



**UNIVERSITY OF  
GEORGIA**

**Carl Vinson  
Institute of Government**

**COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE IN  
GOVERNMENT**



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# No Shortcuts

# Robert's Rules of Order

# General Henry M. Robert, III



“The great lesson for democracies to learn is for the majority to give to the minority a full force opportunity to present their side of the case and then for the minority, having failed to win, gracefully to submit and to recognize the action as that of the entire organization and cheerfully to assist in carrying out until they can secure its appeal.”



# Who is in charge?

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# Who is in charge?

## “CHAIRMAN OR PRESIDENT.

The presiding officer of an assembly ordinarily is called the chairman when no special title has been assigned, or in a body not permanently organized, such as a mass meeting. In organized societies, the presiding officer's title is usually prescribed by the bylaws, that of president being most common. The term the chair refers to the person in a meeting who is actually presiding at the time, whether that person is the regular presiding officer or not.”



# Chairman

- 1.) To open the meeting at the appointed time by taking the chair and calling the meeting to order, having ascertained that a quorum is present.
- 2.) To announce in proper sequence the business that comes before the assembly or becomes in order in accordance with the prescribed order of business, agenda, or pro-gram, and with existing orders of the day.
- 3.) To recognize members who are entitled to the floor.



# Chairman

4.) To state and to put to vote all questions that legitimately come before the assembly as motions or that otherwise arise in the course of proceedings (except questions that relate to the presiding officer himself in the manner noted below), and to announce the result of each vote; or, if a motion that is not in order is made, to rule it out of order.

5.) To protect the assembly from obviously dilatory motions by refusing to recognize them.

# Chairman

- 6.) To enforce the rules relating to debate and those relating to order and decorum within the assembly.
- 7.) To expedite business in every way compatible with the rights of members.
- 8.) To decide all questions of order, subject to appeal – unless, when in doubt, the presiding officer prefers initially to submit such a question to the assembly for decision.

# Chairman

9.) To respond to inquiries of members relating to parliamentary procedure or factual information bearing on the business of the assembly.

10.) To authenticate by his or her signature, when necessary all acts, orders, and proceedings of the assembly.

11.) To declare the meeting adjourned when the assembly so votes or – where applicable – at the time prescribed in the program, or at any time in the event of a sudden emergency affecting the safety of those present.

# Odd Rules

- “Except in a small board or a committee, the presiding officer should stand while calling a meeting to order or declaring it adjourned, and while putting a question to vote.”
- “The chair should take special care to make sure that the members always understand what is the immediately pending business – the exact question to be voted on the next time a vote is taken.”



# Traits of a Good Chair

- Consistency - “...in large assemblies where there is much work to be done, and especially where there is a likelihood of trouble, the only safe course is to require a strict observance of the rules.”
- Flexibility – “At the same time, any presiding officer will do well to bear in mind that no rules can take the place of tact and common sense on the part of the chairman.”
- Patience – “they should never get excited; he should never be unjust to even the most troublesome member... Good judgment is essential.”



# What are we going to do?

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# Agenda

- “By a single vote, a series of special orders or general orders – or a mixture of both – can be made; such a series is called an agenda.”
- “In cases in which an agenda is adopted, usually this is done at the outset of a session and the agenda is intended to cover the entire session.”
- “When the adoption of a proposed agenda is pending, it is subject to amendment by majority vote.”



# Taking Up Topics in an Agenda

- “When the assigned time for taking up a topic in an agenda arrives, the chair announces that fact. Then he puts to a vote any pending questions without allowing further debate, unless someone immediately moves to lay the question on the table, postpone it, or refer it to a committee.”
- Address Topic Prior to Moving to Next Topic



# Odd Rules

Minute approval – “The chair says, ‘The Secretary will read the minutes.’ However, in organizations where copies of the minutes of each previous meeting as prepared by the secretary are sent to all members in advance, the chair announces that this has been done, and the actual reading of them aloud is omitted unless any member then request that they be read.”



# How are we going to do it?

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# Ordinance Changes

- Proposed Amendments
- Public Comment
- Discussion
- Call the Question
- Motions



# Zoning Decisions

- Staff Report
- Applicant
- Public Comment
- Discussion
- Call the Question
- Motions



# Discussion

- Board member must first be recognized by Chair
- Chair **MUST** recognize any member who seeks the floor when entitled
- Members who have not spoken have prior over those who have



# Motions

- Starts with a Member making a motion
- Must be followed by a second
  - Second does not necessarily constitute support for the issue
- One motion at a time, but the motion may be amended



# Types of Motions

- Denial
- Approval
- Approval with Conditions
- Table



# Handling a Motion

- Member making Motion has first opportunity to Debate
- “Under parliamentary procedure, strictly speaking, discussion of any subject is permitted only with reference to a pending motion”.
- Customary to allow Member who seconded Motion next opportunity
- When discussing, Members are to address the Chair



# Odd Rule

“In the debate, each member has the right to speak twice on the same question on the same day, but cannot make a second speech on the same question so long as any member who has not spoken on that question desires the floor. A member who has spoken twice on a particular question on the same day has exhausted his right to debate that question for that day.”



