Introduction

The Vice-Chief for Communications is responsible for (1) The communication of Ktemaque Lodge within the lodge, and (2) the communication of Ktemaque Lodge to other scouts and scouters within the council. His tools for this endeavor are (A) The Communications Committee, (B) The Beaver Tracks, which is the quarterly newsletter of the Lodge, (C) the Telephone, which is a device that allows you to speak and have your voice heard by another many miles away without the aid of the internet, (D) Email, which is an auxiliary communication system, and (E) the Lodge Web Page, which is nice to have but is on or near the bottom of the priority list. (F,) His Adviser, can help him in all of these areas.

(A) The Communications Committee is a committee recruited and appointed by the VCC (Vice-Chief for Communications for the express purpose of helping him carry out his functions. Everyone on the committee should help him execute all of his functions, but the degree to which they are asked to help will depend on the Communications Chair and what he feels he can ask of them.

(B) The Beaver Tracks is the newsletter of the Lodge. It must be published and distributed to the Active (Dues-Paid) Lodge Membership at least four times a year; this is both a quality lodge requirement and a necessity to ensure at least minimal communication to lodge members.

(C) The Telephone is a critical part of the VCC’s job. It may be that he himself rarely makes calls to scoutmasters or Lodge Membership-at-large, but he must at least organize such calls. He is responsible for maintaining (1) a Lodge Leadership Phone Tree, (2) A Lodge Membership Phone Tree, (3) A Scoutmaster phone plan. He must also use the telephone to keep in contact with his committee members, the Lodge Chief, and the Communications Committee Adviser (CCA.)

(D) Email is a very useful tool- it provides for quick communication and prevents phone-tag problems. It is neither a substitute for the phone nor for mailings, but it provides a good method for quick exchange of information or large data (membership lists, event reports, etc…)

(E) The Lodge Web Page is a smaller issue; it should include minimal information about the lodge. The Lodge Leadership and contact information should be provided, as well as a copy of the lodge calendar, and information on the general status of the lodge.

(F) The Communications Adviser is a critical resource that can be used to help with many of the technical issues, or with general advice. He is likely to have expertise on the electronic and publishing sides of the job, which will allow the Vice-Chief to concentrate on providing the necessary information for those areas (articles for BT (Beaver Tracks,) etc…) rather than the layout of the actual newsletter, and to concentrate time on other areas that require a personal touch of leadership, such as organizing the communications committee and phone trees.

Above all, the Vice-Chief for Communications is a critical position in the lodge. It is a sometimes tedious job with little visible reward; the reward is primarily in the job well done. But it is important- without communication, no lodge event could ever be a success, and in three years the lodge as a whole would cease to exist.
The Communications Committee

The Communications Committee is a committee recruited and appointed by the VCC (Vice-Chief for Communications) for the express purpose of helping him carry out his functions. Everyone on the committee should help him execute all of his functions, but the degree to which they are asked to help will depend on the Communications Chair and what he feels he can ask of them.

The communications committee should consist of six youth members of various abilities and interest levels. Once of the first acts of the new VCC upon his election should be the recruitment of the members of this committee. This recruitment may take place from several sources, but the most likely to bare fruit are (1) collecting arrowmen known to the VCC from summer camp or another inter-troop medium, or (2) collecting arrowmen by calling those arrowmen attending recent events in the correct age range. Recruitment of six individuals should be completed by early September, in time for the majority of the Lodge’s Program.

Like any team-building effort, it is imperative that the VCC start slow; it is especially important to foster trust in the beginning. Everyone should be given the opportunity to contribute, and the contributions of those less inclined to talk at meetings should be sought out. At the same time, the VCC should not try to foster trust by immediately thrusting a large number of responsibilities on each committee member. He should start off fairly small; ask each member to do one or two things for him, only after hearing what they have to say about how those things should be done.

If the VCC has a great deal of knowledge on how things have been done in the past, he should not always assume that it is the correct way to do it in the future; he must listen to the ideas presented by his committee, or there would be no point in having one.

