

Parliamentary Procedure & Effective Meetings



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- *“Personally, I’m always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught.”*

Winston Churchill



Why It's Important

- Objectives

- Establishes rules and procedures for conducting business
- Ensures legality of meetings
- Expedites business

- Based On:

- The will of the majority
- The right of the minority to be heard
- Courtesy for all
- Consideration of one subject at a time

Hierarchy of Governing Documents

Federal Laws
State Statute
Governing Documents (Code)
Articles of Incorporation
Constitution of Organization
Bylaws
Special Rules of Order
Parliamentary Authority
Standing Rules
Policies and Procedure

- There are documents that take a higher precedence over parliamentary authority
- Example: The MSB Assembly has a different rule in code for reconsideration than what Roberts states, so the Assembly follows the code
- Pay attention to what your governing documents state and talk with your Clerk.

General Meeting Procedures

- The member who made the motion has the right to speak first
- Every member has the right to participation and share equally in discussion (no one member should monopolize the conversation)
- Members wait to be recognized by the chair
- All remarks must be addressed through the chair/presiding officer
- Until a motion has been made, no discussion or debate should take place

General Meeting Procedure

- Members may not speak more than 2 times or more than the allotted time on each motion
- The will of the majority wins the day (choose between being a statesman or a politician)
- Members should not attack other members for their opinion (everyone has their own opinions)
- All debate on a motion needs to pertain to the pending motion (the motion that is directly in front of the body)

Duties of the Chair/Presiding Officer

- Impartially runs the meeting and impartially permits “pro” and “con” debate equally
- Keeps decorum and order during debate
- Keeps discussion on topic
- Determines whether motions are in order
- Makes sure the members are clear on what is before them prior to voting, by stating the motion
- Announces the vote so that all in room can hear

Duties of Chair/Presiding Officer

- Chair in debate:
 - Municipalities are different. There are some chairs that have the right to vote on every motion and there are some that only can vote to break a tie
 - The chair needs to be careful not to sway the debate; however, this does not mean that they have given up their right to have an opinion
 - The chair should wait until debate from the other members is finalized before stating their opinion

Classes Of Motions

- **Main Motions** – brings business forward to be considered
- **Subsidiary Motions** – applied to another motion – by amending, postponing, refer, etc.
- **Incidental Motions** – relate to matters of the meeting rather than to the main motion
- **“Bring Back” Motions** – used to bring back a motion that has already been before the body
- **Privileged Motions** – do not relate to pending business

Processing a Motion

- A member is recognized by the Chair and makes a motion
- Another member seconds the motion (if there is no second the motion fails, unless debate has begun)
- The Chair states the motion, which places it before the body
- When a motion is placed before the body, it now belongs to the body, not to the member who originally made the motion
- After debate, the chair restates the motion and asks for a vote
- The chair announces the results of the vote for everyone in the room to hear

Main Motion

- The purpose of a main motion is to bring business before the body
 - Be specific in stating the motion
 - Make sure the motion states exactly what you are wanting to do

Use positive words to express a negative thought:

CORRECT motion: I move to deny.....

INCORRECT motion: I move to not support.....

Main Motion

“I MOVE to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 18-100.”

This opens the entire ordinance up for amendment, postponement, approval, failure, etc.

- Requires a second
- Is Debatable
- Is amendable
- Requires a majority vote

Subsidiary Motions – Apply to other Motions

- **AMEND**

- Used to modify the pending motion
 - Insert words or paragraphs
 - Strike words or paragraphs
- You can have a primary amendment and a secondary amendment on the floor, but NO more than that
 - Primary Amendment – amends the main motion (requires a second, is amendable, is debatable, requires a majority vote)
 - Secondary Amendment – amends the primary amendment (requires a second, is NOT amendable, is debatable, requires a majority vote)

Subsidiary Motions – Apply to other Motions

- **AMEND** - Example:
 - Main motion: “I move to adopt Ordinance Serial No. 18-100.”
 - Primary amendment is to the Ordinance: “I move a primary amendment to insert a paragraph that reads: Whereas, the Assembly is in support of Department of Transportation to complete the Parks Highway Project prior to the Glenn Highway Project.”
 - Secondary amendment can only amend the primary amendment: “I move a secondary amendment to strike “Parks Highway Project” and insert “Seward Highway Project.”

