

# BYLAWS OF THE HEATHEN FREEHOLD SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Definition of Terms:

- i) For a complete definition of terms see Part 2: Definition of Terms.
- ii) The *Heathen Freehold Society of B.C.* may also be referred to as “the society”, “the Freehold”, “the Heathen Freehold” throughout these bylaws.

## 1. Membership

1.1 The Freehold is a confederation or association of independent tribes, *theods*<sup>1</sup>, *kindreds*<sup>2</sup> and individuals acting in cooperation to fulfill these purposes. Freehold functions are not meant to replace traditional tribal functions. A member theod might well hold its own *thing*<sup>3</sup>, elect its own *witan*<sup>4</sup>,

declare its own sacral king, or on the other hand a member *stamm*<sup>5</sup> might be a "kingless republic". These individual traditions, as examples, are outside the domain of the Freehold because every individual, household, kindred, or tribe is self-responsible and governs itself as it sees fit.

1.2 The members of the society are the applicants for incorporation of the society, and those persons

who subsequently become members in accordance to these bylaws, and in either case have not ceased to be members.

1.3 Those who share a profound reverence for all the old gods and goddesses of the Germanic tribes, collectively known as the Aesir and the Vanir, or by variant names, and an interest in or a commitment to any of the many forms of modern Germanic pagan or Heathen spirituality are welcomed to become members of the Heathen Freehold Society of British Columbia.

1.4 Every member must uphold the constitution and bylaws.

1.5 The amount of the first annual membership dues must be determined by the *trustees*<sup>6</sup> and subsequently dues may from time to time be changed by a simple majority of voting members during

a thing or althing.

1.6 All members are members in good standing except:

(a) a member who has failed to pay his or her current annual membership fee, or any other subscription or debt due;

(b) a member who has been declared not in good standing by the *Witan*<sup>7</sup> or expelled;

1.7 A person ceases to be a member of the Freehold

(a) by delivering his or her own resignation in writing to the *writer*<sup>8</sup>, or any trustee, or by mailing it to the address of the society,

(b) upon his or her death, or in the case of a corporation, on dissolution,

(c) on being expelled,

(d) on having been a member not in good standing for six consecutive months.

<sup>1</sup> “Theod”, meaning *tribe*, see glossary, Part 4.

<sup>2</sup> “Kindred”, a kin-group, a family, or a group of Heathens who worship together.

<sup>3</sup> “Thing”, general assembly.

<sup>4</sup> “Witan” from Old English, “a council of wise ones”, a council of tribal elders.

<sup>5</sup> “Stamm”, a kindred, family, akin to “stem”.

<sup>6</sup> “Trustees”, the directors of the society, see Section 10.

<sup>7</sup> “Witan”, the committee of executive officers of the Freehold, which include the trustees, see Section 16.

<sup>8</sup> The “writer” is the membership secretary of the society, a member of the trustees, see Section 16.

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1.8 When a person ceases to be a member, he or she is considered released from obligation to any oath made pertaining to Freehold law, excepting former Witan who remain bound by privacy agreements covering any material disclosed in the course of their duties.

## 2. New Memberships

2.1 A person may apply for membership by directing an inquiry to the Witan using any of the Freehold contact methods, such as the mailing address of the society, or any of its *shires*<sup>9</sup>, or phone

number or e-mail address, if any.

2.2 All new applications for membership are subject to approval by the Witan.

2.3 When the approval has been received by the applicant, he or she is considered to be a Journeyman member

of the society and at that point membership fees will be due.

2.4 New members are Journeymen with full dues paid and full voting privileges and access to forums as trothed members subject to approval at next Althing.

2.5 With majority vote at Althing Journeyman status may be extended until the next Althing for reasons of personal emergencies or duties that have kept the Journeyman from attending their duties to the Freehold.

2.6 The Witan may, during this trial period and with a two-thirds majority, suspend Journeyman's membership if it is deemed necessary to preserve the peace.

2.7 At the next Althing Journeymen will be reviewed by the membership and if 75% have no objection to this member's conduct and presence, they shall be considered Trothed or full members ever after..

2.8 The Witan and members will bear no bias, but make their best determinations based on available facts, and will clearly state in their notice of denial or suspension the reasons cited as being grounds for the denial or suspension.

2.9 Applicants who have been denied or suspended may contact the *ombudsman*<sup>10</sup> in order to seek mediation, and may appeal the decision at the next Althing.

### **3. Maethels & Membership Revocation**

3.1 Complaints or accusations regarding the alleged violation of Freehold bylaws should be directed

to the ombudsman, who will keep the complaint on record, as well as forward the complaint to the Witan in a timely manner.

3.2 The Witan may set additional official policies regarding the methodology of the revocation of a membership, including but not limited to setting deadlines, enforcing temporary probation, and so on,

which from time to time may be changed as knowledge of traditional Germanic dispute resolution customs may come to light, but which are nevertheless consistent with these bylaws.

3.3 Any such policy change should be announced to all members in a timely manner, but cannot be carried out during the course of a complaint resolution process already in progress and cannot superseded the current bylaws of the society.

3.4 The Witan should seek to settle the dispute through mediation where appropriate and may direct

the ombudsman to oversee a mediation process between disputing parties.

<sup>9</sup> A "shire" is a local branch of the society, see Section 22.

<sup>10</sup> The *ombudsman* is the representative of members-at-large and a member of the trustees.

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3.5 If the Witan deem the complaint may have merit, or is worthy of further investigation, or the dispute mediation process has failed, a *maethel*, or *tribal court of law*, will be declared.

3.6 Or, a maethel will be declared if a simple majority (51% or greater) of the voting members petition

the ombudsman.

3.7 The accused, or defendant, who is alleged to have been wrongdoing, may choose how the maethel shall be constituted:

a) as a jury of peers, with the *freyr* or *freya*<sup>11</sup> presiding, consisting of a random selection of at least three, and at most twelve voting members as determined by the Witan,

b) as a council of elders, consisting of at least three witan,

c) as a wise judge, in the Freehold *freyr* or *freya*.

3.8 The accused has the right to pre-disclosure of the nature of the evidence to be presented against him or her, to defend him or her self, and to be heard at the maethel hearing.

3.9 A membership may be revoked by no less than a two-thirds majority of the maethel, however it is

constituted.

3.10 If the defendant is a *wita*<sup>12</sup>, or a trustee, he or she will step aside until the maethel is concluded,

and assign duties to another wita in the interim.

3.11 The bylaws and official policies of the Freehold which were in effect at the time of the alleged wrongdoing shall be the governing rules for each case.

3.12 In any event, the Witan will ensure that the policies governing maethel and the proceedings of any maethel are fair and just.

3.13 The maethel shall be conducted in a timely manner, will have a lifetime limited to the duration of

each case and will be dissolved as such after reaching its judgment.

#### **4. Ring of Freeholders (Voting Memberships)**

4.1 *Trothed Freeholders* and *Journeyman* are the voting members of the society.

##### **Trothed Freeholders**

4.2 A *trothed Freeholder* is a member in good standing who has sworn, in the Freeholder's Oath, that he or she is true to the Germanic gods and further to abide by Freehold law in regards to Freehold events and functions (See Appendix A: Freeholder's Oath).

4.3 Trothed Freeholders have a vote at meetings of the society, may apply for membership in any gild and may run for election at thing, althing, gild or shire moot.

##### **Oathed Journeyman**

4.4 A *Journeyman* is one who has sworn an oath of troth, but who has not yet been confirmed by the members at Althing. Journeyman have sworn to keep the peace and abide by Freehold law in respect to Freehold events and functions, to speak and participate in such guild activities and functions as they feel they may contribute to so that their Freehold fellows should know and judge them by their words and proven deeds.

4.5 Any trothed Freeholder may sponsor a Journeyman by presenting the proposed Journeyman at thing or althing, or a moot of the local shire of which they are a part, if any. Un-sponsored Journeymen are deemed to be sponsored by the Freyr.

<sup>11</sup> The freyr or freya is the Freehold's sacral leader and the chief executive officer of the society, chair of the Witan.

<sup>12</sup> "Wita" from OE, "wise one, one with wit". Singular form of "witan".

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4.6 There must be 75% approval, or acclamation, by voting members actually attending the meeting for the Journeyman to be accepted as a voting member of the Freehold.

4.7 Voting on a motion to accept a Journeyman may be made in person, by proxy or electronically in the case of forum votes.

4.8 A Journeyman may not foster another Journeyman, nor run for election. In extraordinary circumstances, however, a Journeyman may be appointed to the Witan as per Section 10.

#### **5. Friends & Youth**

5. Sworn *youth* are the nonvoting members of the society, except where noted. Those who swear the Youth oath are held to Freehold Law at Freehold function, given access to Freehold only areas and resources but not granted access to guild forums, not able to vote, stand for office, and not owing dues. Youth swearing the Freeholder Oath are treated as regular Journeyman and Trothed members respectively.

##### **Friends**

5.2 *Friends* are members of the general public who not sworn an oath of troth, who may have simply a keen interest in Germanic culture or who may want to remain informed, but who at any rate are themselves in good standing and have a sponsor who is a trothed Freeholder in good standing. Friends are not members of the Freehold, owe no dues, and are not granted access to Freeholder only areas and guildhalls.