From a procedural standpoint, there are several issues addressed in the Communications Committee Charter (Appendix A.) One of the most critical to any committee is the record kept; the minutes of the meeting. At each meeting, (or for all meetings,) there should be a committee member acting as secretary. He should take minutes at the meeting, and they should be distributed within 15 days of the end of the meeting.

An Agenda should also be sent out at least 15 days prior to every meeting. This allows people to be prepared with what they need to present at the meeting, or to be ready to discuss certain items. It also lets people rearrange their calendars if there is something they consider important. They may call the VCC, who is the chairman of the committee, to communicate their views on some issue in the agenda; if this occurs, the chairman should clearly present the individual’s input at the meeting, even if it is against his own standpoint.

A Budget should be submitted to the Executive Committee at least one month before the money is to be spent; If a Beaver Tracks will need to go out, or the VCC needs some other expenses paid, the Executive Committee must approve the expenditure in advance or it will be considered a donation. The only exception to this rule is if the VCC obtains consent from (1) the Lodge Chief, (2) The Lodge Financial Officer, and (3) Either the Lodge Staff Adviser.

Without the Communications committee and the ability to delegate, the VCC will be unable to function effectively; there is simply too much work to be done. For this reason, it is imperative that a communications committee be established immediately upon the new VCC’s election.
The Beaver Tracks

**The Beaver Tracks** is the newsletter of the Lodge. It must be published and distributed to the Active (Dues-Paid) Lodge Membership at least four times a year; this is both a quality lodge requirement and a necessity to ensure at least minimal communication to lodge members.

The BT should contain certain items. Whenever an event comes up, there should be a Beaver Tracks 5-7 weeks beforehand that contains (1) a positive article about the event, (2) promotions for anything special about the event, (3) the date of the event, (4) the duration of the event, (5) the registration form & info for the event, (6) a Class 1 Medical for the Event (Class 3 if over 72 hours,) (7) the on-site registration location & time, (8) The Location of the Event, and (9) The directions to that Location. Do not make the mistake of putting the directions, date, time, duration, registration location, etc… on the back of the piece of paper that must be mailed in to register for the event.

The Beaver tracks preceding that BT should contain a small promotional article on the event.

The BT following the event should contain a review of the event; The review should be positive but factual. Wherever possible, it should include the names of event participants, ceremonial team members, or arrowmen at large.

There are several other items to a BT. Each should contain the Lodge Calendar for the next three months, as well as the names, telephone numbers, and email addresses of the Key Lodge Officers. They should also contain a “Chiefly Speaking,” which is a brief letter from the chief. The Lodge Adviser may also put in a few words, although this is not necessary. Last but not least, there should be credit given to everybody that contributed to the issue.

Shortly following his election, the VCC should sit down with his adviser and go over every event in the program year, determining when would be good time to send out Beaver Tracks and what exactly should be in each issue. Deadlines should be set significantly (at least two weeks) in advance of the final publication date.
The Telephone

The Telephone is a critical part of the VCC’s job. It may be that he himself rarely makes calls to scoutmasters or Lodge Membership-at-large, but he must at least organize such calls. He is responsible for maintaining (1) a Lodge Leadership Phone Tree, (2) A Lodge Membership Phone Tree, (3) A Scoutmaster phone plan. He must also use the telephone to keep in contact with his committee members, the Lodge Chief, and the Communications Committee Adviser (CCA.)

A Lodge Leadership Phone Tree is initialized one to two days before every ECM to remind officers of the meeting. It is also initialized if there is information that must be quickly distributed to the Lodge Leadership. The exact design of the VCC’s phone tree should be worked out immediately following his election, as it may come into play quite soon.

A Full Membership Phone Tree is a significant undertaking. As there were 371 registered active lodge members on the 2000 Charter, this would represent a task too overwhelming to ask only the six scouts on the communications committee to do. The Vice Chief for Communications should take a current membership list to the Executive Committee Meeting every month, and distribute it to the youth leadership of the lodge. He should also distribute a portion of it to his committee. If there are six people on his own committee, and eight more on the ECM, this leaves everyone with only 26 phone calls to make.

