the facility and the convention chairperson.

The reason for this requirement is that the initial relationship with the convention facility will probably be with the sales staff but as the date for the convention approaches the liaison usually becomes the catering or program representative, who may be unaware of an unwritten agreement. Experience has shown that verbal agreements have not always been honored and sometimes this point was not realized until the final convention statement was received from the convention facility. The necessity for this requirement is emphasized by the possibility of the convention facility changing ownership during the time period between contract-signing and the convention.

## E. OPERATIONS

**CONVENTION PLANNING:** The council president accompanied by the vice president and convention coordinator, should meet with the convention chairperson and the convention executive committee (if desired), approximately 15-18 months prior to the convention. This meeting should include specific as well as general guidance from the president, a review of the Convention Manual, a funding discussion, an outline of the proposed convention agenda, a tour of the convention hotel (if not conducted earlier), and other comments desired by the attendees. Throughout the convention's planning and preparation the president, convention coordinator, and chairperson should maintain a close working relationship in order that the council can assist in resolving problems and help to insure that the best possible convention is held.

**GENERAL PLAN:** . The length of the official convention will be two nights and one day, preferably on a weekend. There will be a Council Board meeting on the afternoon of Day 1 (Friday). The convention itself will begin with an evening Council President's Reception on Day 1 (Friday) and end on Day 2 (Saturday) with the Military Ball. Optional activities such as tours, boat rides, trips, golf tournaments, etc. as desired by the host chapter may be scheduled for the morning and afternoon of Day 1. An optional breakfast may be held on Day 3 (e.g. Sunday). The second Board meeting will also be held on the morning of Day 3 (e.g. Sunday). NOTE: The ship's sailing dates and schedule will determine the plan for a cruise convention.

### **PROGRAMS:**

The following activities are considered to be normal parts of the convention: Annual Business Meeting, Council President's Reception, All Hands (opening) Breakfast, Memorial Service, Military Ball, Day 2 day time social activity (e.g. women's luncheon, luncheon for women and men, entertainment, sight seeing tour, boat ride), and Seminars/information/professional meetings (as desired by host chapter). A Chapter Presidents' Meeting may be held if desired but isn't mandatory if a chapter presidents' meeting has been held recently (e.g. within the past three months). Having speakers at both the All Hands Breakfast and the Military Ball is not required; one speaker at either affair is satisfactory.

(1) Council President's Reception: This is held on Day 1 as the first core-activity. Its purposes are to welcome attendees and provide an opportunity for attendees to renew friendships and make new ones. Normal dress is "Florida-casual" (open-collared shirt or blouse with slacks/skirt, casual dress--as appropriate). NOTE: Most host convention chapters have sold unique convention shirts but many chapters also have their own chapter shirts and naturally want to wear them at the convention. In order to satisfy everyone and still sell convention shirts it is recommended that the convention chairperson designate in the registration package when to wear which shirt. e.g. chapter shirts at the Council Presidents Reception; convention shirts at the All Hands Breakfast. The affair should include bars and light snacks. Some small tables are necessary for attendees that have difficulty standing for extended periods of time but this number should be as few as possible and definitely not enough for everyone. The purpose of the affair is to mix and this won't occur if people are sitting down! It is recommended that this reception be started before the normal meal-time (e.g. 5:00 or 5:30 PM) and that the cost be minimal so that attendees do not expect a mini-meal.

(2) Opening (All Hands) Breakfast: The first activity of Day 2 is a sit-down meal with a welcome program, the purpose of which is to provide a formal beginning to the convention and set an upbeat tone for the entire affair. Dress is Florida-casual. (open collared shirt/blouse slacks). The convention chairperson will welcome the attendees and then introduce the council president who will conduct the program. In addition to the chairperson and the president the head table should include the council vice president, the host-chapter president, a chaplain (if space permits), the local mayor and/or the chairperson of the local county commission, the MOAA president and/or Chairman of the Board of MOAA (if attending), officials, and the local military installation commander (if a military installation is in the area). Because of space spouses of these individuals should not be seated at the head table, but rather at a special table near the head table. Council past presidents, MOAA National Board members, and MOAA staff personnel attending the convention and their spouses should also be seated near the head table for all convention meals. Speeches/comments should be short and a long program is not appropriate. A convention key note speaker is optional.