5.3 *Donating Friends* are members of the general public who while not members of the Freehold, or bound by oaths, feel sufficiently strongly about the Freehold's work that they choose to offer donations equal or greater to membership dues. Donating friends can apply to the guildleaders for access to the guildhalls where they may share in the exchange of learning about guild activities and thus contribute and benefit from the lore of the Freehold.

##### **Kinderfolk**

5.4 Children, or *kinderfolk*, are perhaps the most important of Freehold members, being central to many kindreds and families; they are our link to the future, our legacy, and the *Joy of the Ancestors*.

5.5 Children are numbered as not numbered as members of the Freehold, but deemed to be part of the membership of their parent for the purposes of their participation at Freehold events and rites. Children are thus deemed to be covered by their parent's oaths with respect to conduct and privacy, thus being welcome at all Freehold functions.

#### **Freehold Youth**

5.6 If it is a kindred's wish, and when the kindred parents or guardians deem it, a child may be declared a youth by the kindred or guardian at the Freehold thing, althing, or shire moot, as soon as they express a desire and understanding and no later than the age of majority or until the youth is self responsible.

5.7 Being declared a youth by a parent or guardian can be considered to be a limited grant of parental consent. Specific conditions and limits to the body and nature of this consent are to be set in writing at that time by parents or guardians, and given to the Freehold writer or other wita.

5.8 Youth who wish to vote must swear the Freeholder's Oath with parental consent .

5.9 Trothed Freehold youth shall have a vote at thing and althing and in almost every respect have the same rights and privileges as any Freeholder.

5.10 Youth members who have not yet sworn their Freeholder's Oath will have the opportunity to swear their Freeholders Oath at the next Althing after their majority, subject to 75% approval as with Journeymen members converting to Trothed membership.

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### **6. Things, Althings and Shire Moots (Meetings of the Society)**

6.1 *Althing* is defined as the Annual General Meeting of the society.

6.2 *Thing* is defined as an Extraordinary General Meeting and is any general meeting of the society other than althing.

6.3 Althings and things must be held at the time and place, in accordance with the Society Act, that the trustees decide.

6.4 A *shire moot* is defined as a meeting of members whose registered addresses are within the regional boundaries of active *shire*<sup>13</sup>, as per Section 22.

6.5 A shire moot must be held at the time and place, in accordance with the Society Act, that the *shire aeht*<sup>14</sup>, or two shire members, decides. A shire may from time to time set a minimum of shire members needed to convene a moot at a higher number.

6.6 The freyr or freya may convene a thing when he or she sees fit, as per Section 11, or in or the event of his or her absence any trustee acting in that stead.

6.7 A simple majority of witan may convene a thing.

6.8 Also, a thing may need to be convened if a maethel is declared by the Witan, or a simple majority

of voting members call for maethel as per Section 3 or Section 16, and it so happens the next scheduled althing is more than six months in the future.

6.9 The first althing of the society must not be held more than 15 months after the date of incorporation. After that, an althing must be held at least once every calendar year and not more than 15 months after holding the preceding althing.

6.10 *Regular business* of an althing includes

- (a) the adoption of rules of order,
- (b) the consideration of financial statements,
- (c) the reports of the gilds, if any,
- (d) the reports of the shires, if any,
- (e) the report of the Witan,
- (f) the report of the trustees,
- (g) the election of trustees and witan,
- (h) the report of the auditor, if any,
- (i) the swearing in of new members, if any,
- (j) the counting of proxy votes, if any,
- (k) amendment of the constitution and bylaws, if any,
- (l) the setting of Freehold thew (policy, custom),
- (m) any other business that, under these bylaws, ought to be conducted at an althing, or business that is brought under consideration by the report of the trustees included with the notice convening the meeting.

6.11 *Special business* is defined as:

- (a) all business at a thing except for the adoption of rules of order,
- (b) any business concerning any maethel that has been convened.

6.12 *Shire business* is defined as business related specifically to a particular shire that is neither *regular business* nor *special business*.

<sup>13</sup> "Shire", a local branch of the society. Section 22.

<sup>14</sup> "Aeht" from OE, the executive body of a shire, who are also also members of the Witan.

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6.13 *Business from the floor* is defined as any business which is not *regular business* or *special business* or *shire business*. Business from the floor is to be tabled for the next Witangemot for consideration at that time. Issues not in the agenda are to be entered as items for consideration at the next Thing or Witangemot.

6.14 The Freyr or freya will chair thing and Althing and in his or her absence the Ombudsman. If neither of these attend the meeting within thirty minutes of the time appointed, any wita must be elected to act as chair.

6.15 The *shire ealdorman*<sup>15</sup> will chair shire moots, or in his or her absence any wita who is a member of the shire.

6.16 If no wita is willing or able to act as chair, the voting members must elect one amongst themselves to act as chair.

6.17 A resolution proposed at a thing, Althing or shire moot does not need to be seconded and the chair may move or propose a resolution.

## 7. Voting

7.1 Every member in good standing who has sworn the Freeholder's Oath or the Witan's Oath (Appendix A), and who is thus a trothed Freeholder, is entitled to one vote.

7.2 Trothed Freeholders are encouraged and expected to make every effort to attend Althing, thing, or a shire moot, but in the case that they cannot, they may cast their votes on regular business, special business or shire business by proxy, as per Section 8.

7.3 A *ballot* is defined as a vote, or votes, by proxy on special, regular or shire business.

7.4 *Business from the floor*, which is not special, regular or shire business, that arises spontaneously at Althing, thing or shire moot will be added as agenda items for the next Thing or Witangemot held between the Althing arising, and the next Althing.

7.5 A *poll* is defined as a vote by sworn members in person or electronically.

7.6 Journeymen members may vote in all manners as Trothed Freeholders save on their own membership application..

7.7 Voting members who attend a thing, Althing or shire moot in person, may vote by show of hands, or submit their ballot or poll documents by proxy. Electronic votes may be entered on the forum by members, or a written copy of voting instructions may be filed with the Witan and scanned copies entered into the record.

7.8 Voting members who are not able to attend a thing, Althing or shire moot in person, may authorize another voting member to cast votes on behalf of the *member-not-attending*, only in the event that the member-not-attending:

- (a) is fully informed of business to be conducted at the meeting,
- (b) has not otherwise voted by proxy using ballots or polls,
- (c) has reached an understanding with the *member-attending* prior to the meeting,
- (d) has signed and dated a document naming his or her self and the member-attending, specifically granting that member the right to wield the absentee vote, and
- (e) that document is in the possession of the member-attending at the meeting in question, and is submitted to the Secretary, or whoever is acting as secretary for the meeting, prior to any business getting underway.

<sup>15</sup> "Ealdorman" from OE (whence "alderman") is the executive officer of a Freehold shire.

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7.9 Any authorization given under 7.8 is a temporary grant that may be carried over if the meeting in

question is adjourned to a later date, but which nevertheless expires at the final termination of the meeting, or the adjourned meeting held no later than four weeks after the original meeting was

adjourned.

## **8. Notices, Ballots and Polls**

8.1 Notice of a thing, Althing or shire moot must:

(a) be given to:

- (i) every member in good standing if the meeting is not a shire moot, or,
  - (ii) if the meeting is a shire moot, only members whose registered address is within the geographic boundaries of a shire are entitled to receive notice of a shire moot;
  - (iii) the Freehold Witan, who shall be informed of every shire moot;
  - (iv) the auditor, if applicable, and
- (b) specify the place, day and hour of the meeting,
- (c) the general nature of the special, regular or shire business to be dealt with.

8.2 In the cases that the member being notified is a voting member the notice must also:

- (a) specify in the cases of the special, regular or shire business, the exact nature of that business,
- (b) include one or more ballots or poll documents upon which each member may mark his or her vote(s) and signature.

8.3 A notice of thing, Althing or shire moot may be given to a member either personally or by mail to the member's registered mailing address.

8.4 Official notices, ballots and polls sent by mail will be deemed to have been given on the second day following the day on which the notice, ballots or polls, were posted.

8.5 In proving that notice, ballots or polls have been given it is sufficient to prove the notice, ballots or polls were properly stamped and addressed and put in a Canadian post office receptacle.

8.6 Voting members who wish to vote must either return the polls or ballots to the Freehold mailing address, or in the case of shire business, the shire's mailing address, postmarked within fourteen days after they have been given, or attend the meeting at which the business is to be conducted.

8.7 Failure to return the polls or ballots in the time allotted will be regarded as an abstention.

8.8 The accidental omission to give notices, ballots or polls, or the non-receipt by, any of the members entitled to receive notice, ballots or polls, does not invalidate proceedings at that meeting or the resolutions arising from the counts of proxy votes received.

## **9. Quorum & Adjournments**

9.1 Quorum for thing and Althing is defined as at least one trustee, and in the case of a shire moot, at least one *shire aethling*<sup>16</sup>, who must be in possession of whatever ballot or poll proxy-votes that have been received by the Freehold before the deadline, and at least two other voting members.

9.2 Voting members may from time to time at Althing set quorum at a greater number or configuration

as they see fit, but quorum for Althing or thing must always include at least one trustee, and for shire

moots at least one aethling.

