

# Guide to Autocrating an event in Hartshorn-dale

## I. Planning an Event

### A. What is an event?

1. A gathering sponsored by the branch, with the approval of the seneschal of that branch, that is publicized at least to the local group, and conforms to laws, by-laws, and traditions of the SCA.
2. Unofficial event: gathering without SCA sanction
  - a. No insurance/no waivers
  - b. No awards can be given
  - c. No such thing as an unofficial event, if the event is not sanctioned, it is a private party, and not an event.

### B. Who can autocrat an event? Or, what are the qualifications?

1. The Autocrat becomes an officer of the branch for the duration of the planning and throughout the end of the event until final reports are filed.
  - a. As an officer, the autocrat must be a current paid member of the SCA.
  - b. Autocrat is a deputy to the seneschal
  - c. The seneschal may not serve as autocrat
  - d. Autocrat must be a member of that branch (exceptions can be made but are rare).
  - e. As an officer of the branch, the autocrat should plan on attending most, if not all, the business meetings until the event to give updates on the event.
2. Deputy vs Co-autocrat
  - a. Deputy is there to assist you, and possibly learn how to run the event from you. Deputy should be available in case you aren't.
  - b. Co-autocrat. Useful if there are two distinct aspects of the event that are better managed separately.
    - i. Define responsibilities at the time of the bid.

### C. Before creating a bid

1. Read Hartshorn-dale charter regarding events
2. Thoroughly read this document
3. Choose a site (see 'sites' later in this document)
4. Consider whether food will be served and who will do that.
5. Have a couple dates in mind. (See below on choosing a date)
6. Are there other major staff members needed before entering the bid?
7. Consider the scope of the event, define it.

## II. Hartshorn-dale's bid process.

### A. Our charter allows two business meetings for the populace to decide whether to support an event.

1. The autocrat must plan to present at one business meeting, make adjustments to the bid based on discussion at the meeting, then present the final bid at the 2<sup>nd</sup> business meeting.

2. Bringing an idea to a business meeting is not the same as a bid, which will include the information below. A proposal that is incomplete (see the charter) is not a bid, it is a request for assistance, and/or to garner support.
- B. Items that *must* be on the initial bid:
1. Name of autocrat
  2. Proposed date(s) of event
    - a. Be ready to consider an alternate date.
    - b. Know how these dates will fit into the kingdom calendar, and the prior years of the kingdom calendar.
  3. Dayboard or Feast? or if that decision is being deferred temporarily
  4. Theme of the event
  5. Proposed activities
  6. Names and roles of any staff already on board. Major roles such as Head Cook should be on the initial proposal.
  7. Proposed budget (see section on the budget below)
    - a. Cost of site
    - b. Cost of activities
    - c. Cost of extras like site tokens or pamphlets
    - d. Cost of food
    - e. Any other costs you can think of, or a miscellaneous column for unexpected costs.
    - f. Estimate of number of attendees, using lowest expected number. (See below for how to create a break-even point)
    - g. Site fee to attendees
      - i. Include discount for minors and family discount.
  8. The initial bid must be presented a minimum of 6 months prior to the proposed date of the event to allow enough time to place on the kingdom calendar. The earlier a bid can be placed, the better, to decrease competition on the kingdom calendar.

### III. Choosing a site

- A. Spaces to look at when evaluating a site:
1. How many classrooms do you need?
    - a. Will there be classes? Meetings?
    - b. Can you do 'messy' things there?
  2. Is there space for changing rooms? How many changing rooms?
    - a. Male? Female? Family or individual?
    - b. Can attendees store items in the changing rooms?
  3. Royal Room?
  4. List field?
  5. Area for Gate?
  6. Area for food, both serving and area to eat?
  7. Hall for Court?
  8. Dance? Merchants?

9. If using outdoor space, can pavilions be put up, with the long stakes in the ground?
- B. Does the site have decent cell coverage? Make a note if not.
- C. Have you done a **walk through** with staff? The people who need to be on this walk through are:
  1. Autocrat
  2. Head cook
  3. Class coordinator
  4. Marshals of any martial activities
  5. Head of any other activity, such as A&S competition, or royalty liaison
- D. Are there additional fees or hidden costs for things you might use at the site such as propane for the kitchen, utilities fee, or toilet paper, or cleaning supplies? Will they need one of their staff on site during the event, and charge us for their hours? Ask this question of the site manager, do not find out as a surprise later.
- E. Will an insurance certificate be required?
- F. When can you access the site day of the event to set up, and when do you need to be off site?
- G. Handicapped accessible?
- H. Site rules:
  1. Pet policy (leashed dogs allowed)
  2. Smoking policy
  3. Wet, dry or discreetly wet?
  4. Weapons?

#### **IV. Budget and breaking even.**

- A. **The budget** needs to include everything that you can think of that will be an expense of putting on this event.
  1. Cost of renting the site (the site fee)
  2. All additional costs or fees the site will charge including use of propane or other fuel, toilet paper, etc.
  3. Site tokens.
  4. Insurance certificate if needed
  5. Photocopying cost of program or schedule. (Be careful accepting offers to do the photocopying for free at the time you are bidding for the event, things can change as to the access or ability of the person who said they would make the copies-better to budget for it).
  6. Cost of food
    - a. Usually, the head cook sets the food budget.
    - b. This should include things like disposable serveware.
    - c. Easier to plan if the food is pre-reg only.
  7. Miscellaneous or contingency funds should be built into the budget
  8. **PayPal**
    - a. In the East Kingdom, we may use PayPal for event registration. There is a process to setting it up. Ask the exchequer of the group for assistance.