(3) Memorial Service: The service should be planned for Day 2, the first activity following the Opening Breakfast. The purpose of the service is to honor the memory of the members, auxiliary members, honorary members, special members, and spouses of members, who died during the previous calendar year (e.g. At the 2008 convention service the deceased from 1 January-31 December 2007). A printed program that lists the names of the deceased is to be prepared and extra copies made available to give to widows and widowers of the honorees. Although the names of the deceased are due to the council secretary by the February 1 before the convention experience has shown that very few chapter lists arrive by that suspense and in fact most chapters will require many calls to get this important information.

The service will be conducted normally by the council chaplain and the host chapter chaplain and should be planned for approximately 45 minutes. The names of the deceased should not be read because of the time required. (e.g. the time required to read the names of 300 members/spouses--a normal number of council deaths each year--is approximately 75 minutes.) The dress will be the attire worn at the All Hands Breakfast in order to avoid excessive dress changes throughout the day..

(4) Seminars: The convention usually includes two seminars, depending upon time available, the purpose of which is to present information of interest to individuals and assistance with chapter/club operations and activities. Convention chairpersons should vary the subject matter from one convention to the next in order to hold the attention of the attendees. The MOAA staff and members of Florida council who are MOAA Board of Directors are sources available to make presentations on chapter affairs, legislative issues, personal affairs, etc. The seminars are usually held on Day 2.

The convention chairperson may want to consider a commercial presentation (such as an investor/travel/cruise seminar) and charge a fee to the presenter. One convention chairperson provided scheduled time for a 1 hour presentation, space for a display, and a full page ad in the souvenir booklet in return for the presenter paying the printing costs for the souvenir booklet (approximately \$2200).

(5) **Military Ball:** The ball, held on Day 2, is the highlight of the convention. Mess dress and other dress uniforms are encouraged but dinner jackets and dark suits are acceptable. Non-military ladies wear cocktail attire. The program includes installation of council officers, awards (but see "Awards," this section), dancing, and a speech by a prominent individual (e.g. senior military officer, Congressman, President or Chairman of the Board of MOAA).

(6) **Chapter Presidents Meeting (if scheduled):** This meeting should be held sometime before the business meeting. It is to be attended by the chapter/club presidents, the council vice president, and council board members. MOAA National staff members and other visitors attending should be invited. Other chapter members may attend if desired. It is a shortened version (45-60 minutes) of the annual presidents meeting. This meeting is an opportunity to address subjects of mutual interest. Although there is to be an agenda and the meeting will be conducted by the council president it is not an official meeting in that any motion passed by the assembly is not binding but rather will be forwarded to the Council Board for consideration.

(7) **Business Meeting:** As required by the bylaws the responsibility for conducting the business meeting rests with the council president, assisted by the council board. The convention chairperson will assist with the preparations for the meeting also.

The council president will provide an agenda for the business meeting, a list of the parliamentary rules that will apply to the meeting, and the name of the meeting parliamentarian to the convention chairman. The chairman will publish this information in the convention souvenir booklet. The meeting will be conducted in accordance with the council bylaws and as decided by the president.

The chairperson will arrange the meeting room as directed by the president. The normal arrangements include the following:

- 1) A rectangular table in the front of the room with a rostrum, microphone, and chairs for the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and parliamentarian.
- 2) Chairs arranged in rows for 150 attendees.
- 3) Six signs placed throughout the room to indicate the seating for each council area.
- 4) A microphone on a stand in the aisle that divides the room.
- 5) Sound system to support items 1 and 4, above.
- 6) Placement of the flags of the United States, MOAA, and the seven uniformed services that are represented in MOAA.

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES:** These may include a golf and tennis outings (both held on Day 1), special women's activities (held on Day 2), trips and tours (held on Day 1 and 2), and a luncheon in conjunction with the planned seminars (held on Day 2)

**FLAGS:** The flags listed below are to be displayed at the All Hands Breakfast, the Memorial Service (if space permits), the Business Meeting, and the Military Ball. The order of precedence for the flags as directed by DoD protocol (starting at the audience's left): (1) American, (2) U.S. Army, (3) U.S. Marine Corps, (4) U.S. Navy, (5) U.S. Air Force, (6) U.S. Coast Guard, (7) U.S. Public Health Service, and (8) National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Other flags that may be displayed, in the order of precedence following the NOAA flag, are the flag of the state where the convention is being held, the governor's flag for that state, the MOAA national flag, and the MOAA chapter/club flag of the host chapter or club.

