

PLANNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Few people look forward to meetings. But in the most effective organizations, meetings provide direction and incentives for everyone, allowing members to carry out their responsibilities in an efficient manner. In short, meetings can work FOR the organization rather than a barrier to accomplishment.

All productive meetings begin in the same way: PLANNING. Lack of preparation is the main reason why meetings are a failure. When officers and members of an organization wait until an hour before a meeting to think about what they want to accomplish and how they will do so, the results are often mediocre. Instead, strategic planning should take place in the areas listed below.

Meeting Space

Environment has a significant effect on behavior. Thinking and participating are easier when people are comfortable. Therefore, you should select and arrange your meeting space with care. Be sure that the room is the right size. A room that is too small can become stuffy and create tension. On the other hand, a room that is too large will feel empty. The room should have adequate ventilation and lighting and be free from extraneous noise.

Try to arrange the seating in a semi-circle or square with the leader in the front and center of the room. This allows members to see one another and participate, yet allows the leader the opportunity to guide the meeting. If you can, provide table space so that members can write and take notes. If this is not possible, at least have a table for the leader and the secretary. You may also want to arrange a chalkboard or newsprint and markers to make notes which the entire group can see.

Agenda

The agenda is the “blueprint” for your meeting. It is a list of various topics which your group will discuss during the meeting. An agenda ensures that your meeting has a purpose and that everyone knows what its specific objectives are. In preparing an agenda, solicit items from officers, members and other relevant people. Collect documents and other papers that support each agenda item. Be sure you know the point of each agenda item (i.e., Is it a decision to be made? Information to be shared? A topic to be discussed?).

When the agenda is completed, distribute it to your members several days in advance. Distribute supporting documents in advance or have them available for examination at the meeting. Before the meeting, be sure that people responsible for agenda items are ready to make their presentations. (For more information on making an agenda, see the section entitled “The Meeting Agenda.”)

Rules

Before you have your first meeting, there should be general agreement on how formal your meetings will be and under what guidelines your meetings will be run. Many of these questions may already be answered in your constitution or by-laws. The answers to these questions will depend upon such factors as the size of your group (larger groups often need more rules to run efficiently) and your purpose (a social group will probably want to be very informal). Some decisions to be made include:

- 1) Will you use parliamentary procedure and if so, what kind? (The Santa Rosa Junior College Associated Students and Inter-Club Council use *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* by Alice Sturgis.)
- 2) Who will lead the meeting and what powers will that person have?

- 3) Will you keep a written record of your meeting (minutes) and if so, who will be responsible for taking the minutes?
- 4) Will you repeat information for members who arrive late? (It is usually unwise to do this.)
- 5) Will people be asked to submit reports and proposals in writing?
- 6) How will the group decide if a long discussion should be continued, postponed, or terminated? (Parliamentary procedure is helpful here.)
- 7) What will the group do if the meeting runs beyond the stated time?

Meeting Time

Choose a meeting time that is convenient for as many of your members as possible. Although you might want to allow some flexibility, it is usually best to have regular meetings at the same time and place. As well as designating a starting time, indicate an ending time for meetings. This allows your members to plan their personal schedules. Send out notices of the meeting well in advance. You may also want to have a designated place to post your agendas. If you do not meet on a regular basis, it might be helpful to phone people the night before a meeting.

Of course, planning is not the only ingredient for effective meetings. Groups must also find productive ways to discuss topics during their meetings. But planning is the necessary first step which allows all members to participate fully in the business at hand.

CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Meetings often are viewed as a chore or as an unpleasant part of belonging to an organization. They can even be seen as interfering with a group's 'real' purpose. In fact, meetings frequently are unproductive and can generate conflict or boredom rather than unity and excitement. When this happens, people lose interest, attendance declines and the organization is weakened. But this need not happen. This section will give you some ideas for conducting more effective meetings.

General Principles

Because it may deal with a lot of details and mundane issues, a meeting can be tedious. Members become bored and 'tune out.' On the other hand, meetings can also deal with controversial issues that cause emotions to run high. Members might respond by either trying to avoid the conflict or becoming even more emotional in their discussion. In either case, it is easy to forget the basic principles that make a meeting productive. Some of these are listed below:

- 1) Plan for the meeting. The officers should prepare an agenda in advance (see the section "The Meeting Agenda" below) and see that all necessary arrangements are made (see the "Planning Effective Meetings" section above).
- 2) Be prepared. Read the agenda. Whether you are leading the meeting or are one of the attending members, know what is expected of you and be ready to participate.
- 3) Show common courtesy to each other. Interrupting someone, leaving the room frequently and whispering while someone else is talking all show disrespect for guests and fellow members.
- 4) Listen before speaking. Be sure you have heard and understand what others have said before making a response.
- 5) Stay involved. Ask questions if you do not understand an item on the agenda. Issues are much less boring if you know what they are talking about.
- 6) Take responsibility for what is happening. If you believe something is wrong with the meeting, discuss it with the group.

