Troop 884,

I will warn you up front that this is a somewhat lengthy announcement, but what follows is a lot of important information about the Troop and its functioning, so scouts and adults alike should read it “cover-to-cover”. These aren’t really “new” practices or procedures, just enforcement of procedures that have existed all along but that we have not been implementing as consistently and diligently as we ought to. Unless otherwise noted, the following will become effective with the first Troop meeting of 2015, Wednesday, January 7th.

**For Scouts & Adults**

**Uniform Standards** – on occasions where we are expected to be in uniform – weekly meetings, special events, travel, etc. – scouts and adult leaders should wear as complete a uniform as they own, including scout pants. If a scout does not own scout pants, a pair of cargo pants, slacks, or – if it is the only option available, blue jeans, can be temporarily substituted until he can procure scout pants. If you do not have a particular uniform item and need troop support to obtain it, please approach an adult volunteer and make that known so we can help. We have a uniform closet that may be able to meet the need and, if not, can look at other options. Athletic shorts, “hoodies” or other clothes or hats that are not part of the official BSA uniform should not be worn, the exception being wearing appropriate outerwear like a coat, rain gear, etc.

**MB procedures** - while the Troop will always make reasonable accommodations for unforeseen circumstances, we are going to begin enforcing the established procedures for beginning and completing merit badges. The process begins with obtaining a blue card and getting a Scoutmaster signature, then a MB counselor signature. On a related note, when you begin a MB please consider looking for counselor outside of the Troop so you become accustomed to working and interacting with adults whom you aren’t necessarily familiar or comfortable with – this is a life skill unto itself. Finally, if you are unsure of the process, ask an adult leader and we will be happy to explain.

**Community Service –** similarly, if you are doing community service outside of scouting, get Scoutmaster approval for the project beforehand. I have approved a couple of projects lately post facto because I didn’t want the scout to not get credit for the time and work he put in, but unless there is a specific and compelling reason why you didn’t get approval beforehand, from here on out I will not provide approval after the fact. Please, do not put yourself in the position of not getting credit for the work you do, and do not put me in the position of having to deny you such credit – it stinks for everyone involved. One key to success here is to not wait until the last minute so that, if there is a miscommunication or some other glitch, there is time for you to recover and not miss the opportunity. Also, please make sure what you are proposing to do actually supports “the community” – joining a church or school group that goes around the neighborhood raking leaves is fine, you raking the leaves of you elderly neighbor is undoubtedly noble and in the spirit of scouting, but maybe doesn’t meet the definition of “community service”. Enough said.

**Scoutmaster Conference** – in the interest of allowing me to better organize my time during meetings, as well as cultivating in scouts the practice of planning ahead, please make sure you provide me with at least one week of notification of your need for a Scoutmaster Conference. This also fosters a more deliberate process that enables me and you as the scout to prepare and therefore to participate in a more substantive and meaningful conference. It is also fitting of the occasion since this is a formal part of the rank advancement process.

**Boards of Review** – the Troop Committee has asked me to convey that, in a similar vein to the Scoutmaster Conferences, they will now only be doing Boards of Review during the first and third meetings of each month and with prior notification/approval. The reasons are the same as for the SM Conference. Also, even more than at other times it is important that you show up to your SM Conference and BoR in a full Class A uniform, ironed, shirt tails tucked in, looking and acting sharp. I would add that “lounging” and looking disheveled or disinterested are not the proper way to engage in these important events. Prepare ahead of time by going over your requirements in your head – when and how you completed them, who signed them off, etc.. Think about some of the questions you are likely to be asked and what answers you might offer. Sit up straight, look the person/people you are talking to in the eye, and speak clearly and loudly enough to be heard and understood. Throughout your lives you will have occasion to engage in such interviews, and SM Conferences and BoRs are a tailor-made opportunity to practice these important skills.

**Flag Ceremonies** – we have instituted the practice of beginning our meetings with a flag ceremony that includes formal posting of the colors. Patrols will take turns doing this from week to week. Part of the reason is to better demonstrate respect for our flag, but it is also to help build competence in the scouts’ ability to carry out a ceremony; as scouts you need to know how to do this and the way you learn it is by doing it. Patrol members should be rotated through the various positions with an emphasis on providing an opportunity to be “caller”. If the scout is young and doesn’t know the calls, the PL, APL or even an older scout from another patrol can stand beside him and mentor him through the calls until he becomes proficient. The point is that we are doing this so scouts learn and practice, so the PL or someone who already knows how should not be the only one doing it.