There are a few other important tips to a phone tree. First, make sure to keep your own membership list, and note who is responsible for what section. If you don’t, you may not know who to call to complete the phone calls. After you’ve asked for a phone tree to be executed, make one or two phone calls to random arrowmen on the list; see if they have gotten the message, and discuss the problem with the callers if they have not.

When you are asking people to deliver messages or promote an event via phone, make sure they have all the information that they need. If it all possible, give them a sheet of paper (or an email that they can print out) detailing exactly what the should speak about or ask about, and giving them what information they need. Calling to promote the Fellowship weekend when you don’t know what the date is tends to look bad for yourself and the lodge; don’t let it happen to you or somebody calling for you.

Have a protocol for the phone calls; maybe give a flowchart of what you expect, indicating what to do if someone gets a machine or no answer. If you do not have a system, half the calls will simply be messages left or no answers at houses.

A Scoutmaster Phone Plan is likely to be necessary only on two occasions, both having to do with the Operations committee. The first of these is the Troop Representative Program, the second is the Unit Elections Program. In both instances, you are calling the 100 scoutmasters in Westchester-Putnam council. Feel free to ask for help from the Operations committee when you are doing this.

If you are calling about the Troop Rep Program, you will be calling in September (Initiate these calls if the Operations Committee has not met yet.) The calls should tell the scoutmaster who we have on record as the Troop OA representative, what the responsibilities entail, and should ask if the scoutmaster would like that person to continue for the new year, or whether they would like to appoint a new troop OA representative.

If you are calling about the Unit Elections Program, the exact nature of the call will depend on the Operations Committee.

A Troop Rep Phone Tree is a fairly small job and can probably be handled by the communications committee alone. It involves calling all the Troop Reps in the council with information to disseminate from the Lodge. The list of Troop Reps can be provided by the Operations Committee.
Email

Email is a very useful tool—it provides for quick communication and prevents phone-tag problems. It is neither a substitute for the phone nor for mailings, but it provides a good method for quick exchange of information or large data (membership lists, event reports, etc…)

Email allows for very rapid contact with a large percentage of the lodge leadership. As everyone cannot be expected to have email, it cannot replace regular mail. It also cannot replace phone calls, as phone calls allow for real-time two-way information exchange. The phone also provides a personal touch that can be lacking in emails if they are not designed properly.

If you are going to be doing a large amount of email communication and are unfamiliar with the procedure, be sure to check some e-etiquette references. For now, just don’t type in all capitalized letters, and include your name in every email.

Email also provides an easy way to apply a varying amount of pressure to a person; while it is fairly uncommon to carbon copy a letter that is not official, it is not uncommon to CC an email. Therefore a varying degree of pressure can be put on a recipient to do something, or to respond to your queries about his task(s) based on the number and identity of individuals receiving carbon copies of an email. Similarly, sending an email with few or no CCs can be an indication of trust.

If the VCC does not have an email account, he should get one at the time of his election, and should check it at least once daily. If he has a computer, junio and netzero provide free email access from dial-up. If he does not, any of a dozen services provide web-based email.

The Lodge Web Page

The Lodge Web Page may still say that Chris Davis is Chief. It is often out of date. The best approach to this is to put long-term information up that you can afford to ignore for long periods of time. This may include the year’s Lodge Leadership roster (be sure to obtain the consent of everyone listed,) the lodge yearly calendar, Unit Election Policy, historical data, or information on what the OA is. It should be uncomplicated, self-reliant, easy-to-navigate, and not dependent on a broadband connection to view.

The Adviser

The relationship between the VCC and the CCA is very important to the success of the Communications Committee and the VCC. These two should speak at least once a week for the duration of the lodge’s Program Year. This allows for an open exchange of information, and it allows the CCA to use his resources to help the VCC.
Appendix A: Communications Committee Charter

Ktemaque Lodge #15      Order of the Arrow
Westchester-Putnam Council #388           January 7, 2000

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee is primarily responsible for intralodge communication.