- b. PayPal has the advantage of making it easier for most people to attend.
- c. Not all attendees will use PayPal, and there must be a method of sending a check or money order to the registrar.
- d. Attendees do not pay a premium if they use PayPal, the cost is to be borne by the branch through the event proceeds. Kingdom rule.
  - i. Adjust the site fee, meaning the entire budget, about 2% higher to compensate for the cost of using PayPal.

**B. Break even**

1. What is the minimum number of people you might expect to show up at your event? How would that number be affected by a weather emergency in which the event still ran, but fewer people could attend? This is not the number you hope, this the least number you can reasonably expect to attend.
2. Break-even will be total expected expenses divided by the minimum number of expected attendees
  - a. **Example:** Event should get 50 people even though the branch is hoping for 75. In this example, the cost of the site is \$500. Food is \$175. Miscellaneous is \$100, and site tokens are \$25. No pamphlets are planned. Total expected cost is \$800. Add 2% for PayPal brings it to \$816. Divide by 50 people \$16.32. You could make the site fee \$16.50 or \$17 even.

**C. The NMS is not part of your budget.**

D. Discounting the site fee, even by one penny, removes the NMS for children and makes attending events more affordable for families. Traditionally in Hartshorn-dale we try to do a 'family cap' as well.

1. The easiest way to do a family cap is to charge for two adults and one child.
  - a. Example: using the site fee above of \$17, and assuming children are to be half that at \$8. A family cap would be \$42. This generally applies to children, not to large families of adults.
2. The method for a family cap might be event specific. For instance, if an event was entirely about and geared to children, you might make the 2<sup>nd</sup> adult free, but charge for the children. Or conversely, if an event is expected to not draw children, perhaps children would be free, and there would no need to have family cap.

E. There are very strict rules for 'comping' any of the attendees, so this needs to be set out in advance.

1. All staff, including the autocrat must pay the site fee.
2. Everyone on site must be registered as attending
3. If there is someone who you wish to NOT charge the site fee, speak with the exchequer about that. Occasionally, but not routinely, royals are 'comped'. Hartshorn-dale 'comped' the two non-SCAdian lecturers at KWASS in 2018, as they were normally paid for lectures. We also 'comped' the musicians at KWASS, because they did not attend any of the day's activities, came only in the evening to play for our Dance, and then left.

V. Setting a date

- A. What time of year should this event be held?
  - 1. Outdoors? Indoors?
- B. Are you bidding for a kingdom event that has a specific time or date it must be held, such as Coronation or Crown Tourney?
- C. Avoid calendar conflicts, particularly with geographically closer groups.
  - 1. Look at the kingdom calendar, it has previous events function, where you can look at the last 10 years. Use this to narrow down when other groups have traditional events, they host that would draw attendees from your event.
- D. Check with your staff to avoid conflicts. For instance, you'll lose your head cook if you try to schedule the event on her sister's wedding date.
  - 1. The seneschal is required to attend their branch's events, check with the seneschal to make sure they are available.
  - 2. If there is a local coronet, make certain they are available.
  - 3. If this is a Royal Progress, does the date work for the Royals?
  - 4. If this is a championship, does the outgoing champion have any conflicts?

## VI. Event announcement

- A. What to include:
  - 1. Gate open, and site times
  - 2. Pet policy
  - 3. Wet or dry site
  - 4. Open flame or ground fire policy
  - 5. Outline of class schedule or link to up-to-date schedule
  - 6. List Schedule-MoL open
  - 7. Handicapped accessible or challenges
  - 8. Whether money could be need on site
  - 9. Make clear whether there will be any food
  - 10. Merchant space and what merchants are registered
  - 11. GOOD directions to the site, do not depend on everyone using GPS
- B. Wording should encourage folks to want to attend.
- C. Please go the EK seneschal's website to find 'Gate in a Box' under resources. This will list current Covid policy, restrictions, and announcements which must be placed in the event announcements.
- D. Event announcement is what is placed in Pikestaff, making the event officially advertised.
  - 1. The branch seneschal will receive an automatic email asking if they have sanctioned the event. The event will not appear on the webpage till they answer the email.
- E. **IMPORTANT:** When you put the event announcement onto the kingdom announcement page, you will receive an email with a code. **DO NOT** put that email into the trash file, **you will need the code** to re-enter the announcement to update times and classes and new information as the event approaches.
  - 1. **Because things happen, you must share this code with someone else!** Send it to the seneschal, to the exchequer, and/or the head cook. A great person to

- have a copy of it would the class coordinator, so they can update classes independently of you, if they are good with arranging it on the announcement to make it readable.
- F. After the official event announcement is up, you can set up a Facebook event.
    - 1. Facebook events in Hartshorn-dale must be set up on the Page, rather than the discussion group. Putting there makes it shareable, because the Page is public facing (meaning you do not need to be a member to see the contents of the page). Have the Officers who have access to the page get it set up for you: Social Media, Webminister, and Seneschal.

## VII. Next steps

- A. This is most of what is needed to start the process of Autocrating an event. This is NOT an all-inclusive document. There are many experienced autocrats in Hartshorn-dale. If you have questions, just reach out to the officers, someone will know the answer, or know where to look for the answer.
- B. If you have never autocrated before, use this guide as a starting point, but consider periodically chatting in real time with an experienced autocrat within the group, with all the information handy, and a way to take notes, if needed.