<sup>16</sup> "Aethling" from OE. A member of a shire aeht, the executive body of a shire, also a wita.

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9.3 If at any time during a thing, Althing or shire moot, there ceases to be a quorum present, business then in progress must be suspended until there is a quorum present or until the meeting is adjourned or terminated.

9.4 Business other than the election of a chair, if needed, and the adjournment or termination of the meeting must not be conducted at thing, Althing or shire moot at a time when there is not a quorum present.

9.5 If, within one hour from the time appointed for a thing, Althing or shire moot, a quorum is not present, the meeting must be adjourned to another date within four weeks of the adjournment.

9.6 If, at the adjourned meeting, a quorum is not present within thirty minutes from the appointed time, three members present shall constitute a quorum, even if there is no trustee attending.

9.7 If a trustee or wita is unable to attend the adjourned meeting, the trustees or witan are bound to ensure the attendees are furnished with the final count on any proxy votes which may have remained

uncounted when the original meeting was adjourned, if any, in order that any unfinished business may be resolved.

9.8 A thing, Althing or shire moot may be adjourned from time to time and from place to place if

necessary.

9.9 When a meeting is adjourned for more than four weeks, notice of the adjourned meeting must be

given as in the case of the original meeting.

## **10. Ring of Trustees (Directors of the Society)**

10.1 The *trustees* are the *directors of the society* as defined in the Society Act. The trustees carry out both the Witan's and the Althing's directives, so long as the directives are in keeping with the Freehold purposes and are not inconsistent with these bylaws.

10.2 Three Directors to be selected from amongst the Wita elected by voting Freeholders. Interim Directors to be appointed with two Director signatures from amongst the sitting Wita, or if two signatures are not possible, by special election at a Thing or Witagamot called by any serving Wita upon notification that a directorship is vacant.

10.3 Any Wita including newly elected wita are eligible for election as trustee providing they meet the requirements of the Societies Act 24-25, and have a recent (within 2years) CPIC on file with the Freehold within one calender month of their election.

10.4 Trustees will be elected at Althing or Thing for a term of one year to end at the following Althing. Trustees to be nominated from among the elected Witan by Trothed Freeholders in good standing or other Witan.

10.5 Except for the freyr's or freya's office, separate elections must be held for each office to be filled

unless a 75% majority of all voting members is in attendance at thing or althing, in which case it may

be by acclamation.

10.6 The term of any wita elected to the office of trustee, whether or not he or she is currently a gild drighthen, shall be one year, and shall retire from the trustee office at each althing.

10.7 There is no limit to the number of times a trustee may be reelected.

10.8 If a successor is not elected, the person previously elected or appointed will continue to hold office.

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10.9 In the case that the number of trustees fall below five members, the Witan, with a unanimous vote, may temporarily appoint any fosterman or trothed Freeholder who is willing to fill the vacancy until the conclusion of the following althing.

10.10 An act or proceeding of the trustees is not invalid merely because there are less than the prescribed number of trustees in office.

10.11 Voting members, with a 75% majority, may remove a trustee before the expiration of his or her

term of office and may elect a successor to complete his or her term of office. However, such a removal does not also remove the former trustee from the Witan, or from any position on the Witan he

or she may hold such as drighthen, aethling or ealdorman.

10.12 A trustee must not be remunerated for being or acting as a trustee. However, a trustee must be reimbursed for all expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred by the trustee while engaged in the affairs of the society, as soon as possible for the society, except where that trustee has waived the right to reimbursement, in which case expenses incurred will be regarded as a monetary donation

made by the trustee to the Freehold.

10.13 In any case, the trustees must submit receipts and an expense report for their offices in the previous year, if any, to the *hoarder*<sup>17</sup> at least eight weeks before althing.

## **11. Freyr / Freya (President of the Society)**

11.1 The *freyr* or *freya* is the *president of the society* as defined in the Society Act, and is the chief executive officer of the Freehold.

11.2 The freyr or freya presides at all meetings of trustees and the Witan, and also at thing or althing.

11.3 The Witan is obliged and empowered to elect from amongst themselves one man or woman whom for a term of one year shall act as the sacral head of the Freehold and the warder of its luck.

11.4 There is no limit to the number of times a freyr or freya may be reelected.

11.5 If a successor is not elected, the person previously elected or appointed will continue to hold office.

11.6 Whomever fills this stead, let the cognate of his or her tribe be their title for their term. Thus, a Norse woman would be the "freya", a Norse man "freyr", an Anglo-Saxon woman "freo", a man "frea", a German woman the "frau", and so on.

11.7 As sacral leader of the Freehold, the freyr or freya is to granted membership in the Weoh Gild and is so empowered to lead the Freehold at its holy rites.

11.8 If called upon to do so by a majority of witan at Witangemot, or a majority of members at thing or althing, the freyr or freya may set Freehold thew, custom or policy as he or she deems fit, so long as such deemings are consistent with these bylaws.

11.9 The freyr or freya may also be asked by disputing parties to mediate a dispute or preside over a maethel, as per Section 3.

11.10 The freyr or freya is empowered to declare, in extraordinary circumstances, that a thing or althing must be held if he or she deems it in the best interest of the Freehold.

<sup>17</sup> "Hoarder", the treasurer of the society.

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11.11 In the unlikely case that all the other trustee offices are not currently filled, the freyr or freya may appoint members to fill the vacancies until the next althing.

11.12 In the unlikely event that all trustee positions, including the freyr's or freya's become vacant, the Witan, or voting members at thing or althing must elect one of themselves to act as freyr or freya,

and four others to act as trustees, until the next althing. In any event, there must always be a freyr or freya in office.

## **12. Speaker (Position removed)**

## **13. Secretary (Membership Secretary)**

13.1 The *secretary* fulfills those duties of the *secretary* as defined in the Society Act.

13.2 The secretary is elected at thing or althing and shall:

- (a) conduct all correspondence of the society except that being conducted by the Freyr,
- (b) have custody of all the records and documents of the society, except those required to be kept by the hoarder and the Freyr,
- (c) keep minutes of all meetings of the society and trustees,
- (d) maintain the register of members,
- (e) act as publisher of the official newsletter,
- (f) keep one of the common seals of the society, if any.

13.3 In the event of the absence of the secretar at a meeting, the trustees or the witan must appoint another person to act as writer.

## **14. Treasurer**

14.1 The *treasurer* is the *treasurer* as defined in the Society Act and is elected at thing or althing, and shall:

- (a) keep the financial records, including books of account, necessary to comply with the Society Act, and
- (b) render financial statements to the Witan, members and others when required,
- (c) be responsible for a yearly inventory of physical assets belonging to the society,
- (d) produce a consolidated report from the reports of the gilds and shires, if any.

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## **15. Ombudsman**

15.1 The ombudsman is elected at thing or althing, and shall:

- (a) act as the ambassador of the Witan among members, and be available to answer new member inquiries of any sort,
- (b) be a point of contact, and a representative on the Witan, for those members not already

- represented there by any gild or shire,  
(c) keep record of official complaints, and official judgments, if any, regarding past or present Freehold members,  
(d) coordinate the mediation process between disputing members if called upon to do so,  
(e) coordinate any maethel that is declared, as per Section 3.

## **16. Ring of Witan**

16.1 The *Witan* is the executive committee of the Freehold, which necessarily includes the trustees, that is responsible to ensure the Freehold as a whole remains true to the Germanic gods and fulfills the purposes for which it was formed.

16.2 The Witan shall consist of a minimum of five trothed Freeholders, or a greater number set from time to time at thing or althing, including:

- (a) the *trustees of the society*, as per Section 10,
- (b) *gild drightens*<sup>18</sup> or their representatives, if any, as per Section 19,
- (c) *shire ealdormen* representing regional Freehold shires, if any, as per Section 23,
- (d) any notable elders or honoured folk the members may elect,
- (e) and any temporary appointments made to ensure a minimum of five witan.

16.3 An act or proceeding of the Witan is not invalid merely because there are less than the prescribed number of witan in office.

16.4 The Witan may exercise all the powers and do all the acts that the society may exercise and do, except where required by federal or provincial law, Freehold law or thew to be exercised or done at a

thing or althing, shire or gild moot, and subject nevertheless to:

- (a) all federal or provincial laws affecting the society,
- (b) Freehold law (these bylaws),
- (c) Freehold thews (rules, policies or customs), not inconsistent with Freehold laws, that are made from time to time by voting members at a thing or althing, or if so directed by a simple majority of voting members, by the Freehold freyr or freya.

16.5 Any trothed Freeholder is eligible to run for election to the Witan.

16.6 In the case that the candidate is a gild drighten, or an aethling or ealdorman of a Freehold shire, he or she is elected to the Witan by the gild, as per Section 18, or by the shire, as per Section 22, for a term that the gild or shire may from time to time set for its leader at a gild or shire moot, at minimum one year, up to a maximum of three years.

16.7 There is no limit to the number of times a wita may be reelected, except if such restriction may be resolved by a gild regarding its representative on the Witan.

16.8 If a successor is not elected, the wita previously elected or appointed will continue to hold office.

16.9 Where the candidate is not a gild drighten or representative, separate elections must be held for

each office to be filled unless at least a 75% majority of all voting members is in attendance at althing, in which case it may be by acclamation.