**REGISTRATION PACKETS:** The host chapter will prepare the registration packets which should include the convention registration form, the convention schedule, information on activities and the local area, and dress requirements, (Past convention chairpersons have said that the two questions asked most before the convention concern the schedule and what to wear.) Registration packets should be sent by postal or electronic mail to all potential attendees. The normal list of people include council board members, council past presidents, chapter/club presidents (ten packets to each), attendees at the past two or three council conventions, and presidents of Georgia, Alabama, and North Carolina councils of chapters (ten packets to each). Duplicate mailings to chapter presidents may be required following the

December-January installation period. NOTE: In order to avoid confusion a statement such as this should be placed on the registration form: "Unless noted otherwise all convention activities are open to spouses of MOAA members."

**REGISTRATION FEES:** These fees provide funds that are needed to conduct the convention and that can't be realized by charging for any specific event or activity. They include costs for printing, mailing, registration, name tags, administration, meals for guests and color bearers, the memorial service, the business meeting, and other miscellaneous items. The convention chairperson will determine the amount of the registration fee and all attendees will pay the same amount regardless of the number of activities attended. (This policy change is effective with the 2011 convention.)

**NAME TAGS:** Name tags are necessary to help attendees communicate and socialize. A lavalier-style tag is popular because it doesn't make holes in clothes, can be worn with all types of clothing and materials, and is accepted by both men and women. Recent conventions have used a small plastic envelope to hold a card with the desired information in front and a small schedule in the back. The tag should include a person's name, military rank and service, chapter/club, and chapter or council position, and MOAA Board of Director (as appropriate). The names on the tags should be large enough to be read easily. Indicating on the name tag who is a delegate is discouraged because it serves no purpose and detracts from being able to see a person's name readily.

**SOUVENIR BOOKLET:** This booklet is a convention keepsake and a convention information provider. It should include convention information, a convention agenda, mini-biographies of speakers, information about the host chapter/club and local area, the business meeting agenda, and advertisements from chapters/clubs, merchants, and organizations. The sale of advertisements in the booklet is a necessary and important part of the convention because the revenue from these ads is used to publish the booklet, defray convention expenses, and to provide the primary source of funds for council operations and projects.

The host chapter should have two advertising rates: one for commercial firms (e.g. banks, insurance companies) and a lower rate for MOAA organizations (MOAA National, Florida and other state councils, and chapters). Typical rates recently have been \$295 for a full page commercial ad and \$195 for a full page MOAA organizations ad.

**BARS:** All bars must be no-host, pay-as you-go, although the chairperson can expect to be charged for the bartenders and cashiers. This policy does not preclude accepting a party paid for by a group presenting a seminar or some other similar cocktail party. Rather, it is meant to avoid using convention or council funds to pay for alcoholic drinks.

**EXHIBITORS/VENDORS :** If space permits convention planners are encouraged to solicit vendors and exhibitors. This adds color to the convention and gives conventioners something to do and another place to mingle with their friends. A fee should be charged for this space. This fee may be in the form of providing space for a special price if the vendor purchases a full page ad in the Souvenir Booklet.

**AWARDS:** The following chapter/club awards are to be presented at the convention: (NOTE: The host-chapter/club is not eligible for convention attendance awards.)  
"Most Number of Convention Attendees, 20XX" (NOTE: All registrants with the chapter/club are to be counted)  
"Best Percentage of Convention Attendees, 20XX" (NOTE: All registrants (including spouses) with the chapter/club are to be counted)

Because of the time required and the limited participants awards for scheduled golf and tennis outings should be given at the events and not at other gatherings.

**FREE TIME:** Because one of the reasons a chapter will have been selected for a convention is the availability of attractions in the area (e.g. sights, beach, military museum) the chairperson should provide time in the convention schedule to enjoy these activities. This may be on Day 1 before the convention actually begins or during Day 2. Golf and tennis outings should be scheduled for Day 1 before the

convention begins. Wives activities, if desired, may be scheduled for Day 2 as time permits.

**AFTER-ACTION REPORT:** Approximately 60 days following the convention the chairperson will prepare and distribute a convention after-action report. Individual reports should be sent by postal mail to the council president (two copies), the convention coordinator (two copies), and one copy each to the council vice president, the host chapter president, the host chapter's AVP, and to each designated future host chapter chairperson..

The purposes of the report are to provide a financial accounting of the convention, to provide a summary of the convention, and to provide assistance to future chairpersons. The report must include descriptions of convention activities, a financial report, sample convention materials (registration forms, agendas, etc.), attendance information, lessons learned, problems encountered and recommendations for future conventions.

## F. DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

### FLORIDA COUNCIL OF CHAPTERS PRESIDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Along with the Board of Directors approve the host chapter/club's convention application request, including the chairperson nomination, by the host chapter/club.
2. Provide initial guidance to the convention chairperson at the planning meeting held 15-18 months prior to the convention. (See Section E, OPERATIONS, Convention Planning.)
3. Approve the convention agenda, program, speakers, registration form, activities' prices, and convention budget, etc.
4. Send invitations to convention distinguished guests.
5. Appoint a responsible individual to perform a review of the convention's financial report.
6. Preside at all official functions of the convention.

