HOW TO BE A CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

GFWC / CFWC Club Officer Guide

Purpose of the Position

The Corresponding Secretary is the club's **official correspondence officer**. The position is different from the Recording Secretary.

Recording Secretary = records what happened.
Corresponding Secretary = communicates what needs to be communicated.

The Corresponding Secretary should work closely with the President and should not independently speak for the club on policy matters unless authorized.

1. Know Your Club's Bylaws First

Your first responsibility is to read the club's:

- Bylaws
- Standing Rules
- Policies and Procedures
- Current yearbook/directory
- CFWC and GFWC information applicable to the office

The club's own bylaws determine the specific duties of its Corresponding Secretary. Federation guidance supplements those requirements; it does not replace them.

2. Handle Official Correspondence

The Corresponding Secretary prepares correspondence requested or authorized by the President or governing body.

Typical correspondence includes:

Thank-you letters: speakers, donors, community partners, sponsors, meeting hosts and individuals assisting with projects.

Acknowledgment letters: donations, awards, proclamations, invitations, gifts and community recognition.

Official club correspondence: letters to CFWC, the District, GFWC, government agencies, community organizations and other clubs when authorized.

Courtesy correspondence: sympathy, get-well, congratulations, milestone birthdays, member recognition and condolences when provided for by club policy.

A traditional GFWC leadership guide describes the corresponding secretary as handling general club correspondence not assigned to another officer or committee, writing clearly and concisely, sending correspondence promptly, maintaining copies, and transferring the files to her successor. (GFWC Illinois)

3. Do Not Confuse Correspondence With Minutes

The Corresponding Secretary ordinarily **does not take the official minutes** unless the bylaws provide otherwise or she is temporarily filling in for the Recording Secretary.

The Recording Secretary maintains the official record of meetings. CFWC itself makes this distinction: its Recording Secretary keeps minutes of Executive Board, Executive Committee and Convention sessions. (California Federation of Women's Clubs)

4. Keep a Correspondence Log

I recommend every SGVD club Corresponding Secretary maintain a simple log:

Date	Correspondence	To/From	Reason	Requested By	Action
Sept. 5	Thank-you letter	Guest Speaker	September program	President	Sent
Sept. 12	Invitation	City Mayor	Anniversary event	Board	Sent
Sept. 18	Sympathy card	Member	Family loss	President	Sent
Oct. 2	CFWC letter	CFWC	Federation business	President	Filed

This creates continuity and makes the end-of-year transition much easier.

5. Maintain an Official Correspondence File

Keep copies of important incoming and outgoing correspondence.

A simple electronic filing system works well:

Corresponding Secretary → 2026–2027 → Incoming / Outgoing / Thank You / Sympathy & Courtesy / District-CFWC-GFWC / Community Partners / Invitations / Official Business

Do not retain sensitive personal information unnecessarily.

6. Follow the President's Direction

The CFWC model is particularly clear on this point: the Corresponding Secretary conducts correspondence **as directed by the President and the organization's governing bodies.** (California Federation of Women's Clubs)

For a club, that means the Corresponding Secretary should not independently:

- commit the club to a project;
- promise money or donations;

- take a position on legislation;
- make statements on behalf of the President;
- enter an agreement;
- issue controversial correspondence;
- speak for the Executive Board without authorization.

When in doubt: **draft it and send it to the President for approval before sending it.**

7. Use Good Federation Email Etiquette

Every official email should be professional and easy to understand.

Use a meaningful subject line, identify the club, state the purpose early, provide deadlines clearly, and include the officer's name and title.

Avoid forwarding long email chains when a clean new message would be clearer. Be especially careful with **Reply All** and with exposing members' email addresses. Use BCC for large distributions when appropriate.

CFWC currently provides leadership resources including **"Good Leaders: Protocol & Email Etiquette."** (California Federation of Women's Clubs)

8. Report Correspondence at Meetings

If your club's bylaws or meeting procedure provides for correspondence to be reported, prepare a short summary for the President.

The secretary usually does **not need to read every letter word-for-word**. Identify the sender, subject and any action required.

For example: "Correspondence was received from the City inviting the club to participate in the Veterans Day ceremony. Registration is due October 15."

If correspondence requires action, give it to the President so the item can be properly placed before the body.

9. Protect the Club's Records

Official correspondence belongs to the **club**, not the individual officer.

At the end of the administration, turn over:

- correspondence files;
- electronic files;
- templates;
- contact information maintained for the office;

- correspondence log;
- pending correspondence;
- instructions and procedures;
- passwords/accounts belonging to the club, following the club's security procedures.

Do not leave the next Corresponding Secretary starting from scratch.

10. Monthly Checklist

A Corresponding Secretary can use this quick routine each month:

1. Check with the President for correspondence needing preparation.
2. Review incoming club correspondence.
3. Prepare and send authorized letters promptly.
4. Send thank-you, sympathy, congratulations or other courtesy correspondence.
5. Save copies of important correspondence.
6. Update the correspondence log.
7. Identify correspondence requiring Board or membership action.
8. Prepare a short correspondence report for the meeting.
9. Follow up on unanswered official correspondence.
10. File everything before the end of the month.

The Most Important Rule

The Corresponding Secretary communicates for the organization; she does not independently make decisions for the organization.

That distinction protects the President, the Board, the club and the Corresponding Secretary.

For reference, the official resources are available from CFWC Resources and the GFWC Governance Resource Library.