

APPENDIX D

Parliamentary Law and Procedure; Meeting Decorum and Protocol

Parliamentary procedure refers to the commonly accepted way in which a group of people come together, present and discuss possible courses of action, and make decisions. It defines how groups of people, no matter how formal or informal, can most effectively meet and make decisions in a fair, consistent manner—and make good use of everyone's time.

Parliamentary law is based upon the will of the majority, the right of the minority to be heard, protection of the rights of absentees, courtesy and justice for all, and consideration of one subject at a time.

This article contains basic information about a meeting agenda, handling of a main motion, tips for the president, tips for the secretary, meeting decorum and protocol, and parliamentary procedure potpourri. It is impossible to cover every possible scenario with regard to parliamentary procedure. In instances where an organization's practices and rules differ from those discussed in this article, the organization's practices and rules take priority.

Role of the Parliamentarian

The parliamentarian is a consultant who advises the President and other officers, committees, and members on matters of parliamentary procedure. The parliamentarian's most important work may well be performed before the meeting. During a meeting, his/her role is purely an advisory and consultative one; parliamentary law gives to the chair alone the power to rule on questions of order or to answer parliamentary inquiries.

During a meeting, the work of the parliamentarian should be limited to giving advice to the chair and, when requested, to any other member. It is also the duty of the parliamentarian—as inconspicuously as possible—to call the attention of the chair to any error in the proceedings that may affect the substantive rights of any member or may otherwise do harm. An experienced parliamentarian will often see a problem developing and be able to head it off with a few words to the chair.

After the parliamentarian has expressed an opinion on a point, the chair has the duty to make the final ruling and, in doing so, has the right to follow the advice of the parliamentarian or to disregard it.

The Chair and a Script Agenda (see "Exhibits" for meeting agenda)

--A single rap of the gavel may be used. —

Call to Order

The presiding officer, after determining that a quorum is present, waits or signals for quiet, and says, "The meeting will come to order" and introduces and welcomes guests.

Opening Ceremonies

Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. (If given, the invocation, the national anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag are performed in that order.)

Roll Call (if customary)

"The Secretary will call the roll."

Reading and Approval of Minutes

"The Secretary will read the minutes." **-OR-** "The minutes have been distributed to you."

"Are there corrections to the minutes?" (No need to ask for additions or deletions, as those are considered corrections.) --Pause--

"If there are no corrections, the minutes are approved as read."

With corrections: "If there is no objection, the Secretary will make the corrections."

If there are no further corrections, the minutes are approved as corrected."

Reports of Officers, Boards, and Standing Committees

"The next business in order is hearing reports of the officers, board, and standing committees."

Officers and standing committees are called on in the order in which they are listed in the bylaws. The chair usually calls on only those who have reports to make.

Call on the treasurer: "May we have the treasurer's report?"

"Are there any questions?" --Never: "Any corrections?"--

"The report will be filed for audit." A treasurer's report is never approved or adopted. Only an auditor's report, usually made annually, is adopted, having the effect of relieving the treasurer of responsibility for the period covered by his/her report.

An officer should not move the implementation of a recommendation in his report; another member can make such a motion following the officer's report.

The secretary or other reporting member of a board and the chairman or other reporting member of a committee, "on behalf of/by direction of the board or the committee," moves the adoption of the necessary motion to implement any recommendations the board or committee makes.

Reports of Special Committees (announced only if there are such committees prepared or instructed to report)

Special committees are called on in the order in which they were appointed.

The reporting member, usually the chairman if a member of the assembly: "On behalf of/by direction of the committee," moves the adoption of motions or resolutions in the report.

Special Orders (announced only if there are such items)

Unfinished special orders from the previous meeting and items made special orders for this meeting and not set for specific hours are taken up under this heading. Matters set by the bylaws for a particular meeting may be taken up.

Chair: "The next business in order is the consideration of special orders. The Secretary will read from the bylaws Article _____ Section _____ concerning the election/appointment of a Nominating Committee."

Unfinished Business and General Orders (announced only if there are such items)

Any questions previously introduced and not finished or any postponed to the present meeting are under this heading.

Chair: "The next item of business is the motion relating to . . . that was postponed to this meeting. The question is on the adoption of the motion that . . ." –Proceed with debate and vote-

New Business

"Is there any new business?"

"Is there any further new business?"

Announcements

"The chair has the following announcements. . . . Are there other announcements?"

Adjournment

Chair: "Is there any further business? (Pause) Since there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned." --A single rap of the gavel may be used. —

Handling of a Main Motion

There are several classifications of motions and an order of precedence by one motion over another. Only the very basic information about handling a main motion is provided here, as it is impossible to provide a complete discussion in this article.