<sup>18</sup> "Drighten" from OE, chief of a driht or war band. The title of a leader of a Freehold gild.

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16.10 Newly elected witan shall swear the Freehold Witan's Oath, if they have not before, as per Appendix A, in all earnestness.

16.11 Former witan are not released from their Witan's Oath on retiring from office.

16.12 The first witan of the society, upon incorporation, will be validated in their positions upon the swearing and signing of the Witan's Oath. Subsequently, newly elected witan who have not filled an office in the previous term, are not validated in their positions until their oaths have been accepted as

genuine by at least 75% of the existing witan, or by acclamation.

16.13 Before validating any newly elected wita, the Witan will exercise due diligence in regards to performing whatever background or reference checks may be deemed necessary.

16.14 Unless there is some compelling reason to do otherwise, the Witan should, as a matter of course, accept new witan who have been lawfully elected by a thing, althing, or gild or shire moot by

voting members of the society.

16.15 The Witan will bear no bias, but make their best determination based on available facts, and will clearly state in any notice of denial the reasons cited as being grounds for the denial.

16.16 In the case that the existing witan do not accept a new election, the newly elected member, or

his or her constituents, may request a maethel be declared to settle the question by all voting members at thing, or by proxy vote.

### **17. Witangemot (Proceedings at Meetings of the Directors)**

17.1 *Witangemot* is defined as an official meeting of the Witan, including the trustees, and is analogous to a *meeting of the directors* as defined in the Society Act.

17.2 Any trustee, or a simple majority of witan, may at any time convene a Witangemot.

17.3 The Witan may meet at the places they think fit to conduct business, adjourn and otherwise regulate their meetings and proceedings as they see fit.

17.4 The Witan may from time to time set the quorum necessary to conduct business, and unless so

set the quorum consists of any number of drightens and aethlings, and a simple majority of trustees then in office.

17.5 The freyr or freya must chair all meetings of the Witan, and in his or her absence the speaker, and if neither of these is present within thirty minutes of the appointed time, the Witan must elect a trustee to act as chair at that meeting.

17.6 The trustees may delegate some, but not all, of their powers to committees consisting of any number of witan, as they see fit. Any such committee is analogous to a Freehold gild and should conduct its meetings within the guidelines for gild moots, as per Section 20.

17.7 Questions arising at witangemot shall be decided by a majority vote, except where otherwise specified in Freehold law.

17.8 In the case if a tie vote, the freyr or freya, or in his or her absence, whichever trustee is acting as chair, has second or casting vote to decide the matter. However, in the case of those exceptions requiring a majority of greater than two-thirds the chair does not have a second vote if the special resolution fails by one vote.

17.9 A resolution proposed at witangemot need not be seconded and the chair of the meeting may move or propose a resolution.

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17.10 A resolution in writing signed by all the trustees and a simple majority of the witan who are not

trustees currently in office, if any, is as valid and effective as if regularly passed at witangemot.

17.11 In the event that a witangemot is convened, but quorum is not achieved, or if a physical meeting of the Witan is not possible to convene in a timely fashion, questions needing resolution may

be settled by proxy vote or using telecommunications to conduct the video or phone conference, or other method only where the identity of witan can be reasonably confirmed or observed.

### **18. Ring of Gilds**

18.1 A *gild* is defined as two or more Freehold members who counsel on a regular basis to study, practice and/or teach a particular aspect of Germanic culture.

18.2 *Gild fellows* are Freehold members who are also members in any gild.

18.3 Any two members may form a new gild by applying to the Witan or at althing.

18.4 A gild is a subcommittee of the Witan, and is answerable to it and the althing of voting members. As such, a gild is provincial body and may have numerous centres of activity throughout the province.

18.5 Gilds are charged by the Freehold to learn, do, encourage and teach, each according to its craft or area of knowledge.

18.6 Gilds meet and govern themselves as they see fit in a manner consistent with these bylaws, according to their craft, so long as they continue to fulfill their purposes and the purposes of the Freehold.

18.7 A newly formed gild is *equalitarian*<sup>19</sup> by default and all the fellows of the gild who are trothed Freeholders are entitled to one vote on matters involving gild business.

18.8 An equalitarian gild may elect to adopt a hierarchy appropriate to their craft, and may therefore restrict the voting rights of its fellows accordingly, in regards to gild business, so long as all the voting

fellows of a gild are given the opportunity to vote on the resolution to adopt such a hierarchy. However, any such restriction shall not impinge upon the fellow's right to a vote as a trothed Freeholder at thing, althing or shire moot.

18.9 Any Freehold member in good standing may apply to a gild for fellowship in it, but gilds may have reasonable entrance requirements and criterion, so fellowship in any gild cannot be guaranteed.

18.10 Rejected applications may be appealed to the Witan by way of the ombudsman, and as final recourse at the next thing or althing.

18.11 Gilds may at their discretion charge a reasonable membership fee, provided a fee or *geld*<sup>20</sup> is paid by the gild to the Freehold common hoard. Either the Witan and the althing have the right to determine the geld due, but not retroactively, or cap fees if they are deemed unreasonable.

18.12 Gilds may undertake business, on behalf of, and in the name of, the Freehold, by applying to the Witan or the althing, so long as:

a) no member personally profits in the course of a Gild undertaking,

b) a geld is paid to the Freehold common hoard,

<sup>19</sup> "Equalitarian", a form of social organization wherein every member is has equal rights.

<sup>20</sup> "Geld" from OE, meaning a fee, payment or debt.

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c) any profits or other accretions to the Freehold or the gilds are used solely to further the Freehold's purposes.

18.13 The geld due shall be set by the Witan or althing, and the remainder will be kept by the gild for

its own purposes, so long as those purposes are in keeping with the Freehold's and are not inconsistent with these bylaws or Freehold thews or whatever other requirement which may be set by

the Witan or voting members from time to time at althing.

18.14 These restrictions do not apply to individual gild fellows and their personal, private businesses,

but only to business activities undertaken by a Freehold gild on behalf of, and in the name of, the Freehold.

18.15 Gilds shall be responsible for keeping their own financial records, and submit yearly financial statements to the Freehold hoarder six weeks prior to althing.

18.16 If the gild undertakes no business, or its activities undertake no expenses, it will simply submit

a null report.

18.17 Each gild shall send at least one representative to the althing, who will report in writing and by

by yelping about the gilds activities the previous year. Detail about specific accomplishments is expected. Each gild is also expected to boast, thus informing the althing what plans are for the coming year.

18.18 A Freehold member who is not in good standing for a period of longer than six months shall lose fellowship in any gilds he or she may belong to at the time Freehold membership is made inactive.

18.19 A gild, other than the Weoh Gild, inactive for a year, may be disbanded by the Witan, thing or althing. The Weoh Gild shall not be disbanded or inactive as long as the Freehold exists.

## **19. Gild Drightens**

19.1 Each gild shall elect or appoint at least one gild representative to the Freehold Witan to be announced at althing and who shall be known as the gild *drighten*.

19.2 Gild drightens shall be elected to a single term of no less than one year and no greater than three years, but if reelected may serve any number of terms unless otherwise resolved by a gild.

19.3 The names of gild drightens will be given as public contacts for the Freehold, and phone, e-mail

or mailing address, as preferred, may be included in Freehold publications and public statements.

19.4 The gild drihten may be in possession of a gild seal, granted by the Witan, and may affix it to official gild documents.

## **20. Gild Moots**

20.1 A meeting of any gild is a *gild moot*.

20.2 Every gild fellow is entitled to two weeks notice of a gild moot and this notice may take the form

the fellow prefers, by person, phone, fax, e-mail or post.

20.3 The accidental omission to give notice to, or the non-receipt by, any of the gild fellows entitled to receive notice does not invalidate proceedings at that meeting.

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20.4 Quorum of a gild moot shall be at least two gild fellows, one of which shall be the drihten, or in

his or her absence, the drihten may appoint another to attend instead. A gild may from time to time

set quorum at a higher number.

20.5 In the event that a physical meeting of gild fellows is not possible, a resolution signed by a majority of gild members shall have the same force and effect as if regularly passed at a gild moot.

20.6 Gilds must moot prior to the expiry the current term of office of the gild drihten in order to elect

a drihten to the subsequent term.

## **21. The Weoh Gild**

21.1 The *Weoh Gild* is an essential guild of Germanic priestcraft for *godhar*, *gydhyar*, *weofodthanes*<sup>21</sup>

and any other manner of Germanic priests and priestesses.

21.2 The Weoh Gild is a permanent subcommittee of the Witan. It is the Witan's responsibility to ensure that the Weoh Gild is not inactive so long as the Freehold exists.

21.3 The gild's primary purposes are specified in Section 1, and its charitable activities listed in Appendix B.

21.4 The Weoh Gild is responsible for:

(a) honouring the gods, ancestors and other holy wights on behalf of the Freehold, on an ongoing basis, as deemed fitting,

(b) the taking of auspices on behalf of the Freehold,

(c) coordinating and performing whatever holy communal rites are conducted on behalf of, and in the name of, the Freehold, at least three times per year,

(d) the maintenance of the Freehold's solar-lunar calendar,

(e) developing, on an ongoing basis, a curriculum based on reasonable standards and reflective of current understanding of both ancient and modern Germanic priestcraft,

(f) safekeeping the Freehold Oath-ring, and other holy relics,

(g) working to increase knowledge and awareness of Germanic religion and priestcraft.