### HOST CHAPTER RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Propose the name of the convention chairperson to the council president.
2. Propose the location and convention facility (hotel/resort/cruise ship, etc.).
3. Prepare a tentative agenda and budget for approval by the council president.
4. Make the arrangements for convention activities, speakers, presentations, entertainment, seminars, tours, ceremonies, optional events, sound systems, etc.
5. Establish necessary leadership and committees to plan and conduct the convention.
6. Prepare all convention paraphernalia, including registration materials, memorial service program, hand/pocket schedules, etc.
7. Mail registration packets to potential attendees.
8. Prepare and publish a souvenir booklet.
9. Provide a convention registration table to distribute tickets and information.
10. Establish a common area/room for convention attendees to meet and for exhibitors' displays. If space permits and the cost isn't excessive light refreshments (coffee, tea, water, cookies, etc.) should be available. This should be funded as a convention expense.
11. Provide initial and continuing information to generate convention interest and attendance to the council newsletter editor, the Webmaster, chapter/club newsletter editors, and local news media.

## G. FINANCES

**POLICY:** The host chapter/club will endeavor to offer a high quality convention experience that will attract the most possible attendees. The convention chairperson should attempt to secure the best available prices for accommodations, meals, and activities, etc. without compromising quality. The convention must be planned to be self-supporting. Each activity should be priced to pay for itself except when this is unreasonable or not feasible, e.g. the memorial service or the All Hands Breakfast that requires paying for

the breakfasts of the honor guard. In these cases funds from the registration fees, revenues from ad. sales in the souvenir booklet, and surpluses from other functions may be used.

**FUNDS SURPLUS:** Because the convention is the major source of revenue for council operations and because host chapters/clubs will incur expenses that can not be categorized but for which they should receive compensation (e.g. personal transportation, meals, etc.) chairpersons must plan on a funds surplus of at least \$5000. This should not be paid by attendees' participation in activities, but from other revenue sources. e.g. souvenir booklet advertisements, souvenir sales, fees from commercial seminars, vendors booths, cruise ship comp. berths. Surplus funds will be split between the council and the host chapter/club: 55 percent to the host chapter/club and 45 percent to the council..

**FINANCIAL LOSS:** It is expected that the convention chairperson will exercise sound financial planning, that the council president and convention coordinator will monitor this planning, and that these individuals will coordinate continually throughout the convention planning. Based upon these expectations the council will assume any financial loss.

**OPERATING FUNDS ("SEED MONEY")** The council treasurer will provide \$5000 to the host chapter/club for operating expenses so that chapter/club funds do not have to be expended. This money is a no-interest-loan that must normally be repaid within 60 days following the convention. It will be available to the host chapter normally 10-12 months before the convention or as required, i.e. when this loan has been repaid by the previous year's convention host chapter/club. The amount may be greater for extraordinary expenditures such as hotel or cruise ship deposits.

**FUNDS MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY:** The host chapter/club will establish a convention checking account separate from its normal chapter account(s), and will appoint a convention treasurer to manage this account. The council president will appoint a person to review this account following receipt of the convention financial statement.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:** Following the convention the chairperson will prepare a financial statement as part of the After Action Report. This statement will include the number of registrants, the number of meals served at each event, the number of attendees at activities, the souvenir booklet advertising revenues and publishing costs, and other revenues received and costs incurred. It will also list the surplus funds and the division of these funds (i.e. 55 percent to the host chapter/45 percent to the council). An example of a financial statement is in the Attachments.

**COUNCIL CONVENTION EXPENSES:** Expenses incurred by the council president, vice president, or convention coordinator in support of the convention (e.g. travel and telephone expenses) will be paid from the Council Convention Account. Expenses that are incurred as an integral part of the convention (e.g. business meeting administration and refreshment costs) will be paid as part of the convention costs.

