

Focus on Freeport #4: The Captain's Council

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The Captain's Council is the governing body of Freeport. Councilors make and enforce the laws, defend Freeport's interests at home and abroad, and generally ensure that the city continues to prosper. Since Freeport is a city based on mercantilism and enlightened self-interest, councilors also make sure that they profit from all of the above. The Captain's Council isn't only about prestige; it's also about filthy lucre.

The council, like many aspects of the city, is a legacy of Freeport's piratical past. In the rough and tumble early days, every pirate captain was considered an equal. Decisions were made by a simple majority, and duels were as common as debates. As the city grew, there were just too many captains to continue on as before. When Captain Drac became sole Sea Lord of Freeport, he knew it was time for change. He also knew he couldn't simply disregard the captains of Freeport, or his lordship would be over in a matter of days. His compromise solution was the creation of the Captain's Council. He chose six powerful captains to help him rule the city. They enforced Drac's edicts and handled the day-to-day business of governing the city. These men became the first Captain's Council of Freeport. Under their rule Freeport grew and prospered.

Changing of the Guard

As the city grew it changed in ways that the pirates could not have anticipated. The captains on the council began to settle down and consolidate their power within the city, becoming the de facto nobility of Freeport. Stability in the government improved prospects for trade and so a merchant class established itself. As the population increased so too did the demand for artisans and craftsmen. Soon a strong working class developed and settled in Freeport. It was a long time coming, but the city of rogues and buccaneers eventually grew into a powerful and independent city-state.

By the end of Drac's life the council had gained much power in the city. They had influence with the other captains, the merchants and the tradesman. Although the Sea Lord's word was still law, Drac knew that he could not blatantly defy their will. This as much as his son being unfit for the job convinced Drac to empower the council to approve anyone nominated for the title of Sea Lord. This was a defining

moment for the Captain's Council, as it gave them some control over who would govern the city.

The council elected Drac's nominee, Captain Cromey, who proved an excellent choice. He treated the members of the Captain's Council as equals and thought of them as trusted advisors rather than lackeys. At the end of his rule, Cromey followed in Drac's footsteps by giving the council even more authority. Cromey issued an edict that the Captain's Council would not only approve nominations for Sea Lord but also approve nominations for new council members. This would force the Sea Lord to work with the council to rule the city and provide a check to his absolute power.

The Council Grows Stronger

About thirty years after the death of Drac, the city, which had almost doubled in size, was facing a crisis. A war raged on the continent, disrupting trade and drawing away much of the city's navy. Freeport was in turmoil as food and other essential supplies became scarce. Angry riots were common. The Sea Lord Corliss and the council could barely keep order in the streets. An ambitious and popular councilor named Antonio Grossette saw this as an opportunity to increase the power and influence of the council.

He proposed a plan to the Sea Lord to help him restore order. He asked for Corliss to declare martial law in the city. Since most of the military was off honoring treaties on the continent, private forces would have to be used. To keep peace on the streets, the size of the council have to be temporarily increased to twelve, Grossette argued. Each of the councilors would then be given an area of the city to control and use their own forces to calm the populace. Once order was restored, martial law would be lifted and the council returned to its former size.

At first Corliss resisted. He knew that the council would be a threat to his power if it grew too large. More importantly, endorsing private armies to roam the streets would become a problem itself if not watched carefully. The situation in the city was worsening, however. Many believe that Antonio and his fellow councilors allowed things to deteriorate intentionally to force the Sea Lord's

hand. Whatever the truth, the city was in bad shape. Corliss finally agreed to Antonio's plan but he insisted on choosing the men who would be added to the council himself.

Grossette's plan worked. Order was restored in the city within a few weeks. Food and supplies were rationed and the forces of the council kept the peace. When the war ended six months later the city was recovering nicely and looking forward to a speedy recovery. Now Antonio could make his final gambit.

Corliss wanted to restore the council to its former size as per the original agreement with Antonio. The councilors had other ideas. Grossette had convinced the councilors that they did not have to give up their newfound power. Corliss was outraged and threatened to use the military to remove the councilors, making civil war a very real possibility. Into this impasse stepped Antonio Grossette. He offered Corliss a choice. Face civil war to remove the councilors, or leave the councilors in power and they would put their private military forces under the Sea Lord's control.

With his military tired from a bitter war on the continent, Corliss agreed to this compromise and enacted a law that the council would consist of twelve members henceforward. The councilors then disbanded their forces and a new era in Freeport began. Antonio had increased the size of the council and at the same time diminished some of the powers of the Sea Lord.

Anton's Gift

Anton Drac assumed power in Freeport almost 30 years ago. Fortunately he was able to undo much of his older brother Marten's damage. During this time the Captain's Council put a lot of pressure on the Sea Lord, hoping to capitalize on his efforts to change public opinion about the Drac family. First and foremost they repeatedly attempted to get Anton to repeal the succession law. Marten Drac had passed the law to make certain that the Sea Lord would be a descendent of the original Captain Drac.

When the council realized that Anton would not budge on the succession issue, they decided to change their tactics. For decades the Sea Lord had the power to nominate new members to the council. Although the council voted to confirm these nominees they wanted to be able to put up their own candidates as well.

Anton was initially against the idea. He knew that this would further diminish the powers of the Sea Lord. He also knew that the sting of Marten's hideous regime was still in everyone's mind, so he settled on a compromise solution. The council would have the power to nominate councilors. In

return for this power, the Sea Lord would cast two votes for his nominee and break all ties. This meant that the council would have to have at least seven members vote against the Sea Lord to elect their own nominee.

The council initially was not pleased with Anton's suggestion. They held out for many years hoping that they could get a more favorable result. They changed their minds when Anton decided to go to war on the continent. The council feared that he might die and they would get no deal at all. Shortly before Anton's assassination they accepted his offer and gained nominating power for the council members. This has come to be known as "Anton's Gift".

The Workings of the Council

Although the Sea Lord is able to enact laws, the Captain's Council limits his powers. In four important areas the Sea Lord must gain the approval of the council before proceeding. These are: declarations of war, entering into treaties with foreign powers, allocations of city funds, and the levying of taxes.

Councilors hold their posts for life, with one exception (*see Madness in Freeport* for details on this), and can only be removed otherwise by vote of the council. If a councilor is murdered, a family member has the right to assume his seat. Councilors are only removed if they commit treason or other heinous crimes against the city. Bribery, nepotism, and extortion are not considered heinous crimes in Freeport.

Councilors are nominated by the Sea Lord or by the council itself. A vote is then held with the councilors placing one vote each and the Sea Lord placing two votes. If there is a tie, the nominee of the Sea Lord is automatically elected.

The citizens of Freeport have no direct vote to elect councilors or the Sea Lord. This does not mean that their opinions on the matter are ignored. Both the councilors and the Sea Lord understand that electing unpopular officials can only lead to bad business and an unruly populace. For this reason most members of the Captains Council have influence in important segments of Freeport's population.

The Current Council

Details on the current members of the Captain's Council can be found in *Madness in Freeport*, coming soon to a game store near you. All of the councilors are described, and the PCs will get the chance to meet and greet the people who run Freeport.