21.5 Whomever is elected to the position of freyr or freya shall be granted an honorary membership

in the Weoh Gild, if they are not already a member. When a freyr or freya retires from office, he or she may remain a member of the Weoh Gild.

21.6 The members of the Weoh Gild will, from amongst themselves, select the most suitable candidates to lead their gild, and will present their slate of candidates and their qualifications to the Freehold Witan, who will choose the best candidate to lead the gild.

21.7 The term of office for the drihten of the Weoh Gild is no less than one year and no greater than three, as set by gild members.

## **22. Ring of Shires (Local Branches)**

22.1 A *shire* is defined as a particular region or district in the province of B.C. whose boundaries may

from time to time be established or redrawn by the Witan, or at thing or althing.

22.2 A shire is analogous to a local branch of the society, and must consist of at minimum three Freehold members in good standing, at least two of which must be trothed, voting members.

<sup>21</sup> Various kinds of Germanic priests and priestesses. See Glossary.

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22.3 A *shire moot* is defined as a general meeting of all the voting members of a given shire.

22.4 A *shire aeht* is defined as the executive committee that has been elected by all voting members

of a shire to oversee the execution of the Freehold's purposes, and to represent the shire among the

Freehold Witan, or the meetings of that committee.

22.5 An *aethling* is defined as a member of the shire aeht who has sworn the Witan's Oath and who is not the representative of any gild.

### **Shire Membership**

22.6 A shire that comes to have less than two voting members for an interval of greater than a year may be disbanded by the Witan, thing or althing.

22.7 The shire itself, the Witan or the thing or althing, may from time to time set a greater number of trothed members which are required to maintain an active branch of the society, but in no case shall

it be set higher than the actual number of trothed members currently registered in the shire, and it may not be set at less than two.

22.8 Once formed, every Freehold member in good standing with a registered address that falls within the boundaries drawn for a shire, shall be considered a member of that shire.

22.9 Any member who subsequently changes their address to one that falls within a shire boundary shall be considered a member of that shire seven days from the date they register the change of address with the Freehold writer, or a shire aethling.

22.10 The Freehold writer and the shire aeht will inform each other within seven days of any changes

in a registered member's change in mailing address insofar as it falls within, or outside, the boundaries of a shire.

22.11 A person ceases to be a member of a shire when his or her registered address is changed to one outside the boundaries defined for the shire, or upon ceasing to be a Freehold member as per Section 1.

22.12 Shire members who have sworn the Freeholder's Oath are entitled to vote at shire moots.

### **Founding a Shire**

22.13 To found an active shire, trothed Freeholders who dwell within a given proposed district shall:

(a) elect to do so,

(b) present their founding resolution in writing to the Witan, thing or althing,

(c) elect an executive council of aethlings, called the shire aeht, which shall consist of at minimum two shire members,

(d) establish a plan of action appropriate to their region and submit it along with their founding resolution.

22.14 A shire's founding resolution may be passed, thus officially founding the shire, by a simple majority of the Witan, or at a thing or the althing.

## **23. Shire Aethlings**

23.1 The aethlings who have been elected by shire members to the shire aeht shall swear the Freehold Witan's Oath as soon as possible after a shire's founding resolution has been passed by the Witan, thing or althing.

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### **Shire Ealdorman**

23.2 After the aethlings's oaths are validated by the existing Freehold witan, as per Section 10, the shire aeht shall from amongst themselves elect one of their number be the shire's representative at witangemot, and speak and answer for the shire at thing or althing, and who shall be called the *Ealdorman*.

23.3 All members of a shire aeht, including the representatives of any gilds operating in the shire, shall be considered as Freehold Witan as defined in these bylaws whether or not they attend any Witangemot which is convened.

### **Shire Aeht**

23.4 A shire aeht is a subcommittee of the Witan, similarly to a gild, which may to certain degrees govern itself as it sees fit excepting as stipulated in these bylaws, so long as the shire continues to

fulfill its purposes and the purposes of the Freehold.

23.5 However it is achieved, a shire aeht, consisting of all aethlings and the ealdorman, is responsible to:

- (a) inform the Freehold Witan of any resolution passed by shire members within two weeks after the meeting was held at which the resolution passed,
- (b) keep its own financial records regarding revenues and expenses undertaken in the execution of the shire's purposes, excluding the local undertakings of any gilds,
- (c) submit financial reports to the Freehold hoarder at least 6 weeks prior to althing,
- (d) keep the minutes of shire moots, and submit them yearly to the Freehold writer at least six weeks prior to althing,
- (e) keep a register of members which reside within the boundaries of the shire, and ensure the Freehold's writer's membership records are up to date and accurate,
- (f) keep a record of events or actions undertaken by the shire on behalf of or in the name of the Freehold, and report yearly at althing,
- (g) ensure the shire makes its best effort to execute its action plan, thus fulfilling the purposes of the Freehold,
- (h) ensure that the shire operates in a manner consistent with Freehold law (these bylaws),
- (i) maintain an official mailing address and make available an alternate contact method, such as phone number or e-mail address.

## **24. Gilds in a Shire**

24.1 Gilds with active undertakings anywhere within the boundaries of a shire shall coordinate activities with the shire aeht.

24.2 Gilds operating in a shire are responsible to:

- (a) elect or appoint a voting gild member, who resides within the shire area, to the shire aeht,
- (b) inform the shire aeht with reasonable advance notice of any gild events or meetings planned,
- (c) send a gild representative to any shire moot or aeht which is convened, or if this is not possible, fully answer in a timely manner any inquiry the shire or shire aeht may put to the gild in advance to, or arising out of, a shire moot, and
- (d) make a yearly financial report, to the shire moot preceding the Freehold Althing, detailing revenues and expenditures arising from gild activities within the shire area.

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## **25. Shire Moots**

25.1 *Regular shire business* at a shire moot includes

- (a) the adoption of rules of order,
- (b) the consideration of financial statements,
- (c) the reports of the gilds operating within the shire, if any,
- (d) the report of any witan residing within the shire,
- (e) the report of the shire aeht,
- (f) the election of aethlings to the shire aeht,
- (g) the report of the auditor, if any,
- (h) the swearing in of new members, if any,
- (i) the counting of proxy votes, if any,
- (j) the setting of shire thew (policy, custom),
- (k) any other business that, under these bylaws, ought to be conducted at a shire moot, or business that is brought under consideration by the report of the aeht included with the notice convening the meeting.

25.2 A shire shall conduct its meetings, give official notice, tally proxy ballots and polls, and so on, as stipulated in Section 6.

25.3 Business that, under these bylaws, ought to be conducted at a thing or althing must not be conducted at a shire moot.

25.4 Shire business, however, may be conducted at a thing or althing, prior to the regular and any special business of a thing or althing providing that all provisions for proper notice and proxy voting have been fulfilled.

25.5 No person with a registered address outside the boundaries of a shire shall have a vote on shire business, except as specified in these bylaws.

25.6 Any resolution arising from a shire moot may be overturned at a subsequent thing or althing if a special majority of voting members of the Freehold deem that the shire's resolution is not in keeping with Freehold purposes, may put undue strain on Freehold resources, or any other reasons the members deem as sufficiently compelling.

25.7 A shire shall convene a moot at least once a year, which must be held no later than eight weeks prior to the Freehold Althing.

## **26. Shire Dissolution**

26.1 A shire which fails to convene a moot, and within which no gild has undertaken any activities, within a year's span, may be declared inactive by the Witan, or at thing or althing.

26.2 A shire which has been deemed inactive for two years in a row may be disbanded by the Witan, or at thing or althing.

26.3 A shire may also be disbanded with a unanimous vote of the members of that shire, or a vote on a resolution to disband the shire which passes with fewer than two against it.

## **27. Freehold Seals**

27.1 The Witan may provide a common seal for the society and may destroy a seal and substitute a new seal in its place.

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27.2 The common seal must be affixed only when authorized by a resolution of the trustees, except:

(a) The freyr or freya may affix the seal on a resolution arising out of a judgment at the conclusion of a maethel if he or she solely comprises the maethel as per Section 3, or any other resolution made by the freyr or freya when directed by member resolution, in a manner consistent with these bylaws, to make a single-handed judgment on an unresolved question or point of business,

(b) when a new member's oath or a new wita's oath is validated by the Witan, the writer will impress the seal upon the oath document, and may do so single-handedly,

(c) when the speaker has obtained government approval on any amendment to Freehold law, he or she will impress the seal upon the facing page of a bound copy of current Freehold law as resolved and approved, and may do so single-handedly.

27.3 The Witan shall provide a seal specific to any active gild or shire requesting one, and may destroy a gild or shire seal and substitute a new seal in its place on request of the gild drighthen or shire ealdorman.

27.4 The Witan may recall a gild or shire seal if it is deemed that the seal has not been used, or has been used in a manner inconsistent with these bylaws.

