

Basic Meeting Rules

THOMAS J. BALCH, J.D., PROFESSIONAL REGISTERED
PARLIAMENTARIAN

Schedule

- 1:45 pm Part 1 Lecture with PowerPoint and Q & A period
- 2:45 Lecture to Prepare for Practice
- 2:55 pm Practice making and presiding over consideration of main motions
- 3:15pm Recess
- 3:30pm Part 2 Lecture with PowerPoint and Q & A period
- 4:15pm Adjourn

Overview of Part 1

PART I:

Types of Rules

What Happens at a Meeting

Purpose of Standard Forms

Making Decisions: Handling a Motion

Parliamentary Exercise: Making and
Presiding Over Main Motions

Types of Rules

Types of Rules

Law— e.g., State Not for Profit Corporate Code

Bylaws— basic rules relating principally to itself as an organization

Rules of order

- Special rules of order – specific to organization
- Parliamentary authority- general book of rules

Standing rules

Custom

The ONLY CURRENT AUTHORIZED EDITION *of the*
CLASSIC WORK *on* PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

ROBERT'S RULES *of* ORDER



12TH EDITION

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What Happens at a Meeting

Standard Order of Business (Simplified)

1. Reading and Approval of Minutes
2. Reports of Officers, Boards and Committees
3. Unfinished Business [*not* “Old Business”]
4. New Business

Agenda

Majority vote adopts

- Chair often *proposes* agenda, but cannot “set” it;
-- only body can make agenda binding by adopting it (and may amend it first)

Sample Agenda

- ▶ I. Adoption of Agenda

- ▶ II. Reading and Approval of Minutes

- ▶ III. Reports of Officers

- ▶ A. President Sean Donahue
- ▶ B. Treasurer Sandra Norris

- ▶ III. Report of Executive Committee – Sec’y Ben Choate

- ▶ IV. Reports of Committees

- ▶ A. Projects Review Committee– Mary Ng, Chair
- ▶ B. Special Committee on Counterfeiting – Alan Space, Chair

- ▶ V. Consideration of Regulatory Amendment
Recommendations

- ▶ VI. New Business

- ▶ VIII. Adjourn

Purpose of Standard Forms

Purpose of Standard Forms

“The chair should take special care to make sure that the members always understand what is the immediately pending business - the exact question to be voted on the next time a vote is taken. Failure of presiding officers to do so is one of the greatest causes of confusion in meetings.”

- RONR (12th ed.) 47:17

Purpose of Standard Forms

“It is far better to risk taxing the patience of an assembly by repeating the wording of a motion on which all may be clear, than to risk taking a vote whose effect may be unclear to even a few members.”

- RONR (12th ed.) 47:17

Tip: Sometimes it helps to provide a few words of explanation about the importance for all members to understand the exact motion before they make a decision.

Advantage of Learning Standard Forms

For presiding officer:

- Processing motions becomes second nature
- Free to focus attention on content and on parliamentary issues

For assembly:

- Consistency of language makes it easier for members to follow

Traffic signal analogy

Pattern of Formality

Objective 1: Focus on issues,
not personalities

Objective 2: Preserve chair's
appearance of impartiality

When Chair Speaks

Chair refers to self in third person: "The chair rules that ..."; NEVER use "I"

Don't address member as "you"

- "The chair must ask the member to confine his remarks to the merits of the pending question."
- "The chair rules the motion not in order"; DON'T say "you're out of order".
- Avoid, "your motion is out of order."

Making Decisions: Handling a Motion

Obtaining the “floor”

- ▶ *With important exceptions*, member must be "recognized" before speaking:
 - ▶ Say: "Madam Chair!" "Mr. President!"
- ▶ Chair "recognizes" member who then "has the floor":
 - ▶ "The chair recognizes Ms. Smith."
 - ▶ Or simply: "Mr. Smith."

Preference in Recognition

- **General Rule:** A member can establish prior claim to the floor by seeking it after it has been yielded.
- A member cannot establish prior claim to the floor by seeking it before it has been yielded.

Preference in Recognition

-
- ▶ Common exceptions to general rule:
 - ▶ Maker of motion
 - ▶ One who has not yet spoken has preference
 - ▶ Alternate between supporters and opponents

Handling a Motion

A “**motion**” refers to a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the assembly take certain action.

Six Standard Steps

Bringing a motion before the assembly.

Consideration of a motion.

1. MEMBER MAKES A MOTION

- To make a main motion, member must obtain the floor when no other question is pending.
- SIMPLE CASES: "I move that...."
 - Madam President, I move that the board allot \$100,000 to the Special Committee on Accounting Standards Review.

