

Quick Guide to Parliamentary Procedure

A publication of the Association of Minnesota Counties.

Fundamentals of Parliamentary Procedure

1. Justice and courtesy to all.
2. Address only one issue at a time.
3. The majority rules.
4. Respect the rights of the minority.
5. Each proposition is entitled to full and free debate.
6. The purpose is to facilitate action, not to obstruct it.

The underlying principles of parliamentary procedure include the following:

1. The organization is paramount.
2. All members are equal.
3. An established minimum number of voting members are present at the meeting.
4. Only one member has the floor at any one time.
5. Discussion is not in order unless there is a pending question.
6. It is the issue under discussion, not the person; personal remarks are not in order.
7. A question once decided may not be brought up again at the same meeting.
8. A majority vote decides.
9. A 2/3 vote is necessary if a member's fundamental rights are being reduced or taken away.
10. Silence is regarded as consent.

Meeting Minutes Content

1. Date, time and place of meeting; attendance of members.
2. Every motion.
3. Identity of the maker of the motion.
4. That the motion was seconded.
5. Other motions that apply to the main motion.
6. The disposition of all motions.

Items ordinarily NOT included in the minutes:

1. The identity of the seconder of the motion.
2. The debate/discussion held on a motion.

Gender Protocol

The term "Chairman" or "Chair" is the same as the title of president, mayor or secretary. Use the honorific "Mister" or "Madam" to recognize and respect gender (e.g. "Madam Chair," "Mister Chairman," "Mister Mayor" or "Madam Mayor.")

Order of Business

Call to Order

Opening Exercises (optional)

Quorum Established (number necessary to transact business legally)

Minutes (motion to accept is not in order)

Treasurer's Report (motion to accept is not in order)

Reports of Officers

Reports of Standing Committees

Reports of Special Committees

Special Orders (matters that have been previously assigned priority)

Unfinished Business (never old business)

New Business

Program (acceptable to "close" business meeting here but not to adjourn)

Announcements

Adjournment

Presenting & Processing a Motion

Formal Method:

1. Member rises and addresses the chair.
2. Chair recognizes member.
3. Member makes a motion (introduces the business).
4. Another member seconds the motion.
5. Chair repeats the motion.
6. Chair calls for discussion.
7. Chair takes vote on motion (putting the question).
8. Chair announces result of vote.

Informal Method:

In routine and noncontroversial matters, the chair may use a method known as "general consent." The chair may identify an issue or matter that needs action and he/she could merely say, "Without objection, we will (describe action to be taken)." If there is no objection from the assembly to the proposed action, the chair can declare the action to be adopted. If there is so much as one objection, however, general consent may not be used and the manner must then be processed as a formal motion.

Amendments to Motion

To modify wording of a pending motion, it must be germane to the pending motion but the result may be to produce the opposite effect intended by the pending motion.

How Classified:

- Primary (First Degree) only applies to a main motion.
- Secondary (Second Degree) applies to a pending amendment; is also referred to as an amendment to an amendment.
- There can be no Third Degree amendments (the amendment to the amendment to the amendment).

Form of Amendment:

You say, "I move to amend the motion to:

- Insert or add (word/s)
- Strike (word/s)
- Strike (word/s) and Insert (word/s)
- Substitute (paragraph/s)

NOTE: After a motion is "stated" by the chair, the motion belongs to the assembly, not to the maker and any amendments thereto must be, and may be, adopted only by the assembly. Amendments must be processed either as a formal motion and must be voted upon by the assembly, or if the modification appears to be of a corrective or noncontroversial nature, the chair may process the modification informally under the rules of "general consent." Note that if "general consent" is used that it is the unanimous consent of the "assembly" and not the consent of the "maker" that is obtained.

Statutory Authority

The primary procedural statutes that apply to county boards are:

- MS 471.705, Minnesota Open Meeting Law
- MS 373.02, How the powers are exercised
- MS 375.07, Meetings; Quorum
- MS 375.13, Chair

The county board may adopt its own specific procedural rules; those rules should also adopt a parliamentary authority (e.g. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*) to cover situations not otherwise addressed by statute or by its specific procedural rules.

NOTE: This information is not intended to provide legal advice and may not be relied upon as such. Please consult your own legal counsel to maintain compliance with applicable laws.

Source of parliamentary information: *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 1990 Edition 9th Edition.*

If You Want To...

Introduce business

Adjourn the meeting

Recess the meeting

Complaint about noise, temperature, etc.

Defer action/put off discussion

End debate

Postpone consideration of something

Have something studied further

Amend a motion

Object to procedure

Request information

Request verification of voice vote

Take up a matter previously tabled

To reconsider (from prevailing side only)

Consider something out of scheduled order

Challenge the ruling of the chair

Rescind

Then You Say:

"I move that..."

"I move that we adjourn."

"I move that we recess for/until ..."

"Point of Privilege."

"I move we table the motion."

"I move the previous question."

"I move we postpone the matter until ..."

"I move we refer to the committee ..."

"I move to amend the motion to ..."

"Point of Order."

"Point of Information."

"I call for a division of the house."

"I move we take from the table ..."

"I move we reconsider ..."

"I move we suspend the rules to ..."

"I appeal the ruling of the chair."

"I move we rescind."

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