Role of the Chair

The Chair is the person designated to conduct the meeting. Usually, this is the President of the organization. Although his or her specific responsibilities will be determined by the Constitution or By-Laws, the Chair plays a critical role in conducting an effective meeting. Below is a list of things the Chair can do to insure a meeting is a productive one:

- 1) Start on time.
- 2) Introduce new members and guests to the rest of the group.
- 3) Refer to people by name.
- 4) Be prepared to deal with any procedural or administrative matters that may arise.
- 5) Stay neutral. Talk less than anyone else. LISTEN. If you don't feel you can maintain objectivity while facilitating a discussion, it might be wise to pass the gavel or role of chair to the vice-chair or other designated member.
- 6) Keep to the agenda. Introduce each agenda item with a word about why it is there and what action needs to be taken.
- 7) Encourage new people to participate, but allow members to be quiet if they wish.
- 8) Allow only one person to speak at a time. If the issue is controversial, alternate between people with different points of view.
- 9) Be sure there is a full discussion of issues by calling on everyone who has something to say. Don't let a few people dominate the discussion.
- 10) If a discussion becomes long or goes beyond the allotted time, check with the group to see if they want to continue or postpone the discussion. If the discussion is to be continued, ask the group to confine themselves to comments that are constructive or non-repetitive.
- 11) Ignore totally negative comments and tactfully end a discussion that is destructive.
- 12) Clarify the differences and similarities in what people are saying.
- 13) If the large group cannot formulate a plan or reach a decision, suggest that a small committee be formed to continue the discussion.
- 14) Be sure each agenda item is resolved or assigned to an individual or committee for further action. Set target dates for completion of tasks.
- 15) Briefly summarize the important things the group accomplished and end the meeting on a unifying, positive note.
- 16) Announce plans for the next meeting.
- 17) Thank members and guests for attending.
- 18) Finish on time.

The Contribution of Members

Although the Chair has an important role during the meeting, he or she should not be expected to assume all of the responsibility for an effective meeting. Each individual member should also help in making the meeting a productive one. The following list provides some ways to do this:

- 1) Introduce yourself to new members and guests.
- 2) Listen, and participate in the discussion.
- 3) Ask questions if you don't understand what is going on.
- 4) Speak for yourself. Don't presume to talk for people who are absent.
- 5) Stay on topic and let others know that you expect them to do the same.
- 6) Don't repeat points which have already been made. Give others an opportunity to participate.
- 7) If you disagree with something, do so in a positive way. Remember that there are always several points of view on an issue. Disagree with ideas, not personalities.

- 8) Don't become defensive about a suggestion simply because you introduced it. Once an idea is presented, the group may wish to change it.
- 9) Be supportive of the group's efforts. Offer to help if the group needs committee members or other assistance outside of the meeting. Be sure you understand what is needed.
- 10) Stay until the end of the meeting.

After the Meeting

If a meeting has been especially long or difficult, officers and members often breathe a collective sigh of relief when it's over and move on to something else. However, a truly effective meeting continues after it ends. Here are some things to do after adjournment:

- 1) Officers and advisors should meet to evaluate the meeting. It helps to discuss what was successful and what needs to be changed or improved.
- 2) Write up and distribute minutes within two or three days of the meeting.
- 3) Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- 4) Follow up on items that were delegated to members or committees. See that members know and follow through on their responsibilities. Offer assistance if needed. Do all of these things sufficiently in advance of the next meeting.

Conducting meetings which are as effective as you would like them to be is not an easy task. It takes the cooperation of the entire group over a period of many weeks or months. Although the investment in terms of time and energy may seem great, the long-term benefits will make it worthwhile. The ideas presented in this chapter will give you a start in your efforts.

The Meeting Agenda

There are many reasons why meetings are unproductive and frustrating. One common cause is the lack of an agenda. An agenda is an outline of the issues a group will discuss during its meeting.

