

Notes on Parliamentary Procedure

From Melinda Fredricks, TFRW Parliamentarian

I hope you won't think I'm crazy, but *I love Parliamentary Procedure!* In addition, it is my hope that by the end of Toni Anne's term, you will at least *like* it, too!

Parliamentary Procedure reminds me of algebra (*yes, I also love algebra*) because it provides an orderly, structured means by which you can find a fair, accurate answer in the midst of a tangle of data.

If there's no objection, I plan to have a brief Parliamentary Procedure tutorial in each President's Newsletter. The tutorial will include two parts: A) An Informational Part, and B) A To-Do Part, which will help you apply what you've read. So, here we go!

FIRST PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE TUTORIAL

A. Informational Part

1. What is Parliamentary Procedure?

It is a system of order by which members of an organization agree to conduct business. In TFRW, Parliamentary Procedure includes TFRW's Bylaws and the most current version of Robert's Rules of Order.

2. Why Parliamentary Procedure?

- a. Provides order – similar to traffic signs, stoplights and laws for meetings. (*And we all know can happen when we ignore traffic laws!*)
- b. Makes meetings run smoothly when everyone is in agreement, and allows the group to come to decisions fairly when issues are bitterly contested (*of course, we all know this never happens in any of our clubs*).
- c. Assures everyone is treated fairly:
 - i. That the majority prevails
 - ii. That the minority has an opportunity to be heard
 - iii. That the absent members' rights are protected.

3. Your Club's Bylaws.

- a. The bylaws are sort of like a contract between the members and the club.
- b. Your club's bylaws cannot be in conflict with TFRW's bylaws. If you aren't sure if there's a conflict, contact Jo Konen, TFRW Vice-president of Bylaws, and ask her to take a look at your bylaws.
- c. Bylaws should include the rules, which your club regards as so important that they must not be quickly or easily changed, and which cannot be suspended.
- d. Follow your bylaws. If you don't like one of your bylaws, or a bylaw prevents the group from doing something it wants or needs to do, you cannot ignore the bylaw. Your only recourse is to amend the bylaw. Amending a bylaw takes time, and that is a good thing. Governing documents must not be changed on a whim.
- e. Two things are usually required to amend a bylaw:
 - i. Advance notice that a vote on the bylaws is going to be taken, which includes exactly what change is being proposed.

- ii. A favorable two-thirds vote of the members present. (Remember a vote cannot be taken if a quorum is not present.)

B. To Do!!!

1. Read and become familiar with your club's bylaws. If you've read them before, you might want to reread them as a refresher.
2. Know what your club's quorum is. If your bylaws don't specify how many members constitute a quorum, then by default, it is a majority (51% or more than half) of the entire membership. (Note that associate members do not count toward a quorum.) Your club must have a quorum of the membership present before any votes can be taken.
3. It is a good idea for each club to have a copy of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (10th Edition is the most current at this time). You can find it at most bookstores.
4. In my opinion, the best parliamentary procedure book for a club president is *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, IN BRIEF* by Henry M. Robert III, and others. It is a concise guide authorized by Robert's Rules Association. I've seen this book at Barnes & Nobles and Hastings.

C. Just For Fun!!

Here are some questions to help you learn. You'll need to look in your club's bylaws for the answers.

1. My club's quorum is _____ % of _____ (choose one below).
 - a. Its full membership
 - b. Those present at the meeting
 - c. My club doesn't have a quorum defined in its bylaws.
2. A quorum for any meeting of my club's Board of Directors is _____ % of the voting members of the Board.
3. How much notice must be given to your membership that a bylaws change is going to be voted on? _____. My club's bylaws require a _____ vote of the active members present to amend the bylaws.

Extra Credit: Somewhere in this article I used words that a presiding officer can use to move a meeting more quickly along. What are those words, and what is the parliamentary term for this procedure? (Answer can be found in Robert's Rules, Chapter II, Subsection 4.)