

Notes on Parliamentary Procedure

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In last month's President's Newsletter, I talked about running a meeting according to Robert's Rules standard agenda. *(If you didn't see last month's newsletter, it is available on the TFRW website (www.tfrw.org). Our brilliant and visionary President Toni Anne Dashiell is leading us into the 21st century use of the Internet by publishing every other President's Newsletter electronically and emailing it to the club president!.)*

I've been focusing on some basics of Parliamentary Procedure. TFRW Parliamentary rules include Robert's Rules of Order (most current edition), and the TFRW bylaws.

This month the focus is on how a main motion is handled according to Robert's Rules. However, there are times when the motion is so simple that you can use a kind of short hand to speed the meeting up.

A. Main Motions

1. According to Robert's Rules, a motion is "a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the assembly take certain action." For example, if your club wants to have a fundraiser, then the entire membership needs to make the decision to do so. One of the members must motion to have the fundraiser; "I move that our RW have a dinner-dance fundraiser at Sally's Bar and Grille on Saturday, April 12, 2008." Robert's Rules is the structure used to make sure that the decision is made fairly, and all sides have an opportunity to state their reasons for or against the fundraiser.
2. Script for Main Motion

(Note: A member should rise (or in a smaller group, raising the hand generally is acceptable) and cannot make a motion until receiving recognition from the presiding officer of the club.)

Member: Madame Chairman

Chair: Yes, Ms. _____ *(first names may also be used)*

Member: I move that . . . *("I make a motion that. . ." is incorrect. Also, lengthy motions should be in writing.)*

Chair: Is there a second to the motion? *(Eliminate this step if someone calls out "second!")*

2nd Member: I second the motion.

(Note: do not allow discussion on a motion until it has been seconded and you have restated the motion. This is important for maintaining order and assuring a fair discussion.)

Chair: It is moved and seconded that (state the motion). Is there any discussion? *(The maker of the motion has the first right to speak, so the chair should call on them to speak first.)*

(Note: It is at this time that a motion is considered to be "on the floor" or "pending," and discussion now is now appropriate. A motion to amend and/or a motion to amend the amendment also are appropriate at this time. Remember you cannot amend to the third-degree, that is, you cannot amend the amendment to the amendment. You must first vote on the amendment to the amendment (second-degree), and then another second-degree amendment will be appropriate.

A President must remain impartial in the debate. If you feel you must take sides or speak to the motion, then the president must remain proactive and alert during the discussion; otherwise, discussion can drag down a meeting. Kindly insist that members keep the discussion specifically on the motion or amendment on the floor, even if you have to interrupt the speaker. Remember only one person may speak at a time, and must receive recognition before

speaking. No person may speak more than twice on a motion. There are several ways to help discussion along and still be sure that all points of view are heard, such as alternating pro speakers and con speakers.)

Chair: *(After discussion)* Is there any further discussion? Are you ready for the question? *(pause)* The question is on the adoption of the motion to *(clearly restate the motion)*.

All those in favor, say "Aye." *(Pause)* All those opposed, say "No."

The affirmative has it. The motion is adopted. We will *(state the effect of the vote)*. And the next business in order is . . .

OR

The negative has it, the motion is lost *(state the effect of the vote)*, and the next business in order is. . .

B. Using Unanimous Consent to Speed Up the Proceedings

1. Many times, business is before the body (club members at the general meeting) that requires action, but that no one has objection to. In these cases, a president can move a meeting along more quickly and smoothly by using "general consent," also called "unanimous consent."
2. The chairman would state "If there is no objection, then we will *(states the business)*." At that point, if no one objects, then the other steps of the motion-making process are skipped since going through them would be a waste of time. However, if even one person objects *(no second required)*, then it must go to a vote.
3. It's important for a club member to speak up immediately if they object to the use of unanimous consent.
4. Examples:

Approval of the minutes:

Chair: You have received the minutes. Are there any corrections to the minutes? *(pause)* Hearing none, if there is no objection, the minutes are approved as printed.
(or perhaps there is a correction that is obviously needed)
Is there any objection to the making that change? *(pause)* Hearing no objection, the change will be made.
Are there any other corrections? *(pause)* Hearing none, if there is no objection, the minutes are approved as amended.

If it's time for the meeting to end:

Chair: Is there any other business to come before us?
(If there is none, then state) Since there is no other business, if there's no objection, the meeting is adjourned. *(pause)* Hearing no objection, the meeting is adjourned.

B. To Do!!!

1. Use unanimous consent in your next meeting for approval of your minutes and for adjourning the meeting. If you'd like, you can use the sample scripts above to give you extra confidence the first time.
2. If you've purchased the Robert's Rules of Order IN BRIEF, then read or review Chapter 3 "How Decisions are Made at a Meeting: Handling Motions."
3. Read about unanimous consent in Roberts Rules pages 51-53.

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 must hold a minimum of _____ *(how many?)* regular meetings each year.
2. Do your bylaws specify how many members must be on the Nominating Committee? Circle: yes or no. If yes, then how many? _____
3. Is the Nominating Committee elected or appointed and when? _____ in _____.

Extra Credit: What is another name for unanimous consent? *Hint: it was in last month's Notes on Parliamentary Procedure in the President's Newsletter, and it's also on page 51 of Robert's Rules.*