The agenda is prepared by the officers of the organization, with assistance from the organization advisor. An agenda starts with a list of general business items. Specific topics which are to be discussed at the meeting are placed under the proper agenda item in an outline format. The agenda (along with any supporting documents) is then printed, copied and distributed to members at the meeting. If it is logistically possible, it is good practice to distribute the agendas in advance of the meeting time. This allows members to come to a meeting prepared to discuss their idea, exchange information and make decisions.

The following agenda items are standard in most groups. You can adapt them to meet the needs of your organization, but be consistent.

WHAT TO SAY: USING PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE TO MANAGE MEETINGS

Call to Order

The Chair (usually the president or other designated officer) calls the meeting to order by tapping the gavel once (optional) and saying: "The meeting will now come to order."

The Call to Order may be followed by any opening ceremony the organization may have.

Roll Call

The Chair says: “The Secretary (or other officer/Advisor) will now call roll.”

If attendance is taken, it should be done with the aid of a prepared list of a member’s names. The list can include spaces for recording whether a member is present, absent or tardy.

Reading and Approval of the Agenda

The Chair says: “Please review the Agenda for approval.”

After giving members ample time to review the Agenda, the Chair asks: “Are there any additions, corrections or deletions?”

After the changes are made, the Chair says: “If there are no objections AND no (further) additions, corrections or deletions, the Agenda is approved as presented (amended).” Note: if any member of the body objects to this “quick” approval method, the Chair should ask for a vote.

Reading and Approval of the Minutes

The Chair says: “Please review the Minutes for approval.”

After giving members ample time to review the Minutes, the Chair asks: “Are there any additions, corrections or deletions?”

After the changes are made, the Chair says: “If there are no (further) additions, corrections or deletions, the Minutes are approved as presented (amended).”

Public Comments

The Chair says: “Are there any Public Comments?”

Anyone from the public (not the club/organization members) may give announcements or comments to the members of the club. This is generally one-way communication, at the discretion of the Chair.

Reports of the Officers/Advisor

The Chair recognizes each officer in turn. For example: “May we have the Treasurer’s report?”

Officers may give reports of their current activities and administrative duties. Reports usually are for informational purposes and generally one-way communication.

Reports of Committees

The Chair calls for the reports of permanent (or ‘standing’) committees first, followed by reports of special (or ‘ad hoc’) committees. As each report is requested, the committee chair (or other members) rises and presents the report. If a recommendation is made in the report which requires a vote, the report may more appropriately be given under New Business.

Appointments/Disappointments

The Chair says: “A motion will come forward to appoint/disappoint...” (must be moved and seconded).

Old Business/Unfinished Business

This category includes all Business/Action items left over from previous meetings. The Chair works from the list of Old Business items on the Agenda, announcing each one in turn for movement discussion and action.

The Chair says: “A motion will come forward to...” (must be moved and seconded if not already done so).

Or, a member of the organization says: “I move to...” (must be seconded).

Next the Chair says, “The motion has been moved and seconded, is there any discussion?” After discussion is complete, the Chair may say: “If there is no more discussion, let’s move to the vote. All those in favor, please say ‘Aye.’ All those opposed, please say ‘No.’ The motion carries/fails.” If the motion has already been moved and seconded at a previous meeting, the Chair may ask if there’s any further discussion. Now, move on to the next Old Business item.

New Business

This category includes all New Business/Action items. The Chair works from the list of New Business items on the Agenda, announcing each one in turn for movement, discussion and action.

The Chair says: “A motion will come forward to...” (must be moved and seconded).

Or, a member of the organization says: “I move to...” (must be seconded).

Next the Chair says, “The motion has been moved and seconded, is there any discussion?” After discussion is complete, the Chair may say: “If there is no more discussion, let’s move to the vote. All those in favor, please say ‘Aye.’ All those opposed, please say ‘No.’ The motion carries/fails.” Now, move onto the next New Business item.

Discussion

This category includes all non-action items. It is a good place in the agenda to place presentations or programs. Items that need a lot of discussion prior to becoming action items may be placed here. The Chair may say, “Who would like to begin the discussion on item A?”

Announcements

The Chair may make, or call upon other members of the organization to make any announcements of interest to the group. “Are there any announcements?”

Adjournment

When the agenda is completed, the Chair says: “If there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned.”