# Amending Motions

- Primary Motion may be amended by Body
- Member with Primary Motion may allow amendment
- Body may amend Motion by Vote



# Secondary Motions

- 1) Although the presiding officer has the responsibility of enforcing the rules, any member who believes he has noticed a case where the chair is failing to do so can, at the time the breach occurs, call attention to it by making a ***Point of Order***, the effect is to require the chair to make a ruling on the question involved.
- 2) Although the duty of ruling on all questions of parliamentary procedure affecting the assembly's proceedings rests with the chair, any two members, by moving and seconding an ***Appeal*** immediately after the chair has made such a ruling, can require him to submit the matter to a vote of the assembly.
- 3) When it is desired that the assembly take up a question or do something that would be in violation of a rule that applies, it can be proposed in some cases to ***Suspend the Rules*** to permit accomplishment of the desired purpose.

# Secondary Motions

4) If an original main motion has been made and a member believes that it would do harm for the motion even to be discussed in the meeting, he can raise an ***Objection to the Consideration of the Question***, provided he does so before debate has begun or any subsidiary motion (other than a motion to Lay on the Table) has been stated; the assembly then votes on whether the main motion shall be considered (and if there is a two-thirds vote against consideration, the motion is dropped).

5) If a pending main motion (or a pending amendment) contains two or more parts capable of standing as separate questions, the assembly can vote to treat each part accordingly in successions; such a course is proposed by the motion for ***Division of a Question***.

# Secondary Motions

6) If the main motion is in the form of a resolution or document containing several paragraphs or sections which (although not separate questions) 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***.

7) If a member doubts the accuracy of the chair's announcement of the result of a voice vote (or even a vote by show of hands)-or doubts that a representative number of persons voted--he can demand a ***Division of the Assembly***; a single member thus has the power to require a 15 standing vote, but not to order a count, which only the chair or the assembly can do (see next item).

# Secondary Motions

8) A member can move that a vote be taken (a) by ballot, (b) by roll call, or (c) by a counted standing vote, especially if a division of the assembly has appeared inconclusive and the chair neglects to order a count. This grouping also includes a motion (d) that the polls be closed or reopened in a ballot vote. All these motions are grouped under the heading of ***Motions Relating to Methods of Voting and the Polls.***

9) If the bylaws or rules of the organization do not prescribe how nominations are to be made, and if the assembly has taken no action to do so prior to an election, any member can move while the election is pending (a) to specify one of various methods by which the candidates shall be nominated; or, if the need arises, (b) to close nominations, or (c) to reopen them; these are the ***Motions Relating to Nominations.***

10) A member may ***Request to Be Excused from a Duty*** if he wishes to be relieved from an obligation imposed upon him by the bylaws or by virtue of some position or office he holds.



# Secondary Motions

11) There are several other types of Requests and Inquiries which a member can make in connection with business that someone desires to introduce, or which is pending or has just been pending. These include:

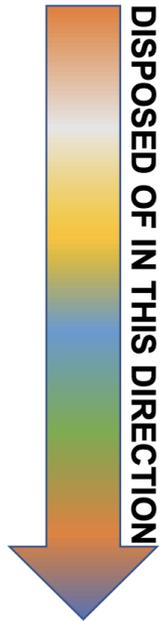
- a. **Parliamentary Inquiry** (a request for the chair's opinion on a matter of parliamentary procedure as it relates to the business at hand--not involving a ruling).
- b. **Request for Information** or, as it is also called, Point of Information (an inquiry as to facts affecting the business at hand directed to the chair or, through the chair, to a member).
- c. **Request for Permission (or Leave) to Withdraw or Modify a Motion** (after it has been stated by the chair).
- d. **Request to Read Papers.**
- e. **Request for Any Other Privilege.**

The first two types of inquiry are responded to by the chair, or by a member at the direction of the chair; the other requests can be granted only by the assembly.



# Hierarchy of Motions

HIGHEST RANKING



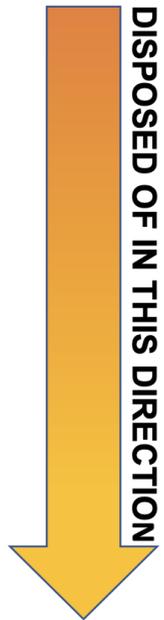
LOWEST RANKING

1. Motion to *Lay on the Table*
2. Motion to the *Previous Question*
3. Motion to *Limit or Extend Limits of Debate*
4. Motion to *Postpone Definitely*
5. Motion to *Commit*
6. Motion to *Amend*
7. Motion to *Postpone Indefinitely*



# Hierarchy of Motions

**HIGHEST RANKING**



1.

**Subsidiary Motion**

2.

**Main Motion**

**LOWEST RANKING**



# Ending a Motion

- Tabling
- Calling the Question



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