**FLAGS ACCOUNTABILITY:** The American flag, flags of the seven uniformed services from which MOAA draws its members, and certain specified convention equipment shall be passed annually from the current year's convention committee to that of the year to follow. The chairperson of the current year's committee or his/her designated representative shall be responsible to assist the chairperson or his/her designated representative of the following year's convention committee in performing an inventory and inspecting these flags, along with their bases and covers, and other specified equipment at the conclusion of the current year's convention. The chairperson of the following years' committee or his/her designated representative shall be responsible for transporting the flags from the current year's site, storing them in the geographical area of the following year's site, and maintaining accountability during the period of possession. The acquiring committee chairperson or designated representative shall sign an inventory receipt for the transfer of equipment. Should the flags, flag accessories, or other signed for equipment be damaged, lost or destroyed, the accountable chairperson shall have such flags, flag accessories, and/or equipment replaced or repaired using that host chapter/club convention account. The current year's and the following year's committee chairpersons shall report the results of these actions and submit a copy of the inventory receipt to the council president.

## H. KEY DATES AND MEETINGS

The dates, meetings, and activities listed below are meant as guidance based upon lessons-learned from previous conventions and are not meant to hinder initiative. Circumstances may require deviations from the list. Dates should be considered "not-later-than dates" for planning purposes and are indicated as "-" before the convention and "+" after the convention.

-18-24 Months: President of interested host chapter submits verbal or written informal bid along with hotel/resort proposal to council president to host convention. If bid appears to be satisfactory Council president, vice president, and convention coordinator meet with convention chapter president and proposed chairperson to tour convention hotel/resort and discuss preliminary convention plans, policies, etc.

-12-18 Months: (30 days before convention board meeting) Council president receives bid (15 copies) to host convention.

-12-18 Months: (Convention board meeting) Council board selects host chapter/club. Announcement of host chapter/club is made to convention attendees, placed in the Council Communiqué, and placed on the council web site. Assuming that the contract is satisfactory as soon after this meeting as is possible the council president will authorize the host chapter/club president or convention chairperson to sign the contract.

--12-18 Months: Convention chairperson should organize the convention committee and begin initial planning.

-12 Months: Convention Chairperson meets with council president and Convention Coordinator to discuss and approve convention plans.

-9 Months (In conjunction with Fall Board Meeting): Convention chairperson presents proposed plans for agenda, registration, speakers, meetings, costs, budget, entertainment, etc. to Board.. Council president gives final approval of convention agenda, programs, registration, activities, speakers, entertainment, etc. NOTE: This is a NLT date; earlier approval is recommended. It is assumed that a publicity program should have been in progress since awarding of the host responsibility but it is at this time that an intense campaign must begin.

-6 Months Convention chairperson mails registration packets to potential attendees. (Depending upon when the convention is to be held and the type of convention. e.g. cruise conventions may be mailed a year in advance)

-60-90 Days (or as specified in contract): In coordination with council president and convention coordinator the convention chair will meet with convention hotel/resort and if necessary adjust number of reservations promised.

-30-60 Days: Council president, vice president, and convention coordinator visit convention site and meet with chairperson to finalize any last-minute details. NOTE: During the last 60 days prior to the convention the entire council board should provide whatever assistance is required to support the convention.

-1 Day: Council president arrives at convention site to meet with chairperson, review convention agenda, programs, etc and discuss any last minute items.

+ 30 Days: Convention chairperson meets with his/her committee to discuss convention and to prepare After-Action Report.

+60 Days: After Action Report due. Chairperson should send copies to the council members designated in Section E, OPERATIONS, AFTER ACTION REPORT paragraph.

## I. CONVENTIONS AT SEA

A cruise ship convention (convention at sea) offers a break from the normal hotel/resort convention. It can have most of the normal convention activities (maybe in a modified form) plus all of the activities of a cruise. But the host chapter will have to be imaginative and flexible because of the ship's schedule and the configuration of the ship itself. Below is a list of the numerous differences and nuances of a convention at sea.

- . By far the best part of a cruise convention is that there are so many planned activities.
- . On the other hand, these activities may make it difficult or maybe even impossible to plan for certain normal Florida Council convention events.
- . Because the cruise has so many planned activities the convention committee doesn't have to be as large as is required for a hotel/resort convention.
- . This convention will attract people who may not have attended a Florida Council hotel/resort convention. It may also offer attendees the opportunity to bring children and/or grandchildren for a family vacation. .
- . The ship has its own schedule that probably can't be changed.
- . Port calls are firm.
- . A room or even space may not be available when it is desired.
- . Except for the ship's theater there may not be row-seats for meetings, the memorial service, seminars, etc.
- . Lounges offer comfortable meeting facilities--but the chairs, couches, and tables are bolted to the floor and many seats don't face the speaker's area.
- . The ship's PA system is used on a nearly continuous basis and often interferes with convention activities, e.g. during two of the council's conventions at sea the ship's entertainment director made numerous announcements that interrupted the memorial services.
- . At times all of the ship's meeting facilities may be in use.
- . Unless the convention has enough attendees to fill a dining room (approximately 400-500 conventioners, depending upon the ship's passenger capacity) the convention won't have a dining room to itself. This will most likely prevent the scheduling of any dinner activities. Even if the council has exclusive use of a dining room the time allowed for dinner and any activities will be limited to approximately an hour and a half.
- . Whereas a hotel or resort will give comp. rooms based upon a certain number of room-nights occupied by conventioners the cruise line will give comp. Cruises, based upon the number of bookings. (See below for a discussion on thi

