

SUMMIT



FOR MTNA LEADERSHIP
SEPTEMBER 8-10, 2023 · CINCINNATI, OH



ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

Introduction

What is parliamentary law?

The set of rules that groups use to conduct meetings and to facilitate the transaction of business and to promote cooperation and harmony.

Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

- All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations.
- The majority has the right to decide.
- The minority has rights that must be protected.
- A quorum must be present for the group to act.
- Full and free discussion of every motion being considered is a basic right.
- Only one question at a time can be considered at any given time.
- Members have the right to know at all times what the immediately pending question is, and to have it restated before a vote is taken.
- No member can speak until recognized by the chair.
- No one can speak a second time on the same question as long as another wants to speak a first time.
- The chair should be strictly impartial.

Cornerstone of Parliamentary Procedure

THE MOTION

Three steps for bringing a motion before a group:

1. A member makes a motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. The chair states the question on the motion.

Three steps in the consideration of a motion:

1. The members debate the motion.
2. The chair puts the question to a vote
 - A. The chair restates the question.
 - B. The chair takes the vote:
 - "All in favor of the motion, say aye."
 - "Those opposed, say no."
3. The chair announces the result of the vote. The announcement should include
 - A. Report on the voting itself, stating which side prevailed.
 - B. Declaration that the motion is adopted or lost.
 - C. Statement indicating the effect of the vote or ordering its execution.
 - D. Announcement of the next item of business or stating the question of the next motion.

Basic Principles of Robert's Rules of Order

- Someone has to facilitate or direct the discussion and keep order.
- All members of the group have the right to bring up ideas, discuss them, and reach a conclusion.
- Members should come to an agreement about what to do.
- Members should understand that the majority rules, but the rights of the minority are always protected by assuring them the right to speak and to vote.

INFORMAL MEETINGS

- Designed for boards and committees whose membership is under 12.
- Rules are less formal than for larger bodies.
- Person presiding is usually seated and can make motions, discuss motions, and vote on motions.
- Members don't have to rise to address the chair and can discuss ideas before making a motion.
- Even though it has a relaxed approach, members should still have an agenda and limit discussion.

The formality of the parliamentary rules is determined by the size of the board or committee.

- The smaller the group, the less formal it is.
- Conversely, the larger the group, the more formal it is.
- The dividing line is 12.

Differences between large boards and small boards

- Members do not have to stand up and obtain the floor before speaking—can speak while seated.
- Motions don't have to be seconded.
- Members can speak any number of times, and usually there is no motion to close debate
- Members can discuss a subject while no motion is pending.
- When all the members know what they are voting on, having a formal motion before voting is not necessary. (However, a formal motion really helps make the record clear in the minutes.)

Differences between large boards and small boards (continued)

- The chair may take advantage of unanimous (general) consent. "Is there any objection to approving the minutes as presented? Hearing none, the minutes are approved." Otherwise, members must vote on proposed board actions like a large assembly. However, the vote can be taken by a show of hands.
- The chair doesn't have to stand up to put a question to a vote.
- The chair may enter into the discussion and may remain seated while conducting the meeting.
- The chair may make motions and votes (unless board custom dictates otherwise).

What if the board meeting disintegrates into chaos?

- You declare parliamentary law:
- Return to formal rules and advise the members that parliamentary procedures are in place.
- Declare a recess for things to cool off. If that doesn't work, adjourn the meeting.

COMMONLY MISUSED AND MISUNDERSTOOD MOTIONS

"I move the previous question."

- Stops debate immediately and take the vote
- Often misunderstood and misused
- Can't just call "question." If chair immediately stops debate and takes a vote, the members can call out "point of order" and remind the chair that someone needs to make a formal motion to close debate, the motion needs a second, and requires a 2/3 supermajority to close debate.

"I move to table..."

- Lay on the table also misused.
- Meant to temporarily put business aside in order to take up a more urgent matter.
- Not meant to kill a motion or delay it to a later time.
- A motion to "postpone" to the next meeting is correct.

MOST COMMON QUESTIONS

Can "ex officio" members of the board vote?

- Yes, they have all the rights of the other members.
- It's just a way to have people serve on the board without having to appoint or elect them.
- Ex officio without vote.

"What is a 'supermajority' vote and when is it used?"

- Motions that require a two-thirds vote rather than a simple majority
- Any motion that takes away the rights of members
- Previous question
- Limit or extend debate
- Close nominations
- Object to the consideration of a question
- Suspend the rules
- Amend the bylaws

"How do we deal with a problem member/officer?"

- Every organization has the right to enforce its rules and expect ethical and honorable conduct from its members.
- Most organizations have discipline problems from time to time.
- If you have a problem member or officer, Robert's Rules has the answer.
- Everything from an unruly member at meetings to an officer who oversteps their boundaries.
- N.B. Correct it early before it escalates usually by taking the person aside and talking with them. Diplomacy, patience and skill are required.
- Be judicious. Disciplining a member or officer often leads to worse problems with the person and the membership. Censure or termination of membership should be used only as a last resort.

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