Subsidiary Motions – Apply to other Motions

- **AMEND** - Now there are 3 motions before the body: main motion, primary amendment, and secondary amendment
 - The first vote would be on the secondary amendment. If it passes, it amends the primary amendment. If the secondary amendment fails, the primary amendment remains the same
 - The second vote would be on the primary amendment. If it passes, it amends the ordinance by inserting that paragraph. If it fails, the ordinance remains the same.
 - The final vote would be on the ordinance, which is the main motion, after all debate and any other amendments

Subsidiary Motions – Apply to other Motions

- **PREVIOUS QUESTION** (call for the question)
 - This motion stops debate
 - To move this motion you must be recognized by the chair
 - No debate can occur once this motion has been moved and seconded
 - Go directly to a vote on this motion
- Requires a second
- Is **NOT** debatable
- Is **NOT** amendable
- Requires a 2/3 vote

Subsidiary Motions – Apply to other Motions

- **LIMIT OR EXTEND LIMITS IN DEBATE**

- There is a limit to how many times each member can speak to a motion. No more than 2 times per motion. I find that most bodies do not limit debate this much, which is fine.
- You may want to limit debate if you have a loaded agenda and you want to make sure the body gets through it's business OR extend debate if there is an item you believe requires more input.
 - “I move to limit debate to 10 minutes on Ordinance 18-100” or “I move to limit debate to one comment per member.”

- Requires a second
- Is NOT debatable
- Is amendable
- Requires 2/3 vote

Subsidiary Motions – Apply to other Motions

- **MOTION TO POSTPONE TO A TIME CERTAIN**

- Postpones action to a specific time or date
- Often confused with the motion to table....tabling should be rarely used.
- May not be postponed beyond the next regular meeting (unless you have a rule otherwise)

“I move to postpone Ordinance 18-100 to a time certain of December 15, 2018”

- Requires a second
- Is debatable
- Is amendable
- Requires a majority vote

Subsidiary Motions – Apply to other Motions

- **POSTPONE INDEFINITELY**

- This motion kills the main motion without directly voting it down.

“I move to postpone Ordinance Serial No. 18-100 indefinitely.”

- Requires a second
- Is debatable
- Is NOT amendable
- Requires a majority vote

Subsidiary Motions – Apply to other Motions

- **LAY ON THE TABLE**

- Sets aside a pending motion in order to take up more **URGENT** business
 - To take this motion up again, a motion to take it from the table must pass
 - Must be taken off the table by the end of the next regular meeting
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- Requires a second
 - Is **NOT** debatable
 - Is **NOT** amendable
 - Requires a majority vote

Subsidiary Motions – Apply to other Motions

- **COMMIT OR REFER**

- The purpose is to send the main motion (pending question) to another group for more research or refinement.

“I move to refer Ordinance Serial No. 18-100 to the Planning Commission to provide recommendations on.....”

- Requires a second
- Is debatable
- Is amendable
- Requires a majority vote

Incidental Motions (relates to matter of the meeting rather than the main motion)

- **POINT OF ORDER**

- **This can be moved if a rule is not being followed** (such as a member isn't speaking to the motion that is before the body)
- **You do not have to be called on by the chair and you can interrupt the speaker**
- **Requires the chair to make a ruling on the point of order**
- DOES NOT require a second
- Is NOT debatable
- Is NOT amendable
- Ruled on by the chair

Incidental Motions (relates to matter of the meeting rather than the main motion)

- **APPEAL FROM THE DECISION OF THE CHAIR**

- When you do not agree with a ruling the chair has made, you would appeal from the decision of the chair or appeal the chair's decision. It takes the decision regarding parliamentary procedure from the hands of the chair and places it with the body
- Voting is a little trickier on this one. The question becomes "shall the decision of the chair be upheld."
- A "yes" vote means you agree with the chair and a "no" vote means you disagree with the chair.