SAMPLE AGENDA

**Santa Rosa Junior College
Associated Students Government
Agenda
April 5, 2008**

I. Call to Order

- II. Roll Call
- III. Reading & Approval of Agenda
- IV. Reading & Approval of Minutes
- V. Public Comments
- VI. Reports of Officers/Advisor/Committees
 - A. President (Obama)
 - B. Vice-President (Gore)
 - C. Advisor (Bush)
- VII. Appointments/Disappointments
 - A. A motion will come forward to appoint Jack Black to the Constitution Committee.
- VII. Old Business
 - A. A motion will come forward to approve the recommended changes to the Election Code. (m/s/)*
- VIII. New Business
 - A. A motion will come forward to approve and allocate funds for the Fall Service Project
 - B. A motion will come forward to allocate funds for the Fall Flea Market
- IX. Discussion
 - A. Fall Awards Banquet
 - B. Brittney Spears, City Mayor's Office
- X. Announcements
- XI. Adjournment

*The 'm' stands for moved and the 's' stands for seconded. This is to remind the organization where they left off at the last meeting.

Using the Agenda

Of course, simply putting topics on a list will not make your meetings more productive. Keep these points in mind as you draw up and use an agenda:

- 1) Be realistic about the amount of time each topic will take. Avoid an overcrowded agenda. If choices must be made, leave more time for the more important issues.
- 2) Take up the less complicated topics first, leaving time at the end for the more complex issues.
- 3) Familiarize yourself with the rules of parliamentary procedure and use them as a guide to meeting management.
- 4) Stick to the agenda. During the meeting, the agenda is followed unless two-thirds of those at the meeting wish to change it (Suspend the Rules).

- 5) Introduce each agenda topic with a word about why it is on the agenda (i.e., information only, discussion or a vote). If appropriate, suggest a time limit for the topic.
- 6) Allow a full discussion of each topic. People have a right to continue to debate an issue until they are finished or until two-thirds of those present agree to close debate and move on.
- 7) Close discussion of each topic with plans for future action.

Using an agenda at your meeting may not solve all of your problems, but an agenda does give a meeting direction and purpose. You may choose to be less structured than the format presented here, but some structure is critical in seeing your organization ‘takes care of business.’ Members are then able to leave a meeting feeling they have accomplished their work and have contributed to the welfare of the organization.

THE BASICS OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Parliamentary Law

According to *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* by Alice Sturgis (2001),

“Parliamentary law is the code of rules and ethics for working together in groups. It has evolved through centuries out of the experience of individuals working together for a common purpose. It provides the means of translating beliefs and ideas into effective group action. It is logic and common sense crystallized into law, and is as much a part of the body of the law as is civil or criminal procedures. The rules of parliamentary procedure are found both in common law and in statutory law.

The common law of parliamentary procedure is the body of principles, rules, and usages that has developed from court decisions on parliamentary questions, and is based on reason and long observance. The common law of parliamentary procedure applies in all parliamentary situations except where a statutory law governs.

The statutory law of procedure consists of statutes, or law, relating to procedures that have been enacted by federal, state, or local legislative bodies. These rules of parliamentary procedures apply only to the particular organizations covered by the law.

Parliamentary procedure is easy to learn, because it is essentially fairness and common sense. It gives confidence and power to those who master it, and it enables members and organizations to present, consider, and carry out their ideas with efficiency and harmony.

It is true that parliamentary law can be used to obstruct the will of the majority as well as to implement it – but this can happen only when a majority of the members are ignorant of their parliamentary rights.”

Who Must Observe Parliamentary Law?

Sturgis again says, “Deliberative bodies, such as business, cultural, religious, social, fraternal, professional, educational, labor, civic, scientific, medical, and governmental organizations, are subject to the principles of common parliamentary law. All profit and nonprofit corporations and association and the boards, councils, commissions, and committees of government must observe parliamentary law.

International and national parliaments, congresses, and state legislatures have developed complete sets of special rules to meet their own specialized needs, and most of these rules differ sharply from those of common parliamentary law. Therefore, these bodies are not subject to common parliamentary law.”

7 Fundamental Principles of Parliamentary Law

Taken from Sturgis (pp. 7-10, 2001).

1) The Purpose of Parliamentary Law

The purpose of parliamentary procedure is to facilitate the transaction of business and to promote cooperation and harmony. The philosophy of parliamentary law is constructive – to make it easier for people to work together effectively and to help organizations and members accomplish their purposes.