1. Member makes a motion (cont.)

When unsure of the proper wording for motion, member may seek assistance from the chair.

1. Member makes a motion (cont.)

As soon as member has made a motion, yields floor. (Does NOT begin debate in favor of motion until after chair states motion.)

2. ANOTHER MEMBER SECONDS THE MOTION

Seconder of motion need *not* obtain the floor.

Calls out, “Second !”

2. Another member seconds the motion (cont.)

Does not necessarily mean that seconder favors the motion:

- Agrees the motion should come before the meeting
- May want assembly to go on record as rejecting motion
- Secunder may vote against motion

2. Another member seconds the motion (cont.)

After debate has begun, it doesn't matter if there was no second

Sometimes Second Unnecessary

When motion made on behalf of
committee

In a meeting of

- Any committee
- A small Board = only about a dozen
Board members present

3. CHAIR STATES THE QUESTION

Basic form: "It is moved and seconded that...."

- Chair: It is moved and seconded that the board allot \$100,000 to the Special Committee on Accounting Standards Review.
- It is moved and seconded to adopt resolution number

3. Chair states the question (cont.)

Chair must state question on a motion immediately after it has been made UNLESS motion is:

- Unclear: reformulate, preserving content to satisfaction of maker
- Not in order
 - Chair may suggest alternate motion that is in order
 - Chair's decision is subject to appeal

4. MEMBERS DEBATE THE QUESTION

A motion is open to debate when stated by the chair.

Most secondary motions, such as amendments, are then in order.

4. MEMBERS DEBATE THE QUESTION

➤ **BASIC RULES:**

- May speak twice on each motion
- Member who has not spoken has preference

4. MEMBERS DEBATE THE QUESTION

BASIC RULES:

Each speech limited to 10 minutes; only the assembly may grant permission to speak longer (by a 2/3 vote or unanimous consent)

Often groups adopt special rule with stricter limits, e.g. 2 or 3 minutes.

4. Members debate the question (con't)

Debate on a question must be confined to the merits of the pending question (germane)

4. Members debate the question (con't)

- AVOID PERSONALITIES:
 - Never attack or make any allusion to the motives of members

5. CHAIR PUTS QUESTION AND TAKES VOTE

“Putting the question” = chair puts question to a vote “after once more making clear the exact question the assembly is called upon to decide”

5. CHAIR PUTS QUESTION AND TAKES VOTE

“ Chair: Is there any further debate? (NO ONE SEEKS FLOOR)

- The question is on the adoption of the motion that the board allot \$100,000 to the Special Committee on Accounting Standards Review.

5. Chair puts question and takes vote (cont.)

Motion recorded in minutes as finally put by chair just before being voted on by assembly

5. Chair puts question and takes vote (cont.)

If voice vote:

Those in favor, say *aye*

Those opposed, say *no*

6. CHAIR ANNOUNCES RESULT OF VOTE

If the assembly decides to do what a motion proposes, it adopts the motion -- or the motion is carried.

- Chair: The ayes have it and the motion is adopted.

6. CHAIR ANNOUNCES RESULT OF VOTE

If there is a tie vote on a motion— or any # in the affirmative less than a majority of votes cast-- the result is the motion is lost.

- Chair: The noes have it and the motion is lost.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PREPARE FOR PRACTICE: MAIN MOTIONS

Handling Main Motions

Obtain the “floor”

Make the motion

Second the motion

State the question

Debate the question

Put the question

Announce result of vote

By the Numbers

For main motion: 2-3-4

State Question = 2 steps

Put Question to vote = 3 steps

Announce Result = 4 steps

By the Numbers

For main motion: 2-3-4

- 2 steps to STATE the question
 - It is moved and seconded to/that ...
 - Is there any debate?

By the Numbers

For main motion: 2-3-4

- 3 steps to PUT the Question
 - Is there any [further] debate?
 - The question is on the adoption of the main motion to/that . . .
 - Those in favor of the motion, say *aye*
Those opposed, say *no*

By the Numbers

For main motion: 2-3-4

- 4 steps to ANNOUNCE the voting result
 - “The ayes / noes have it,
 - and the main motion is adopted/ lost.
 - *{IF ADOPTED, give consequence of adoption}*
 - “The question is now on . . .” OR
 - “Is there further new business?”