Convention planners must keep in mind continually that convention attendees will want to attend appealing scheduled ship's activities and might ignore council events to do so. (In the 1996 convention at sea the only attendees at the post dinner council party were the convention committee and the newly elected council officers because the ship's nightly entertainment was taking place at the same time.) Florida Council has held four conventions at sea (1996, 2001, 2004, and 2007)

### GENERAL COMMENTS:

**Travel Agent:** Unlike a hotel/resort convention the chairperson may not deal directly with the cruise line but rather must go through the agent who will arrange a tour of the ship for you, keep records, make the actual reservations with the cruise line, receive the comp. cash disbursements, resolve problems, and many other tasks. In order to have on-board assistance you may want to offer the agent a comp. cruise with your convention. Some agencies (e.g. MOAA Travel) require this.

**Ship and Cruise Line Selection:** Not all cruise ships and cruise lines are alike. Some ships are too small to have adequate space for meetings and to offer the variety of activities that convention attendees desire. Some are so large that serving a 300+ convention is not uppermost in the minds of the cruise line. The answer lies in the convention committee and the council president and vice president, and their

spouses checking the ship before signing a contract or making a deposit. Bringing a checklist of what you are looking for as well as a tentative convention schedule will help accomplish a thorough check.

**Comp. Cruises:** The standard plan is 1 comp. cruise for every 15 reservations (called berths in the cruise line business). The price of a comp is the average booked reservation as determined following the cruise. (For estimating purposes you may want to use an average cost of a cruise.) For an average Florida Council cruise convention of 300 people this would be 20 comps multiplied by an average cost of \$400/cruise this would provide \$8000. (This example hasn't considered the Florida Council policy of paying the hotel/resort/cruise costs for the council president, the convention chairperson, and their spouses. Nor has it considered any incentives that you may want to incorporate.) The comp. funds will not be made available to you until approximately six weeks after the sailing.

**Registration:** Cruises are major vacations for most people so cruise lines book far in advance of a sailing and so must your group. You should start taking reservations approximately a year in advance (e.g. at the previous year's convention). On the other hand, you must overcome the fact that many of your potential conventioners are accustomed to making their convention reservations 60-90 days before the convention. Experience has shown that incentives such as a drawing open to everyone who books the cruise by an early deadline (four or five months in advance) work very well. However because of the normal timing of the convention this incentive could encounter the distractions of the holiday season so a pre-holiday early booking date should be established.

**Registration Forms:** Cruise ships and travel agencies have registration forms that serve their purposes but are not adequate for our conventions. Information such as the chapter name, chapter office, military rank, seating desires, and convention shirt must also be obtained. One way to do this is to add the requirements to the travel agency's form but space will probably preclude this. A separate convention form is better. If the travel agency is near your chapter area you should have all forms sent to the travel agency and then make periodic (weekly) trips to the agency to get the convention forms. If the travel agency isn't close to the host chapter the second form should be sent to the chapter PO box.

**Security vs. Goodie Bags!** As can be expected, security is a major consideration for cruise lines, ports, and ships since 9/11. This is understandable but in practice it can be exasperating because there are many security agencies with many requirements. The 2004 convention committee had to work with three different security agencies (Homeland Security, Holland America Security, and Port Canaveral Security) in trying to get their convention goodie bags aboard the ship. Without going into excessive details their experiences caused them to recommend that rather than trying to give out the bags and name tags to people before they board the ship as was done in 2001 arrange to have the bags brought aboard and given to conventioners after boarding.

**Dinner Seating:** If you have a dedicated, exclusive dining room/dining time or even if you just want to be sure that conventioners sit with their convention friends you should ask to do the seating chart yourself. (Because it isn't possible to talk directly with a cruise line you will have to make this request--and any other--through the travel agency.)

**Seminars:** Space is available but the timing will have to be worked around the ship's schedule.

**Receptions:** As part of the incentive to get your business the cruise line normally offers you a free conventioners' cocktail party. This is in addition to the Captain's Reception that is for all passengers. If this is not offered when you receive the contract ask for the party before you sign the contract. (If your travel agent is the expert that you desire this will already be in the contract.)

