

# Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is a way to conduct a meeting in an orderly manner. Whenever people hold a meeting, they need rules to help them accomplish their purpose. The rules of parliamentary procedure help the chairperson keep order during a meeting.

## Order of Business

In a well organized meeting, a standard series of steps follows the call to order:

1. The meeting is called to order by the chairperson.
2. The minutes of the preceding meeting are ready by the secretary and:
  - a. May be approved as read.
  - b. May be approved with additions or corrections.
3. Monthly statement of Treasurer is "Received as read and filed for audit." (Chair so states). No motion of approval is necessary.
4. Reports of standing committees are called for by the chairman.
5. Reports of special committees are called for by the chairman.
6. Unfinished business is next in order at the call of the chair or of the meeting.
7. New business.
8. The program (if an annual or other special meeting). The program is part of the meeting: the chairman "presides" throughout.
9. Adjournment.

## Duties

### Chairman

- ? To preside at all meetings.
- ? Keep calm at all times.
- ? Talk no more than necessary while presiding.
- ? Have agenda for meeting before him and proceed to a businesslike manner.
- ? Have a working knowledge of parliamentary law and a thorough understanding of the constitution and by-laws or other legal charter of the organization.
- ? Keep a list of committees on the table while presiding.
- ? Refrain from entering the debate of questions before the assembly. If it is essential that this be done, the vice-chairman should be placed in the chair. A chairman is not permitted to resume the chair until after the vote has been taken on the question under discussion.
- ? Extend every courtesy to the opponents of a motion, even though the motion is one that the presiding officer favors.
- ? Always come to the meeting early and be prepared. When the time arrives to start the meeting, note whether a quorum is present; if so, call the meeting to order and declare "a quorum is present."

### **Vice Chair**

The vice-chair of an organization is the one who acts in the place of the chair, whenever needed. In case of resignation or death of the chair, the vice-chair automatically becomes the chair unless the bylaws provide other methods.

In official meetings, the vice-chair should preside in the absence of the chair or whenever the chair temporarily vacates the chair.

If the chair should be absent for a long period, the vice-chair may exercise all duties of the chair except to change or modify rules made by the chair.

The vice-chair cannot fill vacancies where the bylaws state that such vacancies shall be filled by the chair. In case of resignation or death of the chair and the vice chair does not care to assume the office of the chair, the vice-chair must resign. The office of vice-chair becomes vacant when the vice-chair assumes the office of chair. If there are several vice-chairs, they automatically move up to the higher office leaving the lower office vacant. This office should be filled as instructed by the bylaws or authorized legal authority. In the absence of the chair, the vice-chair is not "ex-officio" a member of any committee.

### **Secretary**

The secretary should issue all calls or notices of meetings and should write such letters as the board of directors or executive committee may designate. The secretary should keep a neat and careful record of all business done in the meetings, with the exact wording of every motion and whether it was lost or carried. Brief extracts from speeches, if important, may be recorded, but no comment of any kind, favorable or unfavorable, should be made. The minutes should show the names of persons appointed to committees, and it is the duty of the secretary to notify all persons nominated or elected on any committee.

The secretary should be on hand a few minutes before the meeting is called to order. He should have the minute book of the organization with him so that reference can be made to minutes of past meetings.

The secretary should always have a copy of the bylaws; standing rules; book of parliamentary procedure endorsed by the organization; list of members of clubs and a list of unfinished business; a copy of which should be given to the presiding officers.

***Secretary's minutes:*** The minutes should be an accurate record of all the organization's activities. A running account of all business matters and actions is taken and reported. The minutes do not summarize the discussions that take place, but simply state actions proposed and what the organization decided to do about each one. The secretary keeps the minutes in a permanent record book. Each set of minutes begins with the date and place of meeting, name of presiding officer and a list of members present. The minutes of an organization should contain a record of what is done and not what is said.

*Minutes should include:*

- ? Members present, date, location and time of meeting.
- ? Approval of previous meeting minutes
- ? Bids
- ? Claims approved/claims rejected
- ? Whether it is a regular or special meeting.
- ? Name of person presiding.
- ? All main motions, whether adopted or rejected, and the names of the persons making the motions; the name of the seconded need not be recorded. A motion which was withdrawn should not be recorded.
- ? Point of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost.
- ? Other matters discussed and action taken; progress on project, reports, etc.
- ? Adjournment time and approval for adjournment
- ? Signatures of the board and the clerk

**Treasurer**

The treasurer of any organization is the custodian of its funds and receives and disburses them upon authority from the organization, the board, executive committee or the finance or budget committee. A treasurer should be bonded.

