



February 1, 2019

Dear Members:

Over our collective four-year tenure as presidents of the Madison Club, no topic has been discussed more frequently or fervently as the discussion of the Club's dress code. As many of you know, a new dress code policy was enacted last summer after the Club's lower-level renovation. In an effort to clarify recent questions from members, we feel it would be beneficial to provide more background and rationale for the Club's current policy.

Dress Code: An Historic Debate

Two of the biggest revenue drivers for the Club are private events and business meals during the workweek. Over the past two decades the Club has had a variety of dress code policies that have been loosely defined and executed; none of them were strictly enforced due to lack of alternative spaces in the Club. Members would have been turned away if not dressed according to published code, and that was not a practice of interest to anyone.

Non-enforcement created dissatisfaction on the part of a vocal group of members who wanted to have business meals in a more professional dining environment. They felt that the Club's fine dining room should exclude casual wear such as jeans, jean shorts, hooded sweatshirts, baseball hats and flip flops. However, when the staff made an effort to enforce a dress code, members arriving in such attire were offended when presented with the posted guidelines.

It was believed by the Board that last year's lower-level remodeling and expansion created the possibility for a workable compromise: create spaces within the Club that have differing dress codes. This alternative is not unique to the Madison Club and is being used successfully by city clubs around the country.

Finding Compromise

Extensive discussions ensued within the Board and also with members at large during our pre-renovation member forums in the summer of 2017. There were extensive discussions on what qualifies as business casual. There were Board members who wanted to return to the jacket and tie requirement. There were Board members who were against any dress code.

Ultimately, the dress code that was established was, in the opinion of the Board, the lowest common denominator that could satisfy the majority. It also provided for a casual option within the Club at all times. The result is a location and time-based dress code operative as follows:

- During the week, Churchill's, the third-floor dining room, has a business casual dress policy. Welcomed attire in Churchill's during these times includes collared dress shirts or golf shirts, dress pants, dresses, slacks, or other professional or dress attire of the same caliber. Sweatshirts, t-shirts, shorts, flip-flops, and denim are not acceptable. This policy is in effect from Monday at 11 AM through 2 PM on Friday.
- The remodeled lower level, Five East Lounge & Tap Room, has no dress code at any time. Members can wear whatever they wish. Operative hours are Monday at 7 AM – Friday at 2 PM.

- From Friday at 2 PM until Monday at 11 AM, given that the lower level is closed for weekend private events, the third-floor dining room has no dress code policy on the weekend. Members are free to dress as they wish.

The practical effect of this location and timing-based dress code is that there is a business-casual standard in one area of the Club during the work week. There is a no dress code policy in effect in another area of the Club during the work week and a no dress code policy in the entire Club during the weekend. As a result, for those casually dressed members, there is always a place that they can use the Madison Club. For those who would like to maintain business-casual attire, there is not always a place for them to go.

It was hoped that this compromise, based on location and timing, would satisfy all factions of the sartorial debate.

Cultural Shifts and Club Response

There are members who believe, rightly so, that business-casual or smart-casual, as currently interpreted includes tasteful blue jeans. A good deal of time, over multiple meetings, was spent discussing this very subject. While taste and opinion were certainly discussed, they were discarded as a basis for making the decision. Ultimately, the decision about where to draw the line of the lowest common denominator was made based on possible enforcement.

It was pointed out, and the majority of the Board agreed, that in particular as it relates to blue jeans, once they were allowed in any form, it would be impossible for staff to regulate what was and was not appropriate. Would it be based on color? Would it be based on price? Or some alternative metric? The same could, of course, be said of designer t-shirts versus more modestly priced collared shirts. That, thankfully, has not come up. Blue jeans were not included as part of the business casual category because it would be impossible for staff to enforce as a practical matter.

Moving Forward Together

We greatly appreciate the comments we have received from members on both sides of this issue. However, the Board still believes that the dress code policy strikes the best balance; providing a casual option at all times while also providing a more special business environment that is not readily found elsewhere in downtown Madison. Moreover, it accomplishes other Board objectives such as maximizing Club revenues by attracting a range of attired members and guests.

One thing we can all agree on is that we want our wonderful service staff to focus their energy on providing a fantastic dining experience for you, your family, your clients and your friends. Our staff has been given a directive and everything goes more smoothly when we are all prepared and informed. Please review the dress code policy and share it with your guests prior to your visit.

As always, thank you for your membership. We hope that even if you do not agree with the dress code policy for Churchill's, that you can at least better understand how it came to fruition and realize the many hours of debate and consideration that this topic has created. We truly want all members to feel comfortable and cared for here, and we appreciate your support. We are fortunate that the Madison Club has a strong membership base and solid financial footing. As we watch other clubs experience very different threats to their viability, we feel that, while controversial, if the dress code debate is our largest issue, we really have much to celebrate.

Sincerely,

Mike Wittenwyler 2018-19

Eric Petersen 2017-18

Erik Johnson 2016-17

Tracy Buglass 2015-16