



First

Baptist Church

Sutherland Springs

Constitution & By - Laws

This Constitution and By-Laws were approved by unanimous vote of the membership at the June 1995 business meeting of First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas.
These documents supersede any and all previous documents.

All revisions, amendments, or changes will be indicated with an asterisk (*) and noted as to the date of revision and adoption of amendment.

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We declare and establish this constitution for the preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and so that this body may be governed in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual member of this church and the freedom of action of this body in its relation to other churches of the same faith.

ARTICLE I NAME

This body shall be known as the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas.

ARTICLE II PURPOSE

The purpose of this body shall be to constitute, establish, and maintain a church for the promotion and advancement of (a) worship of God and the spiritual development and well being of individuals; (b) the observation of Christian ordinances; (c) the teaching and encouragement of adherence to the Christian principles and the practice of the Christian life as revealed and taught in the Holy Bible; (d) the salvation of the lost at home and abroad; and (e) the Kingdom of Christ throughout the world.

ARTICLE III COVENANT

THE CHURCH COVENANT

“Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines.

To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions, to educate our children religiously, and

to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.

To walk circumspectly in the world, to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love, to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and, mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we move from this place, we will as soon as possible unity with another church of like faith, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word."

ARTICLE IV STATEMENT OF FAITH

* The Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God and is the basis for any statement of faith. The Church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Faith and Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on May 9, 1963 up to and including the 2000 revision. We band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ personally committed to sharing the Good News of salvation to mankind.

*Revised and adopted as of October 27, 2005.

ARTICLE V CHARACTER

POLITY

This church is a non-profit assembly governed as a pure democracy by the members of this congregation under the leadership of the Lord who is recognized as the Head of the body. All members have the same voice and vote in matters of policies and procedures.

The Trustees, under the direction of the church body, is authorized to affix their signatures to all legal documents including buying, selling, mortgaging, leasing or transferring property of the church.

The Church is a completely autonomous body, not subject to control of any other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligation of mutual counsel and cooperation which is common among Baptist Churches. Insofar as is practical this church will cooperate with and support the Association, State Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

DOCTRINE

This church recognizes the Bible as its authority in matters of faith and practice. Its understanding of Christian truth as contained therein is in essential accord with the belief of the Baptist churches as indicated in the Statement of Faith herewith. We subscribe to the belief that the two ordinances of the church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

ARTICLE VI MEMBERSHIP

The membership of this church shall consists of professed believers in Jesus Christ who have sympathy with and subscribe to the faith and practices of this church who have experienced believer's baptism in this church or a Church of like faith and order, having been accepted into its fellowship by majority vote of the members in a regular worship service.

ARTICLE VII AMENDMENTS

* This Constitution may be amended at any regular quarterly business meeting by an affirmative vote of 2/3 of the members present; provided the proposed amendment has been offered in writing and promoted from the pulpit in at least (2) two regular Sunday worship services prior to the proposed action.

*Revised and adopted as of October 27, 2005 due to change in ART. III Section C of By-Laws.

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ARTICLE I MEMBERSHIP

A. GENERAL

The membership of this church shall consist of professed believers in Jesus Christ who have sympathy with, and subscribe to the Faith and Practices of this church, who have experienced believer's baptism in this church or a Church of like faith and order, having been accepted into its fellowship by the majority of the members in a regular worship service.

B. CANDIDACY

Any person may offer him/her self as a candidate for membership in this church. All such candidates must be presented to the church for membership by majority acceptance of the members present. Candidates for baptism accepted by this will become members of the church following baptism.

Candidates may present themselves in any of the following ways:

1. By Profession of Faith

By profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, followed with baptism by immersion by the Pastor or the person selected by the church to administer the ordinance of baptism.

2. By Letter

By promise of letter from a Baptist church of like faith and order.

3. By Personal Statement

By restoration upon a statement of prior conversion experience and baptism in Church of like faith and order when no letter is obtainable.

4. By Proxy

When the person desiring membership cannot, for health or other valid reasons, present themselves in person, they may be presented to the church by the Pastor, a family member or a close friend.

5. Reinstatement (See By-Laws, Article I D)

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By reinstatement in the event a person has been excluded from active membership for cause deemed sufficient by the church, provided the person gives evidence to the church of his/her repentance or change in conditions necessary for active membership.

