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What makes a great Board Chair?

CONDUCTING BETTER BOARD MEETINGS: RULES OF ORDER

The chair of the board is responsible for the smooth running of board meetings. This includes setting the agenda with the director, ensuring that packages of relevant information are distributed to trustees before the meeting, and making rulings in accordance with the policies or practices of the board or the agreed upon rules of order. The most common rules of order are Robert's Rules of Order which are summarized below.

Roberts Rules of Order provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language. The conduct of ALL business is controlled by the general will of the whole membership - the right of the deliberate majority to decide. Complementary is the right of at least a strong minority to require the majority to be deliberate - to act according to its considered judgment AFTER a full and fair "working through" of the issues involved. Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the assembly. Under no circumstances should "undue strictness" be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

The fundamental right of deliberative assemblies require all questions to be thoroughly discussed before taking action. The assembly rules - they have the final say on everything. Silence means consent.

- Obtain the floor (the right to speak) by being the first to stand when the person speaking has finished. State Mr/ Madam Chair. Raising your hand means nothing, and standing while another has the floor is out of order. One must be recognized by the chair before speaking.
- Debate cannot begin until the chair has stated the motion or resolution and asked "are you ready for the question?" If no one rises, the chair calls for the vote.
- Before the motion is stated by the chair (the question) members may suggest modification of the motion; the mover can modify as he/she pleases, or even withdraw the motion without consent of the seconder; if the mover modifies, the seconder can withdraw the second.

- The “immediately pending question” is the last question stated by the chair. Motion/Resolution - Amendment - Motion to Postpone
- The member moving the “immediately pending question” is entitled to the floor.
- No member can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken to it once.
- All remarks must be directed to the chair. Remarks must be courteous in language and deportment - avoid all personalities; never allude to others by name or to motives.
- The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations. When presented to the assembly and the question is stated, debate begins and changes occur.

The Rules

- **Point of Privilege:** Pertains to noise, personal comfort, etc. - may interrupt only if necessary.
- **Parliamentary Inquiry:** Inquire as to the correct motion - to accomplish a desired result, or raise a point of order
- **Point of Information:** Generally applies to information desired from the speaker: “I should like to ask the (speaker) a question.”
- **Orders of the Day (Agenda):** A call to adhere to the agenda (a deviation from the agenda requires Suspending the Rules)
- **Point of Order:** Infraction of the rules, or improper decorum in speaking. Must be raised immediately after the error is made
- **Main Motion:** Brings new business (the next item on the agenda) before the assembly
- **Divide the Question:** Divides a motion into two or more separate motions (must be able to stand on their own)
- **Consider by Paragraph:** Adoption of paper is held until all paragraphs are debated and amended and entire paper is satisfactory; after all paragraphs are considered, the entire paper is then open to amendment, and paragraphs may be further amended. Any Preamble cannot be considered until debate on the body of the paper has ceased.
- **Amend:** Inserting or striking out words or paragraphs, or substituting whole paragraphs or resolutions
- **Withdraw/Modify Motion:** Applies only after question is stated; mover can accept an amendment without obtaining the floor
- **Commit /Refer/Recommit to Committee:** State the committee to receive the question or resolution; if no committee exists include size of committee desired and method of selecting the members (election or appointment).

- **Extend Debate:** Applies only to the immediately pending question; extends until a certain time or for a certain period of time
- **Limit Debate:** Closing debate at a certain time, or limiting to a certain period of time
- **Postpone to a Certain Time:** State the time the motion or agenda item will be resumed
- **Object to Consideration:** Objection must be stated before discussion or another motion is stated
- **Lay on the Table:** Temporarily suspends further consideration/action on pending question; may be made after motion to close debate has carried or is pending
- **Take from the Table:** Resumes consideration of item previously “laid on the table” - state the motion to take from the table
- **Reconsider:** Can be made only by one on the prevailing side who has changed position or view
- **Postpone Indefinitely:** Kills the question/resolution for this session - exception: the motion to reconsider can be made this session
- **Previous Question:** Closes debate if successful - may be moved to “Close Debate” if preferred
- **Informal Consideration:** Move that the assembly go into “Committee of the Whole” - informal debate as if in committee; this committee may limit number or length of speeches or close debate by other means by a 2/3 vote. All votes, however, are formal.
- **Appeal Decision of the Chair:** Appeal for the assembly to decide - must be made before other business is resumed; NOT debatable if relates to decorum, violation of rules or order of business
- **Suspend the Rules:** Allows a violation of the assembly’s own rules (except Constitution); the object of the suspension must be specified