**Dress:** "What do I wear?" is the Number One question asked. One reason is because military people are accustomed to being told what to wear but the other more important reason is that after boarding it's too late to learn that a coat is desired at a particular dinner and you didn't bring a coat. You should provide specific guidance by event/activity in your registration packet.

**Speakers:** If you invite a Government official, celebrity, politician, etc. you will have to pay his/her

expenses and someone will have to host this individual. If you invite a MOAA staff person or Board of Directors (BOD) member, including the president and Chairman of the BOD, MOAA will pay all of his/her expenses and except for normal courtesies no hosting will be required.

## **J. ORGANIZATION**

The responsibility of hosting a two day convention with a budget of \$50,000-\$75,000 (excluding hotel reservations), attended by 200-250 people from throughout the entire state is a major undertaking for a MOAA chapter or club. To accomplish this task requires a committee organization that will support such an endeavor.

**LEADERSHIP:** The normal leadership for a convention is to have one chairperson although a few times a chapter has had a chairperson and an honorary chairperson. The chairperson was to provide the actual convention leadership and the honorary chairperson was to provide prestige to the chapter's hosting and generate convention enthusiasm within the host chapter. This may seem to be a harmless arrangement but in practice it hasn't been workable and was actually dysfunctional. The primary reason was that the honorary chair had more approval authority than was expected by the council president or maybe even the actual chairperson. The net effect was a cumbersome operation whereby relatively simple decisions were often delayed unnecessarily awaiting approval from the honorary chair. If a host chapter decides to grant special recognition to a chapter member, the invitation must exclude decision-making authority by the person being recognized. As the executive agent for the council board the council president must have one person to whom he/she contacts for answers and this person must be able to make decisions without talking to another convention chairperson. This does not preclude the normal desire or requirement for the chairperson to need to discuss certain issues with the convention committee.

**CONVENTION COMMITTEE:** For some convention chairpersons the organization of the committee has been a large group of workers and sub-committees with chairpersons for these groups. For other chairpersons a small tightly-knit group of individuals was the answer. For all practical purposes this is a nearly one-person operation. All of Florida Council's conventions were successful in that the attendance was relatively good and attendees have always left the convention feeling that they had an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. Based upon this we can conclude that many managerial styles and types of organizations are appropriate for our conventions. To assist the chairperson in determining how to organize for the convention the two most popular organizations are discussed below. The comments are based upon convention after-action reports and discussions with various chairmen.

**Large Committee with Sub Committees:** This typical committee has a chairperson a vice chairperson, a treasurer, and various sub-committee chairpersons. This group constitutes the Executive Committee. The sub-committees might be determined by tasks, functions, events, or whatever is desired. A usual type of sub-committee organization is to have a vice chairperson for each of the following areas: Registrations, Publicity, Souvenir Booklet, Hospitality Room, Memorial Service, one for each event (All Hands Breakfast, Military Ball, etc.), Women's Luncheon and Activities, Tickets, Tours and trips, each athletic event, and any other tasks or events.

The advantages of this type of organization include the following: the responsibility for activities is shared; more ideas will be generated than if one person or just a few persons tried to perform everything; more attention will be applied to details; group meetings promote discussion and criticism; more chapter/club members and spouses will be involved and thus insuring more excitement and interest throughout the organization; increased chapter/club attendance at the convention; and less of a burden on one person.

The disadvantages of this large organization include the following: it requires more meetings, discussions, coordination and time than other organizational styles; to some chairpersons it is cumbersome; it is not the authoritative style that many military leaders enjoy and are accustomed to using; not all chapters/clubs have enough willing workers to support this type of organization; and it is not as fast to respond as a single-person style.

**Chairperson with a Small Committee:** In this type of an organization the chairperson performs most of the planning, arranging and other pre-convention activities himself/herself, assisted by a small group (three to five others). When the convention begins the group expands to include responsible individuals for various tasks such as registrations, decorations, tickets, and some of the events. The individuals are assisted by other chapter/club members and spouses.

The advantages of this type of organization include the following: it is less cumbersome it is faster to respond; it requires less meeting and coordinating time; a small group is more manageable than a large group; it can be supported by most chapters/clubs; and it is a style that is familiar to and liked by many military officers.

The disadvantages of this type of organization include the following: it places most of the burden on one person; it lacks the large-group's built-in feature of receiving more ideas; details may be over-looked when so few people are involved; it lacks a built-in mechanism for discussion and criticism; and it does not have the advantages of large-scale, actual involvement by the chapter/club.