The committee is responsible for ensuring the completion of 5 items on the quality lodge petition. They are (2) “The lodge inducted a minimum of 30% of its eligible Ordeal members into the Brotherhood,” (6) “The lodge published a current Where-to-go-camping pamphlet, and made it available to every troop and team in the council,” (12) “The average attendance at lodge events such as banquets, fellowships, service weekends, and business meetings, exceeded 25% of the membership reported on the charter application for the prior year,” (14) “A minimum of two youth members attended the last National Order of the Arrow Conference,” and (15) “The lodge produced and distributed a minimum of four newsletters”

The Chairman of this committee is appointed by the lodge chief. The Adviser is appointed by the lodge adviser. This committee is under the jurisdiction of the Lodge Vice-Chief for Communications. It is recommended that this committee include a diverse group of arrowmen, including at least one ordeal members and at least three arrowmen likely to remain active for an additional program year.

The Responsibilities of the chairman of this committee include:
1. To preside over the meetings of the committee
2. To arrange for meetings of the committee as often as may be necessary.
3. To recruit and maintain an active youth membership of no less than six members of the committee, and to ensure their presence at no fewer than 60% of held meetings.
4. To appoint a committee secretary, responsible for secretarial duties associated with the meeting of the committee.
5. To establish, in advance of each meeting, an agenda appropriate to the goals of the committee.
6. To report monthly the progress of the committee to the Lodge Executive Committee.
7. To maintain a regular contact with all members of the committee and such members of the lodge as may be placed above him.
8. The chairman leader should at all times be ensuring that the time spent in committee is productive, and that unresolved issues are parceled out as appropriate and dealt with.

The Responsibilities of the Secretary to this committee include:
1. The taking of minutes at all meetings of the committee
2. The distribution of said minutes, in electronic or written form, to all members of the committee within two weeks of any meeting’s closure.
3. The reading of said minutes at the beginning of the next meeting.
4. The forwarding of a copy of said minutes to the designee of the Lodge Executive Committee for permanent lodge records.

Operationally, all youth members of this committee have one vote when voting becomes necessary. The chairman shall not vote except in the event of a tie. Two motions are the minimum number for any meeting after the first: one motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting, and another to adjourn. Each of these motions requires a simple majority, save as part of an unfriendly act, in which case they require a two/thirds majority. The interim operational policy of the committee is at the discretion of the committee chairman, although the following motions should be recognized at any time:

1. A Motion to approve paperwork presented to the committee (e.g. reports or minutes)
2. A Motion to approve a significant plan or decision made by the committee.
3. A Motion to spend money.
4. A Motion to amend another motion, paperwork, or planning that comes under the committee.
5. A Motion to the previous question.
6. A Motion to table.
7. A Motion to adjourn.

A Motion to spend money has additional requirements: specifically, the money must fall within the budget of the committee. This budget is prepared in advance by the Committee Chairman or his designee, and must be approved by the lodge executive committee prior to expenditure. The motion to spend money must be entered into the minutes, and must note (1) the nature of the items or services purchased, (2) the exact amount spent, or the parameters of what the committee has authorized be spent, (3) the individual responsible for making certain the money goes where it has been approved, and (4) the number of votes for, against, and abstaining.

Each of these motions requires a simple majority (50% approval) to pass, with the exception of the motion to amend. If a motion is made to amend an item, and the amendment is a “hostile” or “unfriendly” act, meaning that the creator of the item being amended disagrees with the amendment, then a 2/3 majority is necessary to amend the item. If the creator of the item being amended approves of the amendment, it is a “friendly” amendment and is automatically incorporated into the item. If the creator either is not present or is indistinguishable, a simple majority is required to approve the amendment.

A Motion to the previous question is a move to close debate on an issue.

The recommended goals for the first meeting of this committee include:

1. Surveying the committee with the new LLDP materials.
2. Appointing a committee secretary.
3. Assigning editors to the next two beaver tracks, and divvying up responsibilities for writing articles.
4. Arranging a phone tree to all active lodge members regarding the closing fellowship weekend at camp Siwanoy.
5. Establishing the committee’s goals for the next six months.
6. Generating a list of possible methods to approach each committee function.
7. Establishing a second meeting date within one month.