- May interrupt speaker
- Requires a second
- Is debatable if the motion being applied to is debatable
- Is NOT amendable
- Requires a majority vote

Incidental Motions (relates to matter of the meeting rather than the main motion)

- **SUSPEND THE RULES**

- Used when a body wishes to do something that it cannot do without violating its own rules
- Example: You have already adopted your agenda for your meeting and then a lot of people show up to speak to a particular topic and you would like to bring that topic up earlier in the agenda. “I move to suspend the rules to move Ordinance Serial No. 18-100 to the first public hearing.”
- There are items that cannot be suspended, such as: rules that protect the rights of individual members, deal with voting rights, and so on.

- Requires a second
- Is **NOT** debatable
- Is **NOT** amendable
- Vote depends on what is being suspended

Incidental Motions (relates to matter of the meeting rather than the main motion)

- **DIVISION OF THE QUESTION**

- Used to separate the main motion or amendment into separate questions.
- Can only be used if each part can be taken as a separate question
- “I move to hold meetings on August 3 and August 20.
“I move to divide the question to take the scheduling of the two meetings separately”
- If the division motion passes, each meeting date would be voted on separately.

- Requires a second
- Is NOT debatable
- Is amendable, but only to how the motion is divided
- Requires a majority vote²⁵

Bring Back Motions (used to bring back a motion that has already been before the body)

- **RECONSIDER**

- Used to erase the original vote on a motion
- Must be made at the meeting (same day) in which the motion you want to reconsider was made
- Only a member who voted on the prevailing side can make the motion to reconsider (whether it passed or failed)
- If the motion to reconsider passes, the affect is to bring it back to right before the original vote was taken. At that point the motion that has been reconsidered is up for debate, amendment, etc.....just like the original vote was never taken.

- Requires a second
- Is debatable if the motion you are reconsidering is debatable
- Is NOT amendable
- Requires a majority vote

Bring Back Motions (used to bring back a motion that has already been before the body)

- **RESCIND** – used to cancel something that the body adopted previously
 - **MOTION TO AMEND SOMETHING PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED** – used to amend something that the body has previously adopted
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- Requires a second
 - Is debatable
 - Is amendable
 - Vote with previous notice is a majority

Bring Back Motions (used to bring back a motion that has already been before the body)

- **RESCING & MOTION TO AMEND SOMETHING PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED**
 - These two motions have the same rules.
 - Roberts allows for these to be moved without previous notice, but requires 2/3 vote to pass and with previous notice it requires a majority to pass
 - Municipalities have to follow the OMA, so previous notice will always be given
 - There are certain things that cannot be rescinded or amended after they have been adopted: if a motion can still be reconsidered these motions are not in order, something that has already been done, etc.

Bring Back Motions (used to bring back a motion that has already been before the body)

- **TAKE FROM THE TABLE**

- This motion is used to take an item off the table that was previously tabled.
 - Must be moved by the next regular meeting from when the it was placed on the table.
 - If an item is not taken from the table by this time, it kills the motion.
- Requires a second
 - Is NOT debatable
 - Is NOT amendable
 - Requires a majority vote

Privileged Motions (motions not relating to pending business, but to members and organization)

- **FIX THE TIME TO WHICH TO ADJOURN** – in better words you are not adjourning your current meeting, but rather continuing the meeting to another day. A motion to continue a meeting is much more understandable.
 - Requires a second, is NOT debatable, is amendable, requires a majority vote
- **ADJOURN** – Used to close/end the meeting
 - Requires a second, is NOT debatable, is NOT amendable, requires a majority vote
- **RECESS** – to take a break during your meeting
 - Requires a second, is NOT debatable, is amendable but the amendment is also not debatable, requires a majority vote

Seconds

- Most motions require a second
- The person seconding a motion does not have to agree with the motion....they are just agreeing to debate it
- The person seconding a motion does not have to be recognized by the chair first
- If there is no second, the motion dies
- If there is no second, but debate has begun, the second is a given
- Who seconds a motion is not recorded in the minutes, unless required by code or charter

Unanimous Consent (general consent)

