

Robert's Rules of Order

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Roberts Rules for Body corporates

Justice and courtesy to all

One thing at a time

The rule of the majority

The right of the minority

In order for a body corporate to conduct business in a professional and effective manner, rules and procedures are needed. The following are basic parliamentary procedures to achieve that end. For additional information, obtain a copy of Roberts Rules of Order from the library or local bookstore.

Securing the Floor

When a member wishes to bring a matter before the house, he /she must first "secure the floor" (be recognized and get permission to speak). To do this:

1. Member raises hand or rises to get Chair's attention.
2. Member addresses the Chair by title (not by his/her name) and says "Madam Chair or Mister Chair" and then waits for recognition.
3. The Chair recognizes a member by either calling by the member by name or nodding in the member's direction.
4. Once recognized, the member "has the floor" and permission to introduce business.

Introducing Business

As in securing the floor, there are several steps:

1. A motion is made by stating, "I move that..." or "I move to..." or "I move the adoption of the following..." "I move," is the equivalent of, "I propose"
2. Another member seconds the motion by saying "I second the motion." The reason that a motion needs to be seconded is to indicate that more than one person is in favor of discussing the matter. It is not necessary to secure the floor in order to second a motion.
3. The Chair restates the motion: "It is moved and seconded that ..." "Is there any discussion?"

Discussing the Motion Discussing the motion allows opposing views on the motion to be debated. The Chair guides the debate by encouraging opposing views. For example, after a member has offered support for the motion, the Chair asks "Is there anyone opposed to the motion?" If a member expresses opposition, the Chair then asks "Does anyone want to speak in favor of the motion?" If the motion is a hot topic, this process may continue for several rounds before the motion is ready to be voted on. Motions that are less volatile may have little or no debate. Based on the topic, the Chair may decide to extend or shorten the discussion before proceeding to a vote.

Voting on the Motion by Voice There are several way of taking the vote. The most common is by voice. This is the form generally used when taking the vote on an ordinary main motion. The form is "All who are in favor of the motion say aye (or yes)". In response, the members who are in favor of the motion should say "aye," loud enough to be heard. The chair then says: "All who are opposed will say No". All those opposed then say "No". The chair announces the result by saying either, "The ayes have it, the motion is carried," or "The nos have it, the motion fails," followed by lightly rapping the gavel on the table. This completes the vote on a particular motion.

Voting on the Motion by Hand If the motion is particularly sensitive, a hand vote and tally is advisable. The Chair says, "All those in favor, raise their hand." A tally is then taken and recorded in the meeting minutes. The Chair then says, "All those opposed, raise their hand." That number is recorded as well. The Chair may ask for those that abstain (do not vote at all) if there are those present, however, members should abstain only if there is a conflict of interest or lack of understanding or background on the motion being voted on.

Voting on the Motion by Acclamation If a motion being made is universally accepted by the members, the Chair may call for a voice vote by acclamation (no dissenters). If there is no objection, the vote is taken and recorded as such.

Voting by Secret Ballot For motions that are highly sensitive, such as election of officers, a paper ballot vote may be appropriate. In this case, each member indicates preference on a ballot, folds the ballot and passes it to the secretary or someone appointed to count the votes. In the case of elections where secret ballots are normal, the process isn't necessary if there is only one candidate. In this case, the Chair may request a Vote by Acclamation.

Types of Motions

Main Motion When a motion has been made, seconded and stated by the chair, all other business should be deferred until the motion has been disposed of. If the motion is long and involved, the secretary should write it down before proceeding to debate or vote.

Motion to Amend This motion changes, adds, or omits words in the original main motion. It is debatable and subject to a majority vote.

Motion to Amend the Amendment This motion changes, adds, or omits words in the first amendment; It is debatable and subject to a majority vote.

Voting Procedure When the main motion has been amended and subsequently re-amended. The first vote deals with the re-amendment. The second vote deals with the amendment. The final vote deals with the main motion (as amended if appropriate)

Motion to Commit When it becomes apparent that a particular motion requires further investigation or study, it may be moved to commit the motion to a committee for further review. This motion is debatable and amendable.

Motion to Table This motion postpones the subject under discussion to some time in the future. These motions are not debatable or amendable and require a majority vote.

Motion to Take from The Table The removal from the table a motion that has been previously tabled. It may be at the same or a later meeting. This returns the motion for further consideration; not debatable or amendable, and can have no subsidiary motion applied. It takes precedence over any main motion.

Motion to Adjourn This motion is in order except when a speaker has the floor, a vote is being taken or when the assembly is in the midst of urgent business. When a motion is made to adjourn to a definite place, and time, it is debatable.

Motion to Reconsider The motion to reconsider a motion that was carried or failed is in order if made on the same day, but must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. Motion in question can be twice reconsidered. Debatable: majority rule.

Question This motion is made to close debate on the pending motion. It is not debatable. The form is "Mr. (Madam) Chairman, I move the previous question." The Chairman then asks, "Shall debate be closed and the question now put?" If this is adopted by a two-thirds vote, the question before the assembly is immediately voted upon.

Point of Order This motion is always in order, but can be used only to present an objection to a ruling of the Chair or some method of parliamentary procedure. The form is "Mr. (Madam) Chairman, I rise to a point of order." The Chairman: "Please state your point of order." After the member has stated the objection, the Chair answers either "Your point of order is sustained" or "Your point of order is denied."

The Chair's decision may be appealed. If appealed, the Chair addresses the assembly and says, "Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained?" This is debatable and voted on like any other motion. A majority or tie vote sustains the decision or reverses the decision of the Chair.

Point of Information Request that is made when a member desires clarification of details. The member may interrupt a speaker and need not obtain the floor.

Repeal Motion to revoke a former action by the group. It may completely remove the motion that originated the action. It may or may not include that the former motion be "struck from the records."

Parliamentary Procedure in Brief

1. Securing the floor

Member raises hand or rises.
Member addresses the chair.
Chair recognizes member.

2. Introducing the business

Member makes a motion.
Another member seconds the motion.
Chair states the motion.

3. Voting on the question

Chair takes the affirmative vote.
Chair takes the negative vote.
Chair announces the result.

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