Divide into Groups of 4,
followed by Recess

PRACTICE: MAIN MOTIONS

Reconvene for Part 2 at 3:30pm

Basic Meeting Rules – Part 2

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Overview of Part 2

Informality in Committees and
Small Board

Committee Reports

Types of Motions

Parliamentary Exercise: Making
and Presiding Over Amendments

Informality in Committees & Small Boards

Application of “Small Board Rules”

Boards: when “not more than about a dozen members present”

Committees: *any* size, unless otherwise instructed by assembly

Informal Committee/ Small Board Procedure

- ▶ Participation
 - ▶ Can raise hand to seek floor to make motions or speak
 - ▶ Speak while seated; chair need not stand
- ▶ No seconds
- ▶ No limit to number of times can speak (except for appeals)
- ▶ Motions to close or limit debate not allowed *in committees* (allowed in boards)

Informal Committee/Small Board Procedure

Informal discussion allowed while no motion pending

Vote can be taken initially by show of hands

Perfectly clear proposal can be voted on without motion

Chair participates in debate, makes motions and votes

Committee Reports

Given by committee chair or reporting member, who makes motion(s) to implement committee recommendations

No second required

President, NOT committee chair, presides over consideration of motions made on behalf of committee

TYPES OF MOTIONS



MAIN MOTION

A **motion** refers to a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the assembly take certain action.

A **main motion** is a motion whose introduction brings business before the assembly; such a motion can be made only while no other motion is pending.

SECONDARY MOTIONS

Can be made while a main motion is pending

Must be disposed of before direct consideration of main motion can be resumed

Amend

- ▶ State **exactly** where in the main motion the change is to be made, (e.g. word{s} before or after, page and line numbers)
- ▶ and **precisely** what words to use.
- ▶ Draft as though giving detailed, word-by-word directions to the secretary how to change the main motion.

Amend

Bad: “I move to amend so that we charge \$50 for the dinner.”

Good: “I move to amend by inserting ‘with a ticket price of \$50’ after ‘dinner.’”

Amend

Chair can require that main motions and amendments be submitted by the mover in writing. (*May stand at ease* to permit.)

Amend: Basic Forms

- STRIKE
 - word(s)
 - paragraph(s)
- INSERT (or ADD)
 - word(s)
 - paragraph(s)
- STRIKE AND INSERT words
- SUBSTITUTE paragraph(s)

Amending an Amendment

Primary (first degree) & secondary (second degree) BUT NO tertiary (third degree amendments)

When a main motion and two amendments are pending, the first vote is taken on the secondary amendment.

Previous Question

- Immediately closes debate and prevents making of most other motions
- Undebatable
- 2/3 vote

Misuse of “Call the Question”

One member *CANNOT* demand an immediate vote by “calling the question” from seat

Must be recognized and move the previous question

Requires a second

No individual member can be deprived of the right to vote except by 2/3 vote to adopt PQ

Postpone

Debatable only with regard to desirability of postponement and time to which to postpone

Amendable

Majority vote (usually)

Point of Order

Can interrupt another who has floor "if the point genuinely requires attention at such a time"

Point of Order

▶ Timeliness Requirement: "must be raised promptly at time breach occurs"

E.g.: if motion is not in order, pt. of order when chair states motion; after debate begun too late

Point of Order

Timeliness Requirement: "must be raised promptly at time breach occurs"

Exceptions: continuing breach, such as motion null & void even if adopted because violates bylaws.

Then pt. of order never too late

Point of Order

Chair rules on all questions of parliamentary procedure affecting the assembly's proceedings

Appeal

- ▶ With second, any member can appeal chair's ruling to full assembly

Appeal

➡ Debatable, *unless*:

- 1) relates to indecorum or rules of speaking
- 2) relates to priority of business
- 3) immediately pending question is undebatable

Appeal

Chair speaks first and last in debate

Other members speak only once

Appeal

“The question is: shall the decision of the chair be sustained?”

Tie vote sustains chair's ruling

Other Common Motions

Rescind/Amend Something Previously Adopted

Limit or Extend Limits of Debate

Refer to a Committee

Suspend the Rules

Parliamentary Inquiry

Request for Information

Reconsider

Recess

Adjourn



Further Information

THE RULES YOU NEED IN A MEETING
MADE SIMPLE AND EASY

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

— *NEWLY REVISED* —

IN BRIEF



The Only
Authorized
Concise
Guide

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FULLY UPDATED 3RD EDITION

Further Information

www.robertsrules.com

- *Question and Answer Forum*

National Association of
Parliamentarians

www.parliamentarians.org

American Institute of
Parliamentarians www.aipparl.org

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Thank you!