- General consent is a great tool to use when voting and can make the voting process faster and easier
 - When it is time to vote on a motion, the chair asks “Is there any objection to such and such motion”
 - If no objection is raised the chair would say “Hearing no objection the motion passes”
 - If objection is raised the body would vote in their regular manner

Saying “So Moved”

- Saying “so moved” is not a good practice
- It raises question on what was really moved, what are we really voting on, what really passed
- It is very important that the members know what they are voting on

Effective Debate

- Start your debate with telling the other members which side you are speaking on
- Start with, Mr. Chair....Mr. Mayor, I speak in favor of the motion because....
- Organize your thoughts and cover the major point you want to make
- Even if you do not agree with another member, they have the right to their opinion just as you do

Debate Etiquette

- Until a motion has been stated by the chair, no proposal may be debated
- Only speak when called on by the chair
- Direct all comments through the chair
- Debate is limited to the immediately pending motion
- Motives or personalities may not be attacked during debate
- Do not draw audience members into debate with questions from the table to the floor

Public Comments

- A big part of being an official is to hear the public's thoughts
- Hold public comments to the time your municipality has allotted. If you allow one public member to speak longer, you should allow all others the same benefit
- Public hearing comments should be related to the topic under consideration
- This is not the time to debate the public, but rather time for you to hear the public
- Remember you are conducting a public meeting and NOT a meeting of the public. You are conducting the business of your constituents, not just the public members who attended the meeting

Meeting Assessment

- Did we act as a deliberate, informed and principled based decision making body?
- Did we fully understand the issues before voting?
- Did we benefit from the experience and expertise of others?
- Did we waste time in the minutiae or were we proactive with the facts?
- Did we let organized groups sway our opinion or did we listen to all sides?
- The big one is.....DID WE READ THE THROUGH THE PACKET THE CLERK PROVIDED?

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTIONS ©
From: *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Robert's Rules*
The Guerrilla's Guide to Robert's Rules
Nancy Sylvester, MA, PRP, CPP-T www.nancysylvester.com

| MOTION | PURPOSE | INTERRUPT SPEAKER? | SECOND NEEDED? | DEBATABLE? | AMENDABLE? | VOTE NEEDED |
|---|---|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn</i> | Sets the time for a continued meeting | No | Yes | No ¹ | Yes | Majority |
| 2. <i>Adjourn</i> | Closes the meeting | No | Yes | No | No | Majority |
| 3. <i>Recess</i> | Establishes a brief break | No | Yes | No ² | Yes | Majority |
| 4. <i>Raise a Question of Privilege</i> | Asks an urgent question regarding rights | Yes | No | No | No | Ruled by chair |
| 5. <i>Call for Orders of the Day</i> | Requires that the meeting follow the agenda | Yes | No | No | No | One member |
| 6. <i>Lay on the Table</i> | Puts the motion aside for later consideration | No | Yes | No | No | Majority |
| 7. <i>Previous Question</i> | Ends debate and moves directly to the vote | No | Yes | No | No | Two-thirds |
| 8. <i>Limit or Extend Limits of Debate</i> | Changes the debate limits | No | Yes | No | Yes | Two-thirds |
| 9. <i>Postpone to a Certain Time</i> | Puts off the motion to a specific time | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority ³ |
| 10. <i>Commit or Refer</i> | Refers the motion to a committee | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority |
| 11. <i>Amend an amendment</i> <i>(Secondary Amendment)</i> | Proposes a change to an amendment | No | Yes | Yes ⁴ | No | Majority |
| 12. <i>Amend a motion or resolution</i> <i>(Primary Amendment)</i> | Proposes a change to a main motion | No | Yes | Yes ⁴ | Yes | Majority |
| 13. <i>Postpone Indefinitely</i> | Kills the motion | No | Yes | Yes | No | Majority |
| 14. <i>MAIN MOTION</i> | Brings business before the assembly | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Majority |

1 Is debatable if the motion is made while no question is pending
2 Unless no question is pending
3 Majority, unless it makes the question a special order
4 If the motion it is being applied to is debatable