**Which Type Committee to Use?** This decision can be made only by the chairperson. MOAA is an organization of experienced leaders and managers who know what their personal leadership styles are and what has been effective for them in the past. The chairperson must be comfortable with the organization and feel that he/she can use it not only to plan and arrange the convention but to respond to problems and situations that occur during the convention itself.

## **K. CONCLUSION**

As was stated at the beginning, the purpose of the Convention Manual is to help chairpersons to conduct efficient, meaningful, and enjoyable conventions. While some specific requirements were presented much of the information was meant to provide ideas and challenges for chairpersons to be innovative and imaginative in their planning. In some cases what was done at past conventions will be only the starting point to try something new and different. It is assumed that this booklet will be revised periodically using the recommendations and ideas of convention chairpersons and council presidents on how to make Florida Council's convention continue to be the best in MOAA. The manual was meant to be used along with available convention after action reports. Advice from someone who has done what you're about to do can be invaluable by telling you what went well and what didn't go so well!

## **ATTENDANCE & FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

## Convention Attendance & Financial Comparisons

Convention Hosting		Souvenir Booklet			Surplus (Loss)
Year	Chapter	Attendance	Ad Revenue	Publish Costs	
1978	Palm Beach	160	UKN	UKN	(\$514)
1979	Tallahassee	164	UKN	UKN	(\$663)
1980	KOS	205	UKN	UKN	\$873
1981	Clearwater	231	\$2318	\$2059	\$2602
1982	Pensacola	249	\$2765	\$1227	\$118
1983	Broward City	250	\$4070	\$2055	\$544
1984	Gainesville	315	\$3862	\$3862	\$478
1985	Central Florida	282	\$3155	\$1955	\$3471
1986	Tampa	336	\$9002	\$4348	\$1192
1987	CP Can	560	\$15332	\$5120	\$5227
1988	Up Suncoast	529	\$6296	\$3525	\$2725
1989	Palm Beach	445	UKN	UKN	\$2361
1990	Collier City	511	\$17557	\$3700	\$8886
1991	Mayport	337	\$5010	\$1658	\$6106
1992	Pensacola	312	\$1865	\$679	\$4793
1993	Tampa	360	\$10973	\$3592	\$5269
1994	Broward City	334	\$7040	\$2150	\$1973
1995	KOS	313	\$3900	\$2134	\$6155
1996	Cape Can *	600	\$4175	\$2062	\$2017
1997	Central Florida	317	\$6403	\$1350	\$5486
1998	Tallahassee	572	\$9514	\$503	\$5150
1999	St Pete	375	\$4134	\$1440	\$5363
2000	Pensacola	315	\$10160	\$1387	\$9710
2001	Tampa *	386	\$8428	\$1824	\$9483
2002	KOS	237	\$4800	\$1413	\$7272
2003	Sarasota	288	\$9039	\$2815	\$5225
2004	Cape Can *	289	\$5251	\$2464	\$9145
2005	Palm Bch Gdn	252	\$9245	\$3179	\$10266
2006	St Pete	205	\$7805	\$2012	(\$5249)
2007	NE Florida *	123	\$4095	\$1648	\$1259
2008	Cape Can	197	\$5773	\$2694	\$4050
2009	St Pete	252	\$10,540	\$2437	\$11,530
2010	Calusa	241	\$12,140	\$1849	\$13,469

\* CONVENTIONS AT SEA

**ATTENDANCE & FINANCIAL STATEMENT**  
**Activity Attendance**

Number of Registrations (Early: XXX; Regular: XXX; One Event: XX)	XXX
All Hands Breakfast	XX
Women's Luncheon	XXX
Military Ball	XXX
Business Meeting	XXX
Tour Boat Ride	XXX
Seminars	XXX

**Activity Income vs. Expenditures**

ACTIVITY	INCOME	EXPENDITURES`	NET
Registration/Admin.	\$XXX	\$XXX	\$XXX
All Hands Breakfast	\$XXXX	\$XXXX	\$XXX
Military Ball	\$XXXX	\$XXXX	\$XXX
Business Meeting	0	\$XXX	(\$XXX)
Convention Shirts	\$XXXX	\$XXXX	\$XXX
Souvenir Booklet	\$XXXX	\$XXXX	\$XXXX
Seminars	\$XXXX	\$XXX	\$XXXX
TOTALS	\$XXXXX	\$XXXXX	\$XXXX

**TOTAL SURPLUS: \$XXXX**

**PROCEEDS: TO CHAPTER (55%): \$XXXX TO COUNCIL (45%): \$XXXX**