Parliamentary procedure should not be used to awe, entangle, or confuse the uninitiated. Technical rules should be used only to the extent necessary to observe the law, to expedite business, to avoid confusion, and to protect the rights of members.

Two basic procedural rules have developed to assure that the simplest and most direct procedure for accomplishing a purpose is observed. First, motions have a definite order of precedence, each motion having a fixed rank for its introduction and its consideration. Second, only one motion may be considered at a time.

2) Equality of Rights

All members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations. Every member has an equal right to propose motions, speak, ask questions, nominate, be a candidate for office, vote, or exercise any other privilege of a member. Every member also has equal obligations.

The presiding officer should be strictly impartial and should act promptly to protect the equality of members in the exercise of their rights and privileges.

3) Majority Decision

The majority vote decides. The ultimate authority of an organization is vested in a majority of its members. This is a fundamental concept of democracy.

A primary purpose of parliamentary procedure is to determine the will of the majority and see that it is carried out. By the act of joining a group, a member agrees to be governed by the vote of its majority. Until the vote on a question is announced, every member has an equal right to voice opposition or approval and to seek to persuade others. After the vote is announced, the decision of the majority becomes the decision of every member of the organization. It is the duty of every member to accept and to abide by this decision.

When the members of an organization select officers, boards, or committees, and delegate authority to them, this selection and delegation should be by the democratic process of majority vote.

4) Minority Rights

The rights of the minority must be protected. Democratic organizations always protect certain basic rights belonging to all members. The right to present proposals, to be heard, and to oppose proposals are valued rights of all members, although the ultimate authority of decision rests with a majority, except when a higher vote is required. The members who are in the minority on a question are entitled to the same consideration and respect as members who are in the majority.

The minority of today is frequently the majority of tomorrow. A member of the majority on one question may be in the minority on the next. The protection of the rights of all members, minority and majority alike, should be the concern of every member.

The rights of absentees also must be protected.

5) The Right of Discussion

Full and free discussion of every proposition presented for decision is an established right of member. Each member of the assembly has the right to speak freely without interruption or interference provided that the rules are observed. The right of members to “have their say,” or to “have their day in court,” is as important as their right to vote.

6) The Right to Information

Every member has the right to know the meaning of the question before the assembly and what its effect will be. The presiding officer should keep the pending motion clearly before the assembly at all times and, when necessary, should explain it or call on some member to do so. Any motion and its effect should be explained if there are members who do not understand it. Members have the right to request information on any motion they do not understand so that they may vote intelligently.

7) Fairness and Good Faith

All meetings must be characterized by fairness and by good faith. Trickery, overemphasis on minor technicalities, dilatory tactics, indulgence in personalities, and railroading threaten the spirit and practice of fairness and good faith. If a meeting is characterized by fairness and good faith, a minor procedural error will not invalidate an action that has been taken by an organization. But fraud, unfairness, or absence of good faith may cause a court to hold any action invalid.

Parliamentary strategy is the art of using legitimately the parliamentary principles, rules, and motions to support or defeat a proposal. It includes, for example, such important factors as timing, wording of proposals, choice of supporters, selection of arguments, and manipulation of proposals by other motions. Strategy, ethically used, is constructive; however, if it involves deceit, fraud, misrepresentation, intimidation, railroading, or denial of the rights of members, it is destructive and actually illegal.

In 1776 John Hatsell, the famous British parliamentarian wrote, “Motives ought to outweigh objections of form.” The interpretations of the courts make it clear that the intent and overall good faith of the group are of more importance than the particular detail of procedure used in a given instance. The

effectiveness and, in fact, often the existence of an organization are destroyed if its officers or members condone unfairness or lack of good faith.

Motions

A motion is a proposal that the assembly TAKE A STAND or TAKE ACTION ON SOME ISSUE.

Members can:

1. Present Motions
(Make a proposal: “I move that...”.)
2. Second Motions
(Express support for the intent of another member’s motion: “I second that motion.”)
3. Debate/Discuss Motions
(Give opinions on motions.)
4. Vote on Motions
(Make a decision.)

There Are Four General Types of Motions:

(See Attachments: Principal Rules Governing Motions; The Chief Purposes of Motions; Changing Motions Already Voted On)

1.) Main Motions

Introduce subjects to the assembly for its consideration. They cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly. They yield to privileged, subsidiary and incidental motions.