Should there be any dissent as to any candidate for reinstatement, such dissent shall be referred to the pastor and deacons for investigation and the making of a recommendation to the church within (30) thirty days. An affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting shall be required to elect such a candidate for membership.

6. Watch Care

Watch Care affiliation does not result in church membership nor does it allow the person to participate in the business affairs of the church. A person who wishes to identify with this church in worship and fellowship, may petition to be a Watch Care participant. The ministerial staff or deacons may make a recommendation to the church family for the final approval following an investigation of the circumstances.

C. VOTING RIGHTS

Every member of the church is entitled to vote on all issues and elections and on all questions before the Church in a duly called business meeting. A person must be present in the assembly to vote.

D. DISMISSAL OF MEMBERS

Membership shall be terminated in the following ways:

1. By transfer of Letter

Any member in good standing with the Church shall be granted to any Baptist church of like faith and order upon request for the letter from said church. Since church letters are not individual property, it is not policy of this church to grant such letters to individuals.

2. By Death

At the time our Heavenly Father calls any member of the local church home, that members name will be removed from the church roll, such information being permanently filed in the deceased file.

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3. By Exclusion

In the matter of discipline the church shall follow the general guidelines in Matthew 18: 15-20. The exclusion of a candidate for membership or the termination of membership will be a rare and serious occurrence.

Should a member be guilty of conduct unbecoming of a Christian, or become a disruptive or divisive influence in the church and its good name by reason of immoral conduct, unchristian acts or by persistent breach of the Covenant vows, thus becoming an offense to the church and its good name, the member may be disciplined by the church to the extent of termination of membership in the following manner:

If, upon investigation, a member appears guilty of any of the above offenses or other serious breaches of conduct, the Pastor and Deacons will take every reasonable measure to resolve the issue with the member. If prayerful efforts fail to result in resolution, the chairman of the deacons will notify the member of an opportunity for a hearing before the deacon body. If reconciliation efforts fail, the deacons may elect to recommend termination of membership. An affirmative vote of a majority of the members present in a regular or called church business meeting will declare the offender to be no longer in membership. Notification of the church action in writing by the Church Clerk will consummate the procedure.

*4. By Inactivity

To ensure more accuracy in record keeping, any person that has not attended church functions for a period of one year or more, shall have every attempt to be contacted to determine intent and then be removed from the church rolls as deemed necessary.

* Added and adopted as of July 20, 2008.

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ARTICLE II CHURCH OFFICERS

All officers must be members in good standing of the church and elected by the church. An officer should be one vitally interested in all affairs of the church, and an active participant of the same. Officer selection will be made in consultation with the Pastor.

* The Church body is the final approving authority on the termination, hiring, appointment, or ordination of Church Officers. This will be done by confidential “paper ballots”.

*Revised and adopted as of January 18, 2000.

A. PASTOR

He is the spiritual leader and chief administrator of the church. Through his God-inspired leadership the overall progress of the church will be manifested.

He shall meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 2.

The Pastor shall work with his staff members and the church, leading them to achieve the church’s objectives and purpose. Likewise, he shall proclaim the Gospel to the believers and unbelievers and minister to the spiritual needs of the community.

B. MINISTERIAL STAFF

The elected ministerial staff, as is deemed necessary, will assist in administering the work of the congregation. Specific policies, job descriptions, and working relationships for all personnel will be covered in the Operation and Procedures of the Church.

C. DEACONS

1. Scriptural requirements: Acts 6:1-8, 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

2. Church requirements:

a. Demonstrate mental and spiritual maturity.

b. Be willing to fill the office of deacon in the spirit of Christ and remain a humble

servant of the church.

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c. Be found faithful for a least one year in this church prior to his election and ordination, or be found faithful for a period of (6) six months prior to election if he has been ordained by another Baptist church.

d. Under go a period of training. This is to include a study of the book, “The Ministry of the Deacon”, or other books or resources as determined by the Pastor and deacon body.