27.5 Individual gilds may affix their gild seal, if any, on gild oath documents, graduation or completion

certificates, gild resolutions, gild thews, or other official gild correspondence, as they see fit, but only

in the presence of the gild's drighthen.

27.6 Shires may affix their shire seal on official documents only in the presence of the ealdorman of that shire.

## **28. Borrowing**

28.1 The trustees may, on behalf of, and in the name of the society, raise or secure the payment or repayment of money in order to carry out the purposes of the Freehold, and in particular but without limiting that power, by the issues of debentures, so long as 75% of voting members, and 100% of the trustees have so resolved.

28.2 The voting members, with a two-thirds majority, may also otherwise restrict the borrowing powers

of the trustees, but a restriction thus imposed expires at the next althing.

## **29. Auditor**

29.1 This part applies only if the society is required or has resolved to have an auditor.

29.2 The first auditor must be appointed by the Witan, who must also fill all vacancies occurring in the office of auditor.

29.3 At each althing occurring during which time the society is required or has resolved to have an auditor, the society must appoint an auditor to hold office until the next althing.

29.4 An auditor may be removed by ordinary resolution.

29.5 An auditor must be promptly informed in writing of the auditor's appointment or removal.

29.6 A wita, or an employee of the society, must not be its auditor.

29.7 The auditor may attend thing or althing.

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## **30. Bylaws**

30.1 On being admitted to membership, each member is entitled to, and the society must give the member without charge, a copy of current Freehold law.

30.2 Except where a bylaw is explicitly declared as being unalterable, these bylaws may only be altered or added to by special resolution (two-thirds majority of voting members).

## **31. Conduct of the Freehold and its Volunteers**

31.1 Every member will strive, to the best of his or her abilities, to live up the sacred oaths sworn in the course of fulfilling the Freehold's purposes.

31.2 No person, in the execution of the Freehold's purposes, shall knowingly contravene Freehold bylaws or applicable provincial or federal laws.

31.3 No member may personally profit in the course of executing the Freehold's purposes, and any profits or other accretions to the Freehold shall be used solely to promote its objectives.

## **32. Privacy Policy**

32.1 The Freehold will treat membership information as absolutely confidential and will not share it with anyone without each member's prior consent.

32.2 Freehold Witan will swear an oath, as per Appendix A, prior to or upon taking charge of any membership or other records, to protect the privacy and respect the wishes of all members in regards

to access to information about them.

## **33. Winding Up**

33.1 Prior to the winding up and dissolution of the society, a final financial statement and an asset inventory will be conducted.

33.2 Where any physical assets are not holy relics, remaining Freehold members will be given the opportunity to bid at auction for the assets.

33.3 If the asset is any holy relic owned by the Freehold or one of its gilds, every effort will be made to return it to the craftsman who created it, or his or her kinsmen. If the craftsman cannot be found, or if he, she or the kin deem it, it may be sold at auction to remaining Freehold members along with other assets.

33.4 Physical assets remaining which have not been auctioned to members may, at the members' deeming, either be auctioned to the public, or donated to one or more organizations so long as that organization or organizations share most or all of the same purposes as the Freehold.

33.5 After the orderly repayment of any debts possibly incurred by the Freehold, whatever money remains shall be donated to one or more organizations as the remaining members deem fit, so long as that organization or organizations share most or all of the same purposes as the Freehold.

33.6 If such an organization cannot be found, any remaining assets will be donated to the benevolent charitable society, as defined by Revenue Canada, of the members' choice.

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## **PART 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS A,B**

### **ABBREVIATIONS**

**AFr** - Anglo-French

**Dn** - Danish

**Dt** - Dutch

**G** - German

**Gmc** - Germanic  
**Gr** - Greek  
**Goth** - Gothic  
**IE** - Indo-European  
**L** - Latin  
**lit.** - *literally*  
**ME** - Middle English  
**ModE** - Modern English  
**OE** - Old English  
**OHG** - Old High German  
**ON** - Old Norse  
**Sd** - Swedish

## A

**AESIR** [<Old Norse (ON) plural] One of the two races of gods in the aboriginal Germanic religion, the other race of gods being the Vanir.

**AEHT** [<Old English (OE) "a court of law, assembly"] In *shire aeht*, the executive committee of a shire.

**AETHLING** [<OE "noble one"] 1. A noble of high rank. 2. In Freehold law, a member of an AEHT.

**ALTHING** [<ON "a council, or court, the yearly, national general assembly of freemen"] The *Annual General Meeting* of the society, a province-wide assembly consisting all voting members of the society. (See also THING)

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** [see ALTHING]

**ASATRU** [reconstructed from ON *asa* - "the gods" + *tru* - "faith, troth", lit. "*troth with the gods*"]

1. The aboriginal religion of the Germanic tribes of Northwest Europe; 2. A modern variant of Germanic tribal religion. See AESIR and TROTH.

## B

**BEDE** [<OE "prayer", whence Modern English (ModE) *bid*] A Heathen prayer, beseechment or offering in verbal form, whether presented as prose or poetry. Often used to address the gods, ancestors or other wights at the opening of a holy rite.

**BLOT** [<ON] Blot is the rite of votive offering, libation or sacrifice by which gifts are offered to the gods, ancestors, wights of the land or other spirits.

**BOAST** [<ME *bosten* < *bost* < Anglo-French (AFr) "to talk about one's abilities, or the abilities of someone close"] 1. During the rite of symble, an oath relating to an action yet to be taken. 2. The report at althing of the Witan, a gild, shire or member, regarding a plan for the coming year.

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## PART 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS B,C,D,E,F

**BYLAWS** 1. These bylaws, also known as "law" or "Freehold law" throughout.

## D

**DISIR** [<ON, plural of *dis*, "sister", a *goddess or priestess*] 1. A collective of kindred female spirits said

to be tied to specific families. 2. A *dis* is a female guardian-angel, who follows every human from birth,

and only leaves at the time of death;

**DRIGHTEN** [<OE "band chief" < *driht* "war band, comitatus"] The elected leader of a Gild, who is a member of the Witan.

## E

**EALDORMAN** [<OE *ealdorman* - "chief, prince" < *elder* + *man* "human", whence ModE *alderman*] The

chief elected representative of a regional Shire who will be sworn into the Witan (see SHIRE).

**ELDER** [<OE *ealdor* "old"] 1. A senior member of a kindred or tribe; 2. A senior member of the society.

## F

**FALLEN** [<OE ] The deceased, especially if killed in a battle or heroic act.

**FELLOW** [<OE *feolaga* < *feoh* "fee" + *laga* "a laying down" (see LAW), basic sense of "one laying down wealth for a joint undertaking"] A member of any Gild.

**FELLOWSHIP** [see FELLOW] Membership in any Gild.

**FOLK** [<OE *folc*, akin to German (G) *volk*, < Indo-European (IE) \**pel*, "to crowd", whence Latin (L) *plebs* "common people"] 1. The Germanic peoples, tribes or nations; 2. The members of the Freehold.

**FOSTERMAN** [*foster* + *man* < OE *fostrian* "to nourish, bring up" + *man* "human"] A voting member of

the society who, because he or she has not yet sworn an oath of troth, is fostered and vouched for by a trothed Freeholder.

**FREE** [<Middle English (ME) *fre* < OE *freo* – "not in bondage, noble, glad, illustrious" < IE \**prei-* "to be fond of, to hold dear", whence Sanskrit: *priya* – "to be fond of, to hold dear"; see FRIEND]

**FREEHOLD** [ <ME ] 1. A holding of land freely held, and passed down through the generations by inheritance; 2. Abbreviated name of this organization, Heathen Freehold Society of British Columbia;

3. Any land holdings of the society.

**FREEHOLDER** [ < ME, "householder", *one who dwells on a Freehold of land*] A voting member of this organization who has sworn the Freeholders Oath, the Witan's Oath or the Fosterman's Oath (same as TRU FREEHOLDER or TROTHED FREEHOLDER).

**FREEMAN, FREEWOMAN** [<OE *freomon* < *freo* (see FREE) + *man* "human", *one not in slavery or bondage*] A member of this society having full civil and political rights, same as FREEHOLDER.

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## PART 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS F,G,H

**FRAU** [<Old High German (OHG) "lady"]

**FREO, FREA** [<OE "lady", "lord" ]

**FREYA, FREYR** [<ON "lady", "lord", (See FREE)]

1. The names a goddess and a god who are principals among the Vanir; 2. The title of the Freehold's elected chieftain, chairman or sacral king or queen, according to his or her tribal tradition,

who is also member of the Witan and a trustee, elected by the Witan.

**FRIEND** [<ME: *freond* – "friend, lover"; akin to German *freund* < Proto-Germanic \**frijon* – "to love" (whence OE *freon*) see FREE] A nonvoting member of this society who has been sponsored by a trothed Freeholder.

**FRITH** [<ON, *peace*, akin Old High German (OHG) *fridu* "peace" < Germanic (Gmc) \**frithu* "peace, prosperous fellowship" <fri "to love" + *thu* substantive particle] 1. Peace; 2. A state of peaceful and prosperous fellowship which is the result of love shared.