**Adult Patrol Advisors** – in order to promote and facilitate better implementation of the Patrol method, we have assigned an adult leader to each of the Patrols to act as an advisor. Specifically, Mr. Wence will be the adult advisor to the Dogge Patrol, Mr. Veronie will advise the Potato Patrol, and Mr. Nalls will advise the Burnt Toast Patrol. Shortly after the new year they will sit down with the PL from the patrol they are assigned to and discuss expectations and what their role is and is not with respect to supporting the patrol.

**Troop Election Cycle** – we are currently in the unfortunate position of our election cycles occurring such that we go to summer camp with a brand new slate of Troop leaders. To fix this we are going to extend current tenures by a month or tw and hold Troop elections sometime in February and every six months thereafter. If you are currently in a leadership position and cannot or do not want to continue in it until February, please let me know and we will make arrangements for someone to act in the interim until elections are held.

**PLC attendance** – there has been some confusion over who needs to attend PLCs each month, so here is the definitive guidance. The SPL will attend and preside over the meeting, ASPLs and PLs will also attend and the Scribe will attend to record and report the meeting. Scouts in other positions of leadership do not need to attend and, in the interest of keeping the meeting to a manageable size, should not attend unless asked to discuss a particular agenda item for which they bear responsibility. The exception is if the PL is unable to attend, in which case he should arrange with his APL to attend in his absence. If neither can attend, a senior scout from their patrol should attend – whatever the scenario, every patrol should be represented at every meeting. The Scoutmaster will attend all meetings and ASMs are invited to attend also.

**Adult Opportunities**

**Communications -** Mr. Elliott has recently taken on the roles of Eagle Scout coordinator and OA representative, in addition to the support he provides the Troop by attending many of our monthly camping events. I am therefore making an appeal on his behalf for someone to take on the communications function he has performed for the last few years. This principally consists of sending/forwarding e-mail announcements to the Troop on behalf of the SM, Committee Chair and SPL. If you would consider doing this but need more information to make a decision, please e-mail or talk to him in the next week or two and he can better advise you of the time/effort involved.

**Recruitment** - We are also looking for a recruitment coordinator. We have done better at recruiting this year than last – though the work is ongoing and the results remain to be seen - but it would be better still if we had a single person whose sole focus is to draw local Webelos and Boy Scout-age non-scouts, to 884 events so that we can showcase our Troop and the program we provide. This is a function that doesn’t require tons of time but can provide outsized benefits to the Troop. Someone with some reach-back into the world of Cub Scouts would be mildly preferable, but far more important is simply to have someone who is doing this for the Troop.

**Program/schedule announcements** – in closing, we have had a few events come up that were/are not on the Troop calendar but that everyone needs to be aware of:

**First Aid/CPR** - Mr. Pleet has graciously agreed to conduct a First Aid MB and CPR course for scouts and adult leaders on Saturday, January 3rd from 9:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Mr. Scheaffer has also graciously agreed to make his facilities at ECPI available for the training, so that will be the venue. There will be a $??? fee to cover the cost of the books and materials for each participant. A sign-up sheet will be out at the next couple of Troop meetings and there may end up being an upper limit to the class size, so if you are interested sign up sooner rather than later. If we end up having to impose a limit we will do so on a first-come-first-admitted basis using the sign-up sheet.

**Holiday Troop Meeting Schedule** – we will meet on the 10th and 17th of December – the 17th will be the annual Christmas party – and will then break for Christmas and New Years, resuming meetings on January 7th.

**New Parents Meeting** – at the Troop meeting on February 25th, once cross-overs are complete and we have a crop of new scouts (hopefully), we will conduct a meeting/social with new parents. The idea is to welcome them, provide an opportunity for them to get to know established parents, convey our scouting values and expectations of them as members of the Troop, and to familiarize them with the “mechanics” of the Troop’s functioning – budgeting, programming, rank advancement, etc.. Details and a schedule will be forthcoming, but it will occur during our normal meeting time and place. Please make it a priority to be there to meet and make welcome the newest members of 884 and their parents.