3. Election Procedures

a. There shall be a strong emphasis from the pulpit and in the church bulletin several weeks prior to the election of deacons. The purpose of this is to inform the congregation that a nomination of deacons is imminent and to stress the qualities and qualifications of a deacon.

b. A deacon election committee, as selected by the deacon body, is responsible for the deacon review and election process.

c. All deacons currently serving will be given the opportunity to serve for another year. Likewise ordained deacons who have moved into the church from another Baptist church and have met the (6) six month membership requirement will be interviewed by the deacon election committee. The interview will include a review of the qualifications of a deacon, the obligations of deacon service in the church, and a determination of the candidate’s willingness to serve.

d. When the number of ordained deacons has been determined, the committee, in consultation with the Pastor and deacon officers, will specify the desired additional number needed. The total participating deacons will not exceed one deacon for each (7) seven resident church families.

e. The deacon election committee, along with the pastor, shall meet periodically throughout the year to compile a list of nominees. Any member of the church may recommend persons to the Pastor and deacon election committee as possible nominees. They shall base their decisions on the spiritual qualifications described in the scriptures and the nominee’s willingness to serve. If selected by the deacon election committee, the prospective deacon and his wife shall be interviewed by the Pastor and members of the deacon election committee. Those meeting the deacon qualifications will then be recommended to the congregation.

f. From this list of nominees, the membership shall vote by secret ballot following the worship service on the designated Sunday. Members of the church will be asked to vote approval or disapproval of each nominee. Candidates must receive a 90% approval vote to qualify for ordination.

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g. Deacon ordination shall be held in October.

h. Special elections and ordinations may be called as deemed necessary by the deacon election committee with the approval of the congregation.

D. CHURCH CLERK

1. Election

The Clerk will be elected annually by the church after being selected by the Nominating Committee. The Clerk should have a capacity for accurately recording details, should take pride in keeping the records neat, and be faithful to guard them safely. The Clerk should be regular in attendance and alert to recognize actions that need to be recorded.

2. Duties

To serve the church efficiently in these functions, the Church Clerk will give attention to the following duties:

a. Serve as recorded.

The Clerk will record for the church, by writing down in a permanent form, the transactions of the church business meetings.

b. Procure records of all church officers and prepare the annual letter.

The statistics prepared by the Clerk are used by the denomination's statisticians in compiling the official denominational records.

c. Preserve the records.

It is the Clerk's duty to keep a full set of all reports and minutes for past years as well as current records. Every precaution should be taken to guard records against possible misuse, loss, or destruction. All such reports, records and minutes are the property of the church and are to be maintained at the church and be open for inspection by any member upon request.

d. Carry on all church correspondence.

Letters relating to admission of new members, dismissals, and other official communication are the Clerk's responsibility.

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E. CHURCH TREASURER

1. Election

The Treasurer will be elected annually by the church after being selected by the Nominating Committee. This person must be a servant of the church and of unquestioned integrity.

2. Duties

- a. Work with the Stewardship Committee in maintaining the procedures for receiving, counting, banking, recording, disbursing, reporting and auditing all monies received by the church.
- b. Maintain adequate records of all monies received and disbursed. The disbursement of church funds should be in keeping with church procedure. Bills should be paid promptly.
- c. Examine supporting records of all checks and ascertain that all checks are properly signed.
- d. Make monthly reports to the Stewardship Committee and to the church. At the end of each month, the Treasurer should determine that books are balanced.
- e. Be responsible for preparing the financial portion of the annual church letter for the Association.
- f. Works in close cooperation with the Stewardship Committee and serves as chair person.
- g. Keep adequate records of individual contributions and periodically provide reports to individuals and families.

F. TRUSTEES

1. Election

- a. Trustees shall be selected, interviewed, and enlisted by the Nominating Committee. They are to be presented to the church for election prior to the beginning of each new church year.
- b. If a vacancy occurs, the Nominating Committee will nominate a replacement immediately.

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2. Duties

a. The Trustees are responsible to the church for serving as legal representatives of the Church. They should be knowledgeable of legal matters and have a good understanding of general business procedure, including legal transactions involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, and rental of property.

b. Trustees act as directed by the Church. Trustees cannot act on their own initiative but as the church instructs. It is mandatory that church action authorizing the Trustees signing a particular legal document be recorded in the official minutes of the church.

c. Trustees will sign as Trustees of the Church, not individually.

G. ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

1. Election

The Association Executive Board Members shall be elected annually by the church after being selected by the Nominating Committee. They should have an understanding of Baptist life as it relates to the church, the local Association, State Convention and Southern Baptist Convention.

Each church in the local association is entitled to three voting members of the Association Executive Board. These three members consist of the Pastor and two elected representatives of each cooperating church. The Pastor of each church is entitled to a voting membership whether he is elected or not.

2. Duties

a. Attend the Association Executive Board meetings and share in the work of the body.

b. Serve along with the Pastor as Liaison between our church and the Association.

c. Assist the Pastor in communicating the work of our Association to the church. Seek to keep before our membership the needs of our Association and the work of Baptists in the area.

H. MODERATOR

1. Election

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The Moderator will be the Pastor, his designee, or a member of the ministerial staff. In the absence of the Pastor designee, the chairman of the deacons will preside. In his absence, the Church Clerk will call the church to order and a moderator pro-tem will be elected to preside for the meeting.

2. Duties

- a. Preside at all quarterly business meetings and at special called meetings for transaction of church business.
- b. Guard and build the fellowship of the church. The moderator must seek to achieve unity in diversity.
- c. Keep order. Recognize each speaker and allow ample discussion.
- d. Expedite the business of the church by keeping the business at hand moving and resolved. Prolonged discussions may be referred to the appropriate committee for study and reporting.

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ARTICLE III CHURCH MEETINGS

A. WORSHIP SERVICES

At this time the church shall meet regularly each Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening for preaching, instruction, evangelism, and for the worship of Almighty God. These meetings are open for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the ministerial staff.

B. SPECIAL SERVICES

Revival services and any other church meetings that are essential in the promotion of the objectives of the church shall be placed on the church calendar.

C. REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING

* Regular quarterly business meetings shall be held on the third Sunday of the third month of each quarter. Unless circumstances warrant a rescheduling or postponement to another day.

*Revised and adopted as of October 23, 2005.

D. SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING

A special called business meeting may be held to consider matters of a significant nature. The Pastor or deacon executive officers can call the meeting. A notice to the congregation of the subject, date, time and location must be given in two regular worship services unless extreme urgency renders such notice impracticable; in which event notice will be waived.

E. QUORUM

The quorum consists of those in attendance of any properly called business meeting.

F. PARLIAMENTARY RULES

Robert's Rules of Order Revised, is the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church, unless otherwise stated in this Constitution and By-laws.

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ARTICLE IV ORDINANCES

A. BAPTISM

Baptism is a symbolic act of obedience portraying the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the sinner's death and burial to sin and being raised to new life in Jesus.

A person who receives Jesus Christ as Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service; and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord, will be eligible for church membership upon being baptized. Each candidate should be visited by a church minister or a member of the Baptismal committee to set a date and time for baptism.

1. Baptism will be by immersion in water.
2. Baptism will be administered by the Pastor, ministerial staff or whomever the church shall authorize.
3. Baptism will be administered as an act of worship during any worship service.

B. LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby all those present who profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, through partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine, commemorate the death of Jesus Christ and anticipate His second coming.

1. The Lord's Supper should be observed, at least, quarterly.
2. The Pastor and deacons will be responsible for administration of the Lord's Supper.
3. The deacons will be responsible for the physical preparation of the Lord's Supper.

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ARTICLE V LICENSING AND ORDAINING MINISTERS

A. LICENSING

Any man who gives evidence of a call to the ministry, and upon the recommendation of the Pastor and deacon body of the church, may be licensed by the Church to the Gospel Ministry. A majority vote of approval by members present at any business meeting is required.

B. ORDINATION

Any man who is licensed to the Gospel Ministry by this or any church of like faith and order, who possesses the scriptural qualifications for ministry, and who has the recommendation of the Ordination Council, may be ordained by a majority vote of approval by members present at any business meeting.

The Ordination Council, as invited by the Church, shall consist of ordained ministers and deacons of this church and any church of a like faith and order. They shall examine the qualifications of the candidate and, by a majority vote of approval, may recommend such candidate to the church for ordination.