**FRITHGARD** [<ON *frith* "peace" + *gard* "yard, enclosure", *a protected, peaceful place*] 1. a protected

and sacred area where weapons are yielded up and bloodshed prohibited; 2. the protected "enclosure" of the Freehold, its communications, meetings and holy places.

**FULL** [<OE *ful*, akin to ON *full*, "a cup, goblet" with sense of *perfectly, very well, completely, at its height*] 1. A cup, goblet or drinking horn used to make offerings of a sacramental drink such as mead; 2. A *toast* that is drunk at husel the sacred feast, or symble the rite of oaths, usually offered after a bede or oath.

## G

**GERMANIC** [< Latin (L), *Germani*, Roman name for tribes of central Northwest Europe, possibly from

Proto-Germanic] 1. Designation of the various aboriginal European tribes whose modern descendants include speakers of the English, Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic, Dutch, German, Danish, and other related languages. 2. Used here as a synonym for TEUTONIC and NORDIC.

**GILD** [< Modern English (ModE) *guild* < ME *gild* < blend of ON *gildi* "guild, guild-feast" & OE *gyld* "association of paying members", akin to OE *gielðan* "to pay, yield up". (See also FELLOW) ] An

association of Freehold members in the same religious discipline, craft or trade, that is charged to study, practice, do and teach its craft, both to Freehold members and the public. (See also DRIGHTEN)

**GELD** [<OE *gield* "payment"] A contribution made by a Gild or Shire to the Freehold treasury.

**GODHI** [<ON] A priest of the aboriginal Germanic religion, called a *weofodthane* in Anglo-Saxon.

**GOTHIC** [<OE<L<Gr< Gothic \**Gutans* < *gut* + *thiuda* (see THEOD)] 1. The Gothic people or tribes. 2. The East Germanic language spoken by the Goths.

**GYDHIA** [<ON] A priestess of the aboriginal Germanic religion.

## H

**HEATHEN** [<OE: *haethen*, literally "heath dwellers", a translation first used in the 4th century for Latin

*paganus* - a countryman, rustic] 1. Used as a general label for ideas, people and things informed or inspired by the aboriginal Germanic religion and cultures or their modern variants; 2. A practitioner of

or devotee to the Germanic religion.

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## PART 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS H,I,J,K,L

**HEATHEN FREEHOLD SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA** The name of this society, also called simply "the Freehold" throughout these bylaws.

**HEATHENISM** [See HEATHEN] 1. The aboriginal Germanic religion; 2. Any modern variant of the original Germanic religion.

**HOARD** [<OE *hord*, akin to German (G) *hort*, "a supply stored up and hidden or kept in reserve, a store of money"] 2. All Freehold assets, whether tangible or intangible, in their entirety; 2. The Freehold treasury.

**HOARDER** [see HOARD] The *treasurer* of the Freehold, a member of the Witan and a trustee, who is

responsible for financial reporting, inventories, and so on.

**HOUSEHOLD** [<ME *house* + *hold*] 1. The home of a Heathen; 2. One of several designations for a group of Heathens who live or practice their religions together. (See also KINDRED)

**HUSEL** [<OE *sacramental food and wine*, akin to Gothic *hunsel* - "sacrificial feast"] A sacred kindred

or community feast of communion with the Heathen gods and ancestors.

## I

**INDO-EUROPEAN** A hypothetical, reconstructed language supposedly spoken by any of numerous waves of migrating tribes thought to have settled across Europe, the Middle East and parts of India over several thousand years just prior to the dawn of Indic and European civilization.

## J

**JORD** [<ON, akin to Danish (Dn) *jord*, OHG *erda*, Dutch (Dt) *aard*, OE *eorþa*, whence ModE *earth*] The goddess Earth, mother of Thor.

**JOTUN** [<ON, "giant" akin to OE *eoten* "giant, monster"] An elder race of giants renowned for their strength and power.

## K

**KINDRED** [<ME *kinreden* < OE *cynn* "kin" + *raeden* "state, condition", (akin to *readan* "read, rede"); "relatives, family, related persons"] 1. A group of Heathens who are all related by birth or marriage,

a

sib, and who may live or practice their religions together; 2. Any small group of Heathens who live or

practice their religions together: often a typical kindred are not related to one another.

**KINDERFOLK** [>G *kinder* (plural) "children", akin to OE *cynd* "child", akin to ON *kundr* "son", + *folk* "people"] 1. Children; 2. Any Freehold member who is legally a minor

## L

**LANDVAETR** [<ON akin to OE *landwiht*, *land* + *wiht*, "land-spirit"] Nature spirits associated with a

particular geography.

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## **PART 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS L,M,N,O**

**LAW** [<ME *lawe* <OE *lagu*, akin to ON *log*, *lag* "something laid down and settled"] 1. The laying down

and ordering of manifestation, as in the ur-law (orlog- original law) laid down by the Norns, the weavers of fate; 2. all the rules of conduct established and enforced by the custom of a given community, state or other group; 3. The constitution and bylaws of this society, and any other policies from time to time in place, as in *Freehold Law*.

**LAW-SPEAKER** [<OE, ON] same as SPEAKER.

**LIGHT-ELVES** [<ON *lyossalfar*, "light-elves", akin to OHG *alb*, OE *aelf*, whence ModE *elf*, "shining one"] A race of elves whose Queen is said to be *Sunna the Sun goddess* and whose King is said to be the god *Freyr of the Vanir*.

## **M**

**MAETHEL** [<OE "an assembly"] 1. An assembly, a deliberative or judicial meeting, council; 2. A special judicial committee temporarily formed to make a judgment on any matter of dispute brought forward to the Freehold's members or the Witan, such as an alleged violation of the bylaws, or a membership revocation.

**MAN** [<OE *mann*, "a human", akin to G *mann*, Goth. *Manna* < IE base \**manu* "human", akin to \**men* "to think"] A human being of either sex.

**MEAD** [ModE < OE *meodu*, akin to G *met*] A fermented wine made of honey and water regarded as a sacrament by Germanic Heathens.

**MOOT** [<OE *mot*, *gemot*, "a meeting"] 1. An early English assembly of Freemen to administer justice,

decide community problems, etc. 2. A general meeting of a Freehold Shire. 3. A meeting of a Freehold Gild.

## **N**

**NORDIC** ["Of the north, north-ish", <OE *nord* "north" + *sch* "-ish"] The Caucasoid peoples of North Western Europe, used in these bylaws as synonymous with GERMANIC and TEUTONIC.

**NORNS** [<ON] 1. A race of influential wights, some of whom stem from the Aesir, others the Vanir, some the Jotun, and others from origins unknown, concerned with the unfolding of logr, or LAW, the

primal ordering of ongoing manifestation, the unfolding moment; 2. Urdi, Urdandi and Skuld, equated with the Fates, who weave the fates of all, or others of their race. See also WYRD.

## **O**

**OATH** [<OE *ath*, akin to G. *eid*] 1. A ritualistic declaration, typically based on an appeal to the gods, or some revered person or object, that one will speak the truth, keep a promise, remain faithful, etc. 2. The ritual form used in making such a declaration. 3. The thing promised or declared in this way.

**OATH-RING** [<OE *ath* "oath" + *hring* "ring"] 1. Any ring upon which oaths are sworn; 2. Among the Freehold's most holy objects, the *Freehold Oath-ring* is traditionally used by Freeholders, Fostermen

and the Witan to swear holy oaths.

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## **PART 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS O,P,Q,R,S,T**

**OMBUDSMAN** [ < Swedish (Sd) *ombudsman*, "deputy, representative", <ON: < *umbe* "about" + *bjotha* "to bid, offer" + *man*] 1. One of the Witan and among the trustees of the Freehold, elected at althing. The representative of those members who may not be members of any gild or shire, and to whom member complaints or disputes are initially directed.

## **R**

**RING** [<OE *hring*, akin to ON *hringr* "ring, a small circular band of metal"] 1. Where Freeholders are united by a particular oath, usually by swearing on the sacred Oath-Ring, they are called a collectively "ring", whence "the Ring of Freeholders, the Ring of the Witan". (See OATH-RING)

**ROLL-CALL** 1. The reading of a list of names; 2. The list of Freehold members, kept secure under oath by the Freehold writer (secretary of the society).

## S

**SHIRE** [<OE *scir* "shire", akin to OHG *scira*, "office, official charge", a *district*] A local branch of the society serving a specific district or region.

**SPEAKER** [<*speak* < OE *specan* < *sprecan*, akin to G *sprechen*, "to speak, make an address"] A member of the Witan and a trustee, elected at althing, who is the legal secretary of the Freehold and

is responsible for all aspects of maintaining, amending and reporting on Freehold law. Also known as

the *law-speaker*.

**STAMM** [<G akin to ModE *stem*] Family, tribe. See KINDRED.

**SWARTHY-ELVES** [<ON *svartalfar*, "dark-elves", akin to OHG *alb*, OE *aelf*, whence ModE *elf*] A race

of dark elves also known as dwarves, who are masterful with crafts.

**SYMBLE** [<OE akin to ON *sumbl* and OHG *sumbal*, "a banquet, symposium, festivity, feasting, a religious festival"] In modern heathenry *symble* is a rite of utterances before the community, within the sight of the gods and ancestors, where in oaths are sworn, yelps and boasts are given, offering of sacramental mead, or other beverage, is consumed, and gifts may be given. A rite much resembling the modern *formal toast* at a feast or banquet.

