

Conducting Business - The Handling of a Motion:

Motion: A formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the assembly take certain action.

Main Motion: A motion which brings new business before the assembly.

Secondary Motions: Motions relating to procedural steps. (e.g. motions to: adjourn, accept a report, amend a pending motion, refer an item to committee)

Second: Agreement that the topic addressed in the motion should be *discussed*. (Seconding a motion does not necessarily mean the member is in favor of the motion.) Its purpose is to prevent time from being consumed by the assembly having to act on a motion that only one person wants to see introduced.

Stating the Question: The chair repeats the motion as the way of formally placing it before the assembly.

Debate: The members discuss the merit of the pending motion. Arguments in favor and against are presented. Various amendments may be offered and accepted or rejected.

Putting the Question: The chair calls for a vote on the motion by restating it for the assembly: "The question is on the adoption of the motion to.....Those in favor ... Those opposed.... "

Voting: In small groups, voting is generally by show of hands.

Majority Vote: Approval by **more than half** of the members present and voting is needed to carry most motions. *A tie vote defeats the motion in the same way as a negative vote.*

Announcing the Result: The chair immediately gives the count, announces which side "has it", and the disposition of the motion. "4 in favor, 2 opposed; the affirmative has it, the motion is carried." "2 in favor, 4 opposed; the negative has it; the motion is defeated." When needed, the chair states the effect of the vote, or orders the steps necessary for its execution.

Repeat the process with the next motion.

Definitions:

Board: An administrative body of elected or appointed persons within an organized society which functions as an instrument of the society's full assembly.

Special Rules of Order: Procedural rules which supplement or modify rules in the society's designated parliamentary authority. A society is free to adopt any rules it wishes (even rules deviating from parliamentary law.)

Special Rules of Order for Executive Council

1. That the committee chairs, comprising a duly appointed advisory committee to Executive Council, have the right to make motions, seconds, and to participate in debate on matters brought before the Council.
2. In interpreting Robert's Rules of Order or these Special Rules of Order, the term "member" applies to both Executive Council and Committee Chairs. The terms "voting members" or "officers" refer exclusively to Executive Council members.
3. That unless the Chair specifically states a more formal arrangement, the following conventions associated with small boards are in effect during meetings:
 - Members are not required to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking, which they can do while seated.
 - There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question
 - The chair can speak in discussion without rising or leaving the chair
 - If a motion is made at the direction of a committee comprising more than one member, it does not require a second.
 - Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending, provided that it is clearly identified as such. Any member, at any time, has the right to request that a motion be made in order to focus the discussion.
 - The chair need not rise while putting questions to the vote
 - Voting is by a show of hands

PROCEDURE IN SMALL BOARDS:

In a board meeting where there are not more than about a dozen members present, some of the formality that is necessary in a large assembly would hinder business. The rules governing such meetings are different from the rules that hold in other assemblies, in the following respects:

- Members are not required to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking, which they can do while seated.
- Motions need not be seconded.
- There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question, and motions to close or limit debate generally should not be entertained.
- Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending
- Sometimes, when a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion's having been introduced. Unless agreed to by unanimous consent, however, all proposed actions of a board must be approved by vote under the same rules as in other assemblies, except that a vote can be taken initially by a show of hands, which is often a better method in such meetings.
- The chair need not rise while putting questions to vote
- The chair can speak in discussion without rising or leaving the chair; and, subject to rule or custom within the particular board he usually can make motions and usually vote on all questions.

Roberts Rules of Order Newly revised, 9th Edition
Pages 477-478

Things To Do With a Motion Other Than Put it To the Vote:

Pending Motion: “To hold next year’s Winter Conference at the Mystic Hilton in October”

Motion to:

1. ***Postpone Indefinitely:*** a way to get rid of a motion which has turned embarrassing or awkward, without having to go on record as voting for or against it.
2. ***Amend:***
 - add sections (“To hold next year’s Winter Conference at the Mystic Hilton in October provided we can negotiate a contract with comp rooms”)
 - remove sections (“To hold next year’s Winter Conference at the Mystic Hilton”),
 - substitute whole sections (“To hold next year’s Winter Conference at the New Haven Omni”; “To hold next year’s Annual Meeting/Picnic at Six Flags”)
3. ***Refer to Committee:*** when the motion needs a lot of research or rethinking to get it ready for vote and it can’t easily be done at this meeting
4. ***Postpone Definitely:*** to designate a new time to discuss the motion (“postpone until after the Conference Committee gives their report”; “postpone until next month’s meeting”)
5. ***Lay on the Table:*** because something urgent has arisen, this sets the motion aside temporarily, with no designated time to resume consideration (e.g. Governor Malloy drops in unexpectedly to address the board)
6. ***Objection to the Consideration of the Question:*** if a member believes that it would do harm for the motion even to be discussed. Requires a two thirds vote against consideration to carry.
7. ***Division of a Question:*** when a motion contains more than one part, and it is useful to treat each separately. (“To hold next year’s Winter Conference at the Mystic Hilton”; “To hold next year’s Winter Conference in October”)
8. ***Consideration by Paragraph:*** If the motion contains several paragraphs or sections, which could be most efficiently handled one at a time, prior to voting on the whole proposal.
9. ***Point of Information:*** an inquiry into facts affecting the business at hand (“Would the committee state how this year’s contract handled comp rooms?”)

September

Robert's Rule of the Day

Chair's vote...where it affects the result (§4)

If the presiding officer is a member of the assembly or voting body, he has the same voting *right* as any other member. Except in a small board or committee, however-...the chair protects his impartial position by exercising his voting right only when his vote would affect the outcome, in which case he can either vote and thereby change the result, or he can abstain. If he abstains, he simply announces the result with no mention of his own vote. In a count of hands on a motion requiring a majority vote for adoption, the outcome will be determined by the chair's action in cases where, without his vote, there is (a) a tie, or (b) one more in the affirmative than in the negative.

Since a majority in the affirmative is necessary to adopt the motion in the case mentioned, a final result in the form of a tie rejects it. When there is a tie without the chair's vote, the chair can vote in the affirmative, and such a vote adopts the motion; but if the chair abstains from voting, the motion is lost. ("There are 35 in the affirmative and 35 in the negative. The chair votes in the affirmative, making 36 in the affirmative and 35 in the negative so the affirmative has it and the motion is adopted.")

When there is one more in the affirmative than in the negative without the chair's vote, the motion is adopted if the chair abstains; but if he votes in the negative, the result is thereby tied and the motion is lost. ("There are 39 in the affirmative and 38 in the negative. The chair votes in the negative, making 39 in the affirmative and 39 in the negative, so that there is less than a majority in the affirmative and the motion is lost.")

Motion of the Month

Previous Question (§6 and 16)

Language: "I move the Previous Question" or "I call for the Question"

Characteristics: · Must be seconded
· Is not debatable or amendable
· Requires a two-thirds vote to be adopted or "ordered"

If it is desired to close debate and amendment of a pending motion so that it will come to an immediate vote, this can be proposed by *moving the Previous Question*. Sometimes the mere making of a motion for the *Previous Question* or "call for the question" may motivate unanimous consent to end debate. Before or after the motion has been seconded, the chair may ask if there is objection to closing debate. [If there is none, in effect the motion has been seconded and approved by unanimous vote. The chair then *Puts the Question* by stating, "The question is on the motion to"]

If a member does object to closing debate, the chair should ask if there is a second to the motion; or, if it has already been seconded, he must immediately take a vote on whether to order the Previous Question. If the motion fails to gain a second, or the necessary two-thirds vote, debate continues as if this motion had not been made. If the motion to *order the Previous Question* is approved by a two-thirds vote, the chair then calls the vote on the pending motion which had been under discussion. ("The question is on the adoption of the motion to....")

[If debate appears to be winding down, it is polite to wait for the chair to ask "Is there any further discussion? Since there is none, the question is on...." and proceed to the vote in the normal sequence of events, rather than pre-empting the chair's role with a call for the *Previous Question*.]

October

Robert's Rule of the Day

Committee Reports (§50)

Annual or periodic reports of committees...are primarily for information, and should summarize important work done by the committee during the year or other reporting period. If the report contains only an account of work done or a statement of fact or opinion for the assembly's information, it should generally be in writing. Apart from filing such a report, however, no action on it is necessary and usually none is taken. [Such reports] may also contain recommendations-which may relate to general policy...or may propose specific action. Specific recommendations for immediate action [on a matter within the committee's concern]...should be grouped at the end and be cast in the form of one or more proposed resolutions. Such resolutions should always be in writing.