The organization should approve the budget or authorize the executive committee or the board of directors to do so. A committee chairman or an officer or member should get permission from the chairman or board to make a expenditure.

No treasurer should accept bills for payments, such as for postage, traveling expenses, etc., from a committee chairman unless receipts are enclosed.

The treasurer should make a monthly statement and a report once a year, or upon the request of the board or parent body during the year. The annual report should be audited. An auditor's report should be presented following the treasurer's report. The presiding officer states to the assembly that to adopt the report of the auditor (if carried) has the effect of accepting the treasure's report.

**Committees**

Committees have no authority except that which is granted by the constitution or by vote of the organization. Unless otherwise provided, the person first named or the one receiving the largest number of votes is its chairman. A committee does not have the right to incur any debt or involve the organization in any way unless given all authority to do so.

Under no circumstances should one or more members of a committee go ahead with the business without action by a quorum; usually a majority of the committee, being present. Failure to observe these rules renders such action "the action of individuals" and subject to "censure."

## **Principal Motions**

**General Statement:** When a motion has been made, seconded, and stated by the chair, the assembly is not at liberty to consider any other business until this motion has been disposed of. If the motion is long and involved, the chairman asks the mover to hand it in writing to the secretary. The mover cannot withdraw his motion after it has been stated by the chair. In general, all important motions should be seconded, which may be done without rising or addressing the chair.

**1. To Amend:** This motion is "to change, add or omit words" in the original main motion, and is debatable; majority vote.

**To Amend the Amendment:** This is a motion to change, add or omit words in the first amendment; debatable, majority vote.

**Method:** The first vote is on changing words of second amendment, the second vote (if first vote adopts change) on first amendment as changed; the third vote is on adopting main motion as changed.

**2. To Refer to Committee:** When a motion becomes involved through amendments or when it is wise to investigate a question more carefully, it may be moved to refer the motion to a committee for further consideration. Debatable and amendable, but a committee must make report on such question.

**3. To Lay on the Table:** The object of this motion is to postpone the subject under discussion in such a way that it can be taken up at some time in the near future when a motion "to take from the table" would be in order. These motions are not debatable or amendable and require a majority vote.

**4. To Postpone:** A motion to postpone the question before the assembly to some future time is in order, except when a speaker has the floor. Debatable, but not amendable, requires a majority vote.

**5. To Adjourn:** The motion is always in order except:

- a. When a speaker has the floor
- b. When a vote is being taken
- c. After it has just been voted down
- d. When the assembly is in the midst of some business which cannot be abruptly stopped.

When meeting the above condition, the motion is not debatable. When the motion is made to adjourn to a definite place and time, it is debatable.

**6. To Reconsider:** The motion to reconsider a motion that was carried or lost in order if made on the same day or the next calendar day, but must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. No question can be twice reconsidered. Debatable, majority vote. Requires two votes: first on whether it should be reconsidered and second on original motion after reconsideration.

**7. The Previous Question:** This motion is to close debate on the pending question. This motion may be made when debate becomes long and drawn out. It is not debatable nor amendable. The form is "Mr. (Madame) Chairman, I move the previous question." The chairman then asks, "Previous question has been called for. Shall debate be closed and the question now be put?" If this be adopted by a two-thirds vote, the question before the assembly is immediately voted upon.

**8. 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. (Madame) Chairman, I rise to a point of order." The chairman says "Please state your point of order." After the member has stated his objection, the chair answers:

- a. "Your point of order is sustained" or
- b. "Your point of order is denied."

If any member is not satisfied, she may appeal from the decision of the chair. The chairman then addresses the assembly, "Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?" This is debatable and the presiding officer may discuss it without leaving the chair. Voted on like any other motion. Majority or tie vote sustains the decision of chair, requires a majority of "no" votes to reverse decision of the chair.

### **Parliamentary Procedure Resources**

To order a copy of "Roberts Rules of Order" for your district, visit your local bookstore or order online from Amazon.com at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com),

### **Parliamentary Procedure Links on the Web**

<http://www.robertsrules.com/>

<http://www.parli.com/>

<http://www.jimslaughter.com/resources.htm>

<http://www.parliamentarians.org/parlipro.htm>