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**ARTICLE VI
COMMITTEES AND COORDINATING COUNCILS**

A. TYPES OF COMMITTEES

1. Regular Committees

These are defined as standing committees working throughout the year in the church. They shall be defined as:

a. Administrative Committees which work with the staff in the administration of the church and report monthly, as required. They are:

- (1) Building and Grounds Committee
- (2) Stewardship Committee
- (3) Nominating Committee
- (4) Long Range Planning Committee

b. Organizational Council are concerned with nurturing and the spiritual outreach of the church to the community. They are:

- (1) Home Bound and Nursing Home Ministry
- (2) Youth
- (3) Children's Ministries
- (4) Nursery
- (5) Vacation Bible School

c. Christian Service Committees will assist the ministerial staff in the function of providing of basic interpersonal services of the church. They are:

- (1) Baptism Committee

- (2) Flowers and Cards Ministry
- (3) Hospitality Committee

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- (4) Revival Committee
- (5) Transportation Committee
- (6) Usher Committee

2. Special Committees

These are defined as committees recommended by the Pastor and/or the Nominating Committee with a unique job to do that terminates at a specific point in time or when a specific task is completed. An example would be a Search Committee for ministerial staff replacements or additions.

B. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

All committee members shall be recommended by the Nominating Committee and elected by the Church unless otherwise indicated in the By-Laws. The Pastor and other ministerial staff shall be ex-officio members to all committees. The principal function of each committee, along with the membership, size, selection and duties shall be detailed in the Operation and Procedures in direct association with the committee listed.

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ARTICLE VII PROGRAM ORGANIZATIONS

A. GENERAL

1. All organizations shall be under church control. All officers will be members of the church, selected by the church, and will report regularly.

2. Program organizations shall be developed as needed.

B. SUNDAY SCHOOL

There shall be a Sunday School for the study of God's Word and for ministry. It shall be divided into departments and classes for all ages and conducted under the direction of the Pastor, Minister of Education, and the Sunday School Director.

The tasks of the Sunday School shall be to teach Biblical revelation, reach persons for Christ, and church membership. It shall perform the functions of the church within its constituency, provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

C. CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

The Nominating Committee will seek out and provide officers and leaders that will be nominated and approved by the church.

The Children's Ministry is an organization to provide for the Biblical teaching and religious training of children through the Sunday School, Children's Church, and week day programs. The ultimate goal of these programs is to lead the children to an acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

D. CHURCH MUSIC PROGRAM

There shall be a Church Music Program under the direction of the Minister of Music. Such officers and/or organizations shall be included as needed. The music program tasks shall be to teach music; train persons to lead, sing and play music; provide music to the church and community; provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

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ARTICLE VIII CHURCH FINANCES

This Church is to be financed and supported by its members and it is understood that membership in this church involves a financial obligation to support the church and its purposes with regular tithes and offerings.

A. BUDGET

*The Stewardship Committee will prepare and submit to the church an inclusive annual budget, indicating by items the amount needed and sought for all local and worldwide expenses for the forthcoming year.

All expenditures shall be disclosed to the church by the Church Treasurer.

*Amended and adopted as of July 20, 2008.

B. ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES

1. Funds for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the Church Treasurer or financial secretary, and be properly recorded on the books of the church.

2. A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the Stewardship Committee and the Church Treasurer.

3. All purchase orders and invoices or contracts shall be verified by the appropriate committee or staff members.

C. FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the church shall run concurrently with the church year that begins on October 1, and ends on September 30.

D. SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX

The Trustees are responsible for the safety deposit box.

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**ARTICLE IX
CHURCH OPERATION AND PROCEDURES**

A. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The organizational chart will depict lines of responsibility in the administration of the church. This chart shall be reviewed periodically and shall be revised as needed. A copy is included in the Operations and Procedures.

B. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Church policies and procedures are described in the Operation and Procedures. They shall be kept in the church office and made available to any member of the church. They shall be maintained by the Church Secretary or the Church Clerk if the church does not employ a secretary.

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ARTICLE X AMENDMENTS

* The By-Laws may be amended at any regular quarterly business meeting by an affirmative vote of 2/3 of the members present; provided the proposed amendment has been offered in writing and promoted from the pulpit in at least two regular Sunday worship services prior to the proposed action.

*Revised and adopted as of October 23, 2005 due to change in Article III, Section C, of By-Laws.

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