Following is an example of the procedure for handling a main motion, which is one that introduces new business.

1. A member says, "Mr. President." (In a large assembly, the member stands and gives his name and identification; in a small group, when the member may raise his/her hand to get the chair's attention, may give his/her name and identification for the benefit of the secretary.) The member awaits recognition by the chair.
2. The chair recognizes the member by calling his name, or, in a small assembly, by nodding to him/her.
3. The member makes the motion: "I move that (or 'to')..." and takes his/her seat.
4. Another member, without rising or raising his/her hand, seconds the motion: "I second the motion" or "I second it" or even just "second."

5. The chair states the motion: "It is moved and seconded that.... Is there discussion?"
6. Members debate the motion.
7. The chair puts the motion to a vote: "Those in favor, say 'Aye.' (Pause for response.) Those opposed, say 'No.'" (Pause for response.)
8. The chair announces the result of the vote: "The 'ayes' have it, the motion is adopted, and (indicating the effect of the vote)," or "The 'noes' have it, and the motion is lost."

One motion that is usually misunderstood is known as "Previous Question" in parliamentary language. It is often referred to as "Question." This motion is used to bring the assembly to an immediate vote on the pending questions; its adoption does this with certain exceptions, which cannot be covered here.

Previous question is not in order when another has the floor, must be seconded, is not debatable or amendable, and requires a two-thirds vote for adoption.

If the motion is adopted, the assembly must stop discussion of the motion before it and take the vote immediately. If the motion is lost, the assembly may continue discussion.

Adoption of a Motion or Action Without a Motion, by Unanimous Consent

In cases where there seems to be no opposition in routine questions or on questions of little importance, time can often be saved by the procedure of *unanimous consent*. Under these conditions, the method of unanimous consent can be used either to adopt a motion without the steps of stating the question and putting the motion to a formal vote, or it can be used to take action without even the formality of a motion.

To obtain unanimous consent in either case, the chair states that "If there is no objection . . ." (or "Without objection . . ."), the actions that he mentions will be taken; or he/she may ask, "Is there any objection to . . .?" The chair then pauses, and if no member calls out, "I object," the chair announces that, "Since there is no objection . . ." the action is decided upon. If any member objects, the chair must state the question on the motion, allow any debate, and put the question in the usual manner. Or, if no motion has been made, the chair must first ask, "Is there a motion to . . .(stating the proposed action)"; or he/she must at least put the question, assuming such a motion.

The correction and approval of minutes is an example of business that is normally handled by unanimous consent. The chair asks, "Are there any corrections to the minutes?" and pauses. (Corrections, when proposed, are usually handled by unanimous consent.) After any proposed corrections have been disposed of, and when there is no response to the chair's inquiry, "Are there any/further corrections to the minutes," the chair says, "There being no corrections/no

further corrections, the minutes are approved as read/distributed/corrected." The minutes are thus approved without any formal vote.

Tips for the President

- Don't let meetings get out-of-hand.
- Make up your committees of members who will work together harmoniously.
- Don't overwork the same crowd. Keep an eye open for new talent.
- Don't do all the work yourself.
- Ensure that meetings are business-like, but not "stuffy."
- Remember that the larger the group, the greater the degree of formality that is necessary.
- Always be willing to answer pertinent questions about the business at hand; other theoretical questions should not be allowed to interrupt pending business.

Tips for the Secretary

The secretary is the keeper of the records and aide to the president. His/her special duties should be specified in the organization's bylaws and other rules. General duties, as described in **Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised** include:

- Recording and distributing minutes and keeping record books in order and up-to-date.
- Keeping committee reports on file.
- Keeping the official membership roll (unless this responsibility is assigned to someone else).
- Notifying officers, committee members, and delegates of their election or appointment.
- Sending out notices of meetings and conducting the general correspondence of the organization unless this duty is assigned to another officer.
- Having available at each meeting: an up-to-date copy of the bylaws and all other rules of the organization; a list of all existing committees and their members; an accurate record of membership; a copy of the organization's adopted order of business; and an outline of that particular meeting's planned order of business.

When the president and vice president are absent, the secretary calls the meeting to order and presides until a chairman pro tem is elected.

When requested to do so, the secretary counts a *rising* vote. He/she also reads recommendations of the executive board, special resolutions, and excerpts from the bylaws and other rules as requested.

In small organizations, selection of a secretary pro tem is often handled by the chair's asking the assembly for general consent to the appointing of a specific member to carry on the duties of the secretary temporarily. If no one objects, the selected individual is elected by general consent and serves in that office temporarily. If anyone objects, the chair opens nominations, and an election, usually by voice, is held.