## T

**TEUTONIC** [<L <Gmc, see THEOD] In these bylaws used as a synonym for GERMANIC or NORDIC.

**THANE** [<OE] 1. A freeman who is nevertheless in the service his or her chieftain, headman or lord.

2. Any servant or officer, as in WEOFODTHANE.

**THEOD** [<OE "a people, folk, tribe" root of TEUTONIC] 1. Any Germanic tribe; 2. An association of kindreds led by a lord or king; 3. In *theodism*, a modern variant of the aboriginal Germanic religion centred on tribalism.

**THEW** [<OE *theaw*, "good qualities, custom, habit, characteristic quality", akin to Old Saxon *thau* "custom"] 1. Sacred customs, beliefs, traditions and ways of behaving by which Heathen may better attune themselves with the Living, with the gods and with ancestors, and which are passed down orally, or by natural social dissolution. 2. Unwritten traditions or laws of a kindred or tribe, local custom. 3. The policies, customs or traditions of the Freehold not specified in Law.

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## PART 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS T,U,V,W

**THING** [<OE *thing*, akin to ON *thing*, G *ding*, "a council, or court, a regional general assembly of freemen", originally "a public assembly"] A *Special General Meeting* of the society.

**THOR** [<ON, akin to OE *thunor*, whence ModE *thunder*, akin to G. *donner* "thunder"] God of thunder,

son of ODHIN and JORD, bearer of a magic hammer, who is a principal among the race of gods called the AESIR.

**TROTH** [<OE, akin to *treowe* "truth", and G *treu*, basic sense *firm (as a tree), tree-like*]

1. Faithfulness, loyalty; 2. Truth, chiefly as "in troth", truly, indeed; 3. One's pledged word, oath, promise; 4. Chiefly said about one's relationship with any of the Germanic gods, but also applicable to any relationship based on mutual promise and commitment; 5. The ongoing performance of the customs and traditions of the Germanic religion, as in "to keep troth with the gods"; 6. The aboriginal

religion of the Germanic tribes (see also ASATRU, HEATHENISM).

**TROTHED** [see TROTH] In these bylaws, referring to a member who has sworn that they are true to the Germanic gods and to uphold Freehold bylaws.

**TROW** see TROTH.

**TRU** see TROTH.

**TRUSTEE** [<ON *traust* "trust, firmness" (see TROTH)] 1. A *director of the society* as defined in the

Society Act. One of usually no less than five witan elected as the society directors.

## V

**VANIR** [<ON] 1. One of the two races of Germanic gods (the other being the AESIR) associated with fertility and the fecundity of the earth, who include Freya and Freyr among others.

## W

**WEOH** [<OE akin to ON *ve*] 1. Sacred, holy, other-worldly. 2. As in the *Weoh Gild*, the Freehold's guild for Germanic priestcraft.

**WEOFOD** [<OE *weoh* "holy" + *fod* "table"] An altar.

**WEOFODTHANE** [<OE *weohfod* + *thane* "servant, officer"] An Anglo-Saxon title for a priest, or *servant of the altar*.

**WIGHT** [<OE *wiht*, akin to ON *vaet*, G *wicht* "creature"] Any spiritual or corporeal entity, a creature, person or spirit.

**WITA** [<OE, "one who knows, wise one, counselor" - singular form of WITAN - < *wit* "wit, wisdom"] Any single member of the Witan.

**WITAN** [<OE, plural form of *wita*, *any number of wise folk*] The executive body of the Freehold responsible to ensure the society fulfills the purposes for which it was formed, consisting primarily of

gild drightens, shire aethlings and the trustees.

**WITANGEMOT** [<OE *witan* + *gemot* "to meet" (see MOOT)] A meeting of the Witan, the same as a *meeting of the directors* as defined in the Society Act.

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## PART 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS W,X,Y,Z

**WRITER** [<OE "to scratch, engrave, write"] The *secretary* of the society, a member of the Witan and a trustee, elected at althing.

**WYRD** [<OE "fate", akin to OE *weorthan*, "to become", > IE \**wert-* to turn. Survives in ModE *weird* and *worth*] 1. The way of things, the unfolding reality. 2. Fate or destiny, in many ways resembling both the Hindu concept of *karma* and the Oriental concept of *tao*. 3. A goddess-like spirit also known

as *Urdi*, one of the famous three NORNS who weave the fates of all wights, including gods and humans.

## Y

**YELP** [<OE *gielpa* "to boast noisily", akin to ON *gjalla* "to cry out"] 1. The report of any past deed during a SYMBLE. 2. The report of a gild, delivered by a gild spokesman or drighthen, at the althing; 3. The report of a new wita before being sworn in, detailing his or her past accomplishments.

**YOUTH** [<OE *geoguthe*] A member of the society who is a minor, but who has been granted by his or

her parents or guardians consent to apply for full voting membership in the Freehold.

***In the case of any discrepancy between the definitions offered here and those defined in the***

***bylaws, the definitions provided in the bylaws shall prevail.***

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## APPENDIX A: OATHS

### A.1 Freeholder's Oath

A.1.1 To become a voting member, or *trothed Freeholder*, the following or equivalent should be sworn, if possible, in the presence of at least two trothed Freeholders.

A.1.2 Or the oath may include additional points and may be printed and signed by the new Freeholder, and then mailed to the Witan care of the Freehold's current mailing address.

A.1.3 The Freeholder's signature will be considered as seriously as a properly witnessed holy oath.

#### OATH:

The new Freeholder lays down all weapons at the weofod (altar). Before the weofod, lays the strong hand upon the ring and declares the following.

**By (Germanic god[s] holy to new Freeholder)**

**I swear / *replight*\* my troth to the gods, to hold them and their gifts first, before all else, whether all fall fair or foul. And I further swear to abide Freehold law in regards to Freehold functions and events, lest I offend my gods; stand dishonoured before the folk.**

*\* Choose "swear" if the swearer has never before sworn an oath of troth, or select "replight" (meaning "to restate") if the swearer has already previously sworn an oath of troth.*

### A.2 Fosterman's Oath

A.2.1 To be sworn by a new voting *fosterman* after acceptance at a thing, Althing or Shire Moot.

#### OATH:

**By (Germanic god[s] holy to new Freeholder)**

**I swear to keep the peace and abide Freehold law in regards to Freehold functions and events, lest I offend the gods and stand dishonoured before the folk.**

### A.3 Witan Oath

A.2.1 Where possible, the freyr of freya may act as the host, as described below, or in his or her absence the highest ranking or most senior wita present.

A.2.2 In the event that the Witan cannot convene to witness an new wita's Oath, the wita may fulfill the swearing of this Oath in writing, on a document bearing his or her signature.

#### OATH:

**Host:** *With fulls and bedes, the Host makes known all gods, ancestors, honoured fallen, landvaetr, elves and other wights who are to act as witnesses, along with the folk, to the swearing of the oath.*

**Wita:** *The oath begins where the newly elected wita introduces the self and brags of his or her accomplishments or merits, and why he or she should be believed in the swearing of it.*

**Challenge:** *Another party challenges the wita, asking if they are really up to the job, or raising any issues from the past which may threaten to upset the frith of the Freehold if they are not addressed. This may be purely symbolic, or it may represent some legitimate concern, but it is important this tradition be observed.*

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**Wita:** *The wita addresses whatever concerns in particular, and counters with a boast about what he*

*or she has done to right the wyrd which may have been upset as a result of past actions, if there is a*

*valid grievance, how reparations have been made.*

**Host:** *Expresses his or her satisfaction at the explanation.*

**Wita:** *Lays down all weapons at the weofod. Before the weofod, laying the strong hand upon the ring and decries:*

**Before the Folk of the Freehold, and before the gods of my people, \_\_\_\_\_(names of Germanic gods sacred to the wita)\_\_\_\_\_, before the ancestors, and all here bearing me witness:**

I, (name) , son / daughter of ,  
brother / sister of (etc.), from the kindreds of  
in the land of , lay my strong hand, as has ever been done,  
upon this sacred Ring, and swear to you, the folk of the Freehold, this solemn oath.  
**By (names of Germanic god[s] sacred to the wita)**  
I swear/replight my troth to the gods, to hold them and their gifts first, before all else,  
whether all fall fair or foul.  
And I further swear to abide Freehold law in regards to Freehold functions and events;  
To fulfill the duties and responsibilities of my charge as a wita of the Freehold;  
To work to ensure the Freehold fulfills the purposes for which it was formed;  
To keep the Freehold ever tru;  
To protect the privacy of members in the Freehold Roll Call;  
To work to preserve the fame and good name of the Freehold, knowing that by my word  
and actions I set an example before all people;  
To honour and remember the witan who have gone before me.  
This I swear lest all worldly strength and prosperity be stricken from me, lest I be left as  
a wretch in the eyes of the Freehold and the gods of the folk.  
Keeping true this holy oath will bring honour to my name, which will be ever told as long  
as Freeholders gang to the althing.

**Host:** *Hails the wita.*

**All:** *A Full is drunk to the wita.*

**Wita:** *The new wita gives offers a blot to the sacred fire.*

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