

# **ASSOCIATION 101**

# **ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER**

# Basic Principles of Robert's Rules (or 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.
- The chair should be strictly impartial and must stand at all times.
- No member may speak until they stand and are recognized by the chair.
- A motion must be on the floor before any discussion.
- Full and free discussion of every motion being considered is a basic right.
- No one can speak a second time on the same question as long as another wants to speak a first time.
- 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.

# Five Most Common Robert's Rules Elements

1. **Motion:** move, second, discussion, vote (majority)
2. **Amend a motion:** move main motion, second, discussion, move to amend, second, discussion, vote on amendment (majority), additional discussion of main motion as amended, vote on amended motion (majority)
3. **Commit:** move, second, discussion, vote (majority)
4. **Question:** call the question, second, no discussion, vote on the question (2/3), vote on motion (majority)
5. **Adjourn:** move, second, no discussion, vote (majority)

# What if an “out of the ordinary” element arises?

- Use a “cheat sheet”
- <https://www.boardeffect.com/blog/roberts-rules-of-order-cheat-sheet/>

**Do we really have to be so formal and complex  
with our small group?**

**NO!!**

- **Robert's makes a distinction between "Formal" and "Informal" groups.**
- **The formality of the parliamentary rules is determined by the size of the board or committee.**

The larger the group, the more formal it is.

Conversely, the smaller the group, the less formal it is.

Dividing line is approximately 12.

# Informal Meetings: Advantages for the Chair

- The chair doesn't have to stand up to put a question to a vote.
- The chair may remain seated while conducting the meeting and may enter into the discussion.
- The chair may make motions and votes (unless board custom dictates otherwise).
- 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.

# Informal Meetings: Advantages for the Members

- Members do not have to stand and obtain the floor before speaking—may speak while seated.
- Motions don't have to be seconded.
- Members may speak any number of times, and usually there is no motion to close debate.
- Members may discuss a subject while no motion is pending.  
(Common practice in informal groups is for the motion to come out of the discussion, not before the discussion begins.)
- 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.)

# What if the board meeting disintegrates into chaos?

- The chair declares 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.

## May "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.
- Exception: "Ex officio without vote"

# "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.

## **Conclusion: All of Robert's Rules of Order may be summed up in these four statements:**

- 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.

“We have come to the end of the presentation on Robert’s Rules. Is there any objection to adjourning the session? Hearing none, the session is adjourned.”