Minutes

Minutes should be as brief as possible and should be reported in the order in which the business was presented in the meeting. They should record action taken by the group, including:

- The exact wording of motions as stated by the chair. (The presiding officer can require any main motion or amendment to be in writing before it will be stated by the chair. The secretary can request the presiding officer to insist that this be done.)
- The name of the member who moved the adoption of a motion and the name of the seconder if it is the practice of the organization to do so OR if the assembly orders that it be included.
- The action taken on the motion.
- Personal opinions and details of debate or discussion are not included. What is done by the assembly, not what is said by the members, should be recorded. Minutes should never reflect the Secretary's opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything that is done.

In writing minutes, the following outline is generally used (items 1-5 should be given in the first paragraph):

1. Kind of meeting—regular, special, annual, adjourned special, or adjourned annual.
2. Name of the organization or assembly.
3. Date, place, and time of meeting.
4. The presence and names of the president and secretary or, in the absence of the regular officers, the names of their substitutes.
5. Whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved or whether the reading was dispensed with, for later approval.
6. A separate paragraph for each subject covered, including, as appropriate:
 - A. Hearing of reports and action taken.
 - B. All main motions and motions to bring a main motion again before the Assembly, except any that were withdrawn, and the wording in which each was adopted, defeated, or otherwise disposed of. (The secretary records the motions in exactly the same words as used by the chair when stating them to the assembly.)
 - C. The disposition of main motions and motions to bring a question again before the assembly that were neither adopted nor defeated. All adhering secondary motions such as amendments, etc., are also recorded.
 - D. Announcements of previous notice of motions to be made at a later meeting.
 - E. Points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, including the reasons given by the presiding officer for his ruling.
7. Hour of adjournment.
8. Signature and title of the person writing the minutes (not "respectfully submitted").

Parliamentary Procedure Potpourri

- An established minimum number of voting members must be present in a meeting in order to transact business. Known as the "quorum," this is a majority unless otherwise specified.

- A majority vote decides a question except in some cases where basic rights of members may be taken away or in changing a special rule.
- A two-thirds vote is necessary for any motion that deprives a member of a right in any way.
- Silence gives consent.
- The President represents and acts for the assembly—not as an individual member. He/she should always remain impartial and refer to himself/herself impersonally ("the chair," "your President," etc.)

Others should refer to themselves in the third person during official reporting, whether speaking or writing. ("This member . . ." – OR – "This chair . . .")

- The chair never "turns the meeting over to" anyone. In the case of hearing a speaker, for example, the chair should say something like, "John Smith will introduce our speaker for the evening"—not "I will turn the program over to John Smith."

Basic Meeting Decorum and Protocol

Meeting Decorum and Protocol

Correct decorum and protocol should be observed in all meetings.

- Invitations to speakers should include the date, time, place, and type of meeting; name of the president and meeting coordinator; general subject and length of speech; tentative outline of the program; and what others on the program will discuss. After invitations are accepted, it should be determined if the speakers will need special equipment, such as a projector. Consideration should be given about whether they need to be met at the venue and escorted to the meeting. They should receive "thank you" notes after the meeting.
- Those responsible for planning and carrying out the meeting should coordinate with the chair for the specific portion of the meeting (such as a business session or banquet) concerning seating arrangements. Head table arrangements are based on accepted seating practices, with special attention paid to rank of importance. Place cards with names printed on both sides are placed before each person seated at the head table.

The presiding officer is seated in the center when the number of seats is odd and to the right of center (the lectern) facing the audience when the number of seats is even. The speaker is seated to the immediate right of the presiding officer.

- Invocations, blessings, or spiritual thoughts should be short and general in nature.
- Members of the assembly arise and resume their seats at the direction of the chair. When meals are served buffet style, the line is formed when and how announced by the chair.
- Members should never walk between the chair and the assembly.

The Flag of the United States of America--Etiquette in Meetings

The Flag Code is a guideline for proper flag etiquette. It is the responsibility of meeting planners to assure that a flag is present for appropriate events and that the flag is displayed properly.

Basic rules:

- While it is not inappropriate to use a desk flag instead of a staff, it is recommended that, whenever possible, staffed flags, properly presented, be used. If a flag is not present in the meeting room, the Pledge of Allegiance should not be recited.
- No other flag should be placed above or to the flag's right except at the United Nations.
- When used on a speaker's platform, the flag, if displayed flat, should be displayed above and behind the speaker. When displayed from a staff in a church or public auditorium, the flag should hold the position of superior prominence, in the position of honor at the clergyman's or speaker's right as he faces the audience, on the same level as the platform. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergyman or speaker or to the right of the audience.
- When displaying the flag against a wall, vertically or horizontally, the flag's union (stars) should be at the top, to the observer's left.
- The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, floor, water, or merchandise.