- A. Main Motions: “I move that we purchase...”
- B. Restorative Main Motions: Reconsider; Rescind; Resume Consideration

2.) Subsidiary Motions

Change or affect how the main motion is handled (they are voted on before the main motion).

- A. Postpone Temporarily (Table):
- B. Postpone to a Certain Time:
- C. Amend: “I move to amend the motion to read...” (hostile and germane)
- D. Close Debate:
- E. Limit Debate:
- F. Refer to a Committee:

3.) Privileged Motions

These are the most urgent. They concern special or important matters not relating to pending business.

- A. Question of Privilege:
- B. Recess:
- C. Adjourn: “I move that we adjourn...”

4.) Incidental Motions

Are questions of procedure that arise out of other motions. They must be considered before the other motion.

- A. Appeal from Decision of the Chair:
- B. Suspend Rules:
- C. Consider Informally:

- D. Point of Order: “Point of order. We do not have quorum.”
- E. Parliamentary Inquiry:
- F. Withdraw a Motion:
- G. Division of Question: Separate one main motion to 2
- H. Division of Assembly: count by rising

Steps on How to Conduct Business

Agenda Item

Identify the agenda items and zero in on what is being discussed. At this point, the Chair should explain the situation but should not allow discussion to take place.

Make a Motion

A motion should be made to focus in on the subject at hand. The correct phrase in making a motion is to begin by saying: “I move that...”

Second the Motion

The motion is seconded to ensure there is more than one person interested in pursuing the motion made. To second a motion, the person could simply say “second” or “I second that motion.” If the Chair does not hear a second he/she should call for one by saying, “Do I hear a second to this motion?” After a motion is made and seconded, the Chair should then repeat the motion as clarification for the group.

Discussion

After a motion is made, seconded and restated; there is discussion germane to the motion on the floor. Both the pros and cons of the motion should be stated.

Vote

The vote on the motion should be taken. A vote can be taken by any of the following methods:

- by voice
- by hand raising
- by ballot

Whatever method is used, this method should be used the majority of the time. The method of counting votes should be consistent.

Amendments

Sometimes, after a motion is made and seconded, someone may want to modify the motion. This can be done by making an amendment to the motion. An amendment to the motion can be made by adding words or striking out words. An amendment, like a motion, needs a second. **Up to two amendments can be made on any motion.** Whenever an amendment is made, the last amendment made is voted on first, working your way back to the original motion. Voting must be done on the amendment to the amendment first, then the amendment and finally, the original motion.

Postponing Temporarily or to a Certain Time

Sometimes there will be an issue on the agenda the group may not want to deal with at that particular moment or meeting. Delaying an item can be done in one of the following ways:

To Postpone Temporarily (Table): A motion can be made ‘Postpone Temporarily’ the issue. Tabling an issue means the issue will not be discussed again until someone makes a motion to ‘Resume Consideration of (the issues)’ (or to discuss the issue again).

To Postpone to a Certain Time: A motion can be made to ‘Postpone to a Certain Time’ the issue. When the period of time stated in the motion arrives, the item is automatically placed on the agenda again for discussion. No motion is necessary to re-open the issue.

In Any Case, Be Considerate

Whether or not you become proficient in using and understanding parliamentary procedure, everyone can be a considerate member of the group by doing the following:

- Raise your hand to be recognized to speak.
- Speak one at a time.
- Listen to whoever is speaking. Don’t carry on your own personal conversation.
- Be a good listener and try not to repeat any point which has already been made.

Some Questions Relating to Motions

Is it in order?

Your motion must relate to the business at hand and be presented at the right time. It must not be obstructive, frivolous or against the bylaws. To avoid confusion, we request all motions be made in the positive context so that people will know what they are specifically voting on.

Do I need a Second?

Usually, yes. A second indicates another member would like to consider the motion. It prevents spending time on a question which only interests one person.

May I interrupt the speaker?

Some motions are so important that the speaker may be interrupted to make them. The original speaker regains the floor after the interruption has been attended to.

Is it debatable?

Parliamentary procedure guards the right to free and full debate on most motions. However, some privileged and incidental motions are not debatable.

Can it be amended?

Striking out, inserting or both can alter some motions at one. Amendments must relate to the subject as presented in the main motion. Amendments must be germane but can be hostile.

Can it be reconsidered?

Some motions can be debated again and re-voted on to give members a chance to change their minds.

What vote is needed?

Most require only a majority vote, but motions concerning the right of the assembly or its members need a two thirds vote to be adopted.