

**PARLIAMENTARY
PROCEDURE**

.....for fun
.....& efficiency

February 2024

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WHY PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE ?

- PROVIDES STRUCTURE TO THE MEETING
- PROTECTS THE MINORITY
- ALLOWS FOR FREE AND IMPARTIAL DEBATE IN A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME
- SAVES TIME – EFFICIENCY

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WHERE TO START?

- Find out what you have in place now
 - Rules of Procedure –
 - Does it mention a parliamentary authority?
 - Are there customs that are not included that should be?
 - Be sure to address abstentions.
- Who is the Mayor looking to as parliamentarian?
- If they are interested bring them along slowly
 - Maybe a briefing for the whole council when you get a new member
 - They don't have to know everything
 - Want to ensure that everyone gets a fair hearing
 - Don't let anyone use Parliamentary Procedure as a weapon
- Remember that TOMA, your Charter, and adopted Rules of Procedure and other law take precedence over parliamentary authority

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Rules of Parliamentary Procedure

The rules of parliamentary procedure are based on common sense and logic; they are designed to protect:

- * the rights of board members in the majority to make decisions;
- * the rights of the board members in the minority to be heard;
- * the rights of individual members; and
- * the rights of absentees*.

Parliamentary procedure should help, not hinder, decision making.

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The Ten "Commandments" of Parliamentary Procedure:


1. **The organization is paramount as opposed to the individual.**
2. **All members are equal.**
3. **A Quorum Must be Present to Conduct Business and/or to Take Legal Action**
4. **Only One Main Question May be on the Floor at a Time**
5. **Only One Member/Speaker Can Have the Floor at a Time**

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6. Debatable Motions Must Receive Full Debate

7. Personal Remarks During Debate are Always Out of Order

8. A Question, once Decided, Cannot come back before the assembly in the same manner in the same form, except by reconsideration.
(if you allow for reconsideration)



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9. The Majority vote decides (unless a greater majority is required by another rule)

10. Silence gives Consent – if you do not vote you give your consent to the decision made by the group (not the same as abstaining)

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Basic Parliamentary Procedure

To become an act or choice of the body, a proposition is adopted by a majority vote:

- Direct approval registered by more than half of the members present and voting
 - In a properly called meeting
 - Where a quorum is present

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Introduction of Business

Main Motion: a formal proposal that certain action be taken

2 steps to obtain the floor:

- Addressing the chair
- Assigning the floor (recognition)

3 steps to bring a motion before the group

- A member makes a motion
- Another member seconds
- Chair states the question on the motion

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No Second, No Debate!

To second a motion is to agree that the motion is worthy of discussion and consideration.

Don't want to consider it? Don't say a word!

Motion is not considered for lack of a second.

(Note: Some privileged and incidental motions do not require a second.)

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Considering the Motion. . .

3 steps in the consideration of a motion

- Members debate the motion (unless no member claims the floor for that purpose)
- Chair puts the question to a vote
- Chair announces the result of the vote

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Commonly Confused Motions

- Lay on the Table (To Table)
- Postpone Indefinitely
- Postpone to a Certain Time

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Commonly Misused Motions

Previous Question

- Many council members may recognize this motion to close debate as **call the question**. It is often misused and almost always misunderstood.
- A member must have been recognized by the chair to make the motion to close debate by saying, "I move the previous question."
- This motion cannot interrupt a speaker; a second is required; and a two-thirds vote is necessary for adoption. Alternatively, unanimous consent may be used.

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Amending a Main Motion



"A motion to modify the wording – and within certain limits the meaning – of a pending motion before the pending motion itself is acted upon." RONR

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Forms of Amendments:

- Insert (add) a word, consecutive words or paragraph
- Strike out a word, consecutive words or paragraph
- Strike out and insert a combination of the above
- Substitute (but must be germane)

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Amendment Pitfalls

- an amendment is presented when another member has the floor (lack of courtesy)
- debate is not confined to pending amendment
- a question has already been decided and the motion is being used to change a previous motion or action
- the amendment is not germane/relevant to the main motion or primary amendment
- the amendment is equivalent to a rejection of the main motion
- new business is introduced under the pretext of being an amendment

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Debate

Robert's says that debate is the discussion regarding a motion that occurs after the presiding officer has restated the motion and before putting it to a vote.



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Rights in Debate



- A member can speak no more than twice on the same question on the same day.
- No member can speak a second time on an item so long as another is requesting recognition to speak for a first time on the same item.
- Each speech must be limited to ten minutes

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Rights in Debate (cont.)



- The maker of a motion has the right to be the first to speak on it.
- All remarks must be limited to the merits of the subject immediately before the assembly.
- All remarks must be addressed to and through the Chair

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Rights in Debate (cont.)



- Personal remarks should be avoided and motives of members must not be questioned; the item, not the person, is the subject of debate.
- Members are seldom referred to by names; officers are referred to by their titles.

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Rights in Debate (cont.)



- A member may not speak against his own motion; **however, he may vote against it.**

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What's Debatable?

- Every main motion
- The following subsidiary motions:
 - Postpone Indefinitely (fully debatable)
 - Amend (limited to merits of amendment)
 - Commit or Refer (limited to wisdom of referring)
 - Postpone to a Certain Time (limited to time to which the motion will be postponed)

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What's Debatable? (cont.)

- Incidental motions
 - Appeal
- Reconsider (a debatable motion)

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What's Not Debatable

- The following subsidiary motions:
 - Limit or Extend Limits of Debate
 - Previous Question
 - Lay on the Table

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What's Not Debatable (cont.)

- All privileged motions
- Incidental motions with the exception of Appeal and Request to be Excused from a Duty
- Motions that bring a question again before the assembly:
 - Take From the Table
 - Reconsider (an undebatable motion)
- Nominations

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Key Rules to Remember

- Make sure everyone has the right to speak;
- Make sure everyone's opinion is met with an atmosphere of respect for their right to hold and promote that opinion;
- Make sure that meeting participants are all focused on the same decision and that they are not confused about which issue is being decided.

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Parliamentary Procedure



Can be a valuable tool for Councils to use in conducting city business in a timely, orderly, democratic manner. It has often has been described as an application of the "Golden Rule" *with common sense and courtesy.*

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Resources

- Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised – 12 Edition
- Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief
- Robert's Rules for Dummies
- The Complete Idiot's Guide to Roberts Rules

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QUESTIONS?

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