The committee chair is [usually] the reporting member. A reporting member *makes* or *presents* a report on behalf of the committee. When the assembly hears the report read or orally rendered, it *receives* the report. Immediately after receiving a report an assembly normally considers whatever action may be recommended or arise out of the report. The reporting member usually makes the necessary motion to implement the recommendations at the conclusion of his presentation:

["*Resolved, That*..... On behalf of the committee, I move the adoption of the resolution just read."] If the report contains more than one resolution, the reporting member makes a single motion for the adoption of them all. [These resolutions can be considered separately if the motion for *Consideration by Paragraph* or *Division of a Question* is then moved and adopted.] [If the committee has made no recommendation, but another assembly member feels action is warranted based on the report, he/she can make a motion. "In accordance with the information in the committee's report, I move that...."]

Motion of the Month

Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim (§6 and 28)

Language: "I move that the resolution be considered by paragraph" or "I move that the resolution be considered seriatim"

Characteristics:

- Must be seconded
- Is not debatable;
- Is amendable
- Requires a majority vote to be adopted

If the main motion is in the form of a resolution or document containing several paragraphs or sections which could be most efficiently handled by opening each paragraph or section to amendment one at a time (before the whole is finally voted on), such a procedure can be proposed by the motion for *Consideration by Paragraph or Seriatim*.

The member who moved the adoption of the document...reads the first subdivision. The chair then asks, "Is there any debate or amendment to this paragraph?" When there is no further debate or amendment to the first paragraph, each succeeding one is taken up. Amendments are voted on as they arise, but...no vote on adoption [of paragraphs or the resolution] is taken until there has been opportunity to perfect all the parts by amendment. After all parts have been considered, the chair opens the entire document to amendment....Then the entire document is acted upon in a single vote.

The chair, on his [or her] own initiative, can apply this method to any elaborate proposition susceptible to such treatment...If a member feels that time could be saved by acting on [the proposal] as a whole, he can [counter by] moving "*that it be considered as a whole*".

August 2002

Robert's Rule of the Day

“Filling Blanks” (RROO pg. 159-164)

“Filling blanks, although not a form of amendment in itself, is a closely related device by which an unlimited number of alternative choices for a particular specification in a main motion can be pending at the same time. In effect, it permits an exception to the rule that only one primary amendment can be pending at a time, and in certain cases it has distinct advantages.

In filling blanks, the number of alternatives is not limited; members have an opportunity to weigh all choices before voting and to vote on them in a fair and logical order. Among cases adopted to such treatment are main motions or primary amendments containing names of persons or places, dates, numbers or amounts.

CREATING A BLANK. A blank to be filled can be created in one of three ways:

- a) A member can offer a motion or an amendment containing a blank: for example, “Resolved, that we build a new headquarters at a cost not to exceed \$ _____....”
- b) A member can move that a blank be created. For example, assume that the pending resolution is “Resolved, that we build a new headquarters at a cost not to exceed \$3,000,000. Any member can move to “create a blank by striking out of the pending resolution the sum ‘\$300,000.’ ”.....
- c) the chair can suggest the creation of a blank, as follows: “The chair suggests creating a blank by striking out ‘\$300,000.’ If there is no objection, a blank will be created. [Pause] There is no objection; the blank is created.”....

When a blank exists, or has been created, any number of members can suggest, without a second, a different name, place, number, date or amount for filling it. No member can suggest more than one proposal for filling the blank, unless he receives unanimous consent to do so. Each proposal is debatable and is treated as an independent original to be voted on separately until one is approved by majority.

....whenever a logical order is apparent (e.g. money, dates, amounts: names are voted on in the order in which offered) it is advisable to arrange the proposed entries so that *the one least likely to be acceptable will be voted on first*, and so on. New supporters may then be gained with each succeeding vote until a majority in favor of one entry is reached....

The suggestions for filling a blank can be voted on by any of the regular methods....When names are being voted on the ballot has an advantage in more truly revealing the will of the voting body; frequently when the vote is by voice, members vote for those nominated first.

It should be noted that the vote that fills a blank does not decide the main question. When the blank is filled, the chair must immediately state the question on the adoption of the completed motion. (e.g. “Members have voted to fill the blank with the sum of \$250,000. The vote is now on the motion “Resolved, that we build a new headquarters at a cost not to exceed \$250,000” All in favor....)...

Normally, blanks should be filled before voting on the motion itself, but if a large majority is confident that the measure will be rejected in any case, time may be saved by ordering the *Previous Question* on all applicable pending questions before the blank is filled. (e.g. “The vote is on the motion “Resolved, that we build a new headquarters at a cost not to exceed \$ _____.”) If by chance the motion is nevertheless adopted, the blank should be filled and the motion completed before any other business is taken up.