

Parliamentary Procedure



Parliamentary procedure is used to facilitate the speedy and effective completion of business. The degree of parliamentary procedure used will depend on the number of people involved. The more people there are, the more rules you will need to maintain control.

Introduction of Business

The business of the organization is introduced at meetings by means of main motions, committee reports or communications.

Main Motions

A motion is a proposal that requires taking action or taking a stand. The steps leading to the adoption of a main motion are:

1. Obtaining the floor
2. Making the motion
3. Seconding the motion
4. Stating the motion
5. Discussing the motion
6. Putting the question
7. Voting

To obtain the floor: rise, address the chair (the presiding officer), who recognizes the member by name. Then, and NOT before, the member states the motion. If several members rise at the same time, the chair decides which rose first and is thus entitled to the floor.

To make the motion say, "I move that ____." A motion MUST always be in the affirmative form.

To second the motion say, "I second the motion." It is not necessary to rise or be recognized by the chair.

Discussion

Before allowing any discussion of the main motion, the chair must say, "It is moved and seconded that we...". Until the chair has stated the motion, the maker can withdraw or alter it without asking the consent of the chair. The chair then asks, "Is there any discussion?" The mover has the right to speak first, and should be recognized by the chair, even if another member has risen first and addressed the chair.

Speakers must address their remarks to the chair. If members desire to ask questions of the speaker, they rise and without waiting to be recognized say, "May I ask a question?" In cases of emergency a member rises and without being recognized and says, "I rise to a question of privilege." It may be to have better ventilation or to have disorder checked. When the questions of privilege have been settled, the member who was interrupted continues the discussion. The discussion must be relevant to the motion.

Voting

The discussion is closed by the chair, who asks, "Are you ready for the question?" The motion is then restated and if there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.

The chair calls for the vote saying, "All those in favor of the motion say 'Aye' or 'stand' or 'raise the hands.'" If the meeting seems closely divided in opinion, the chair should call for a rising vote. After those in favor of the motion have voted, the chair must call for the negative vote. "Those opposed...", even though the vote may be unanimous.

If the vote is by "Ayes" or "Nays," and the chair is not sure of the result, there should be a second vote, asking

for a rising vote. The members must remain standing or hold their hands raised until the chair announces he or she is completed. The result is announced by saying, "The motion is carried (or lost)".

A vote by ballot is a secret, written vote. Unless called for in the By-laws, it can be ordered by "general consent". That is, without waiting for a motion the chair says, "If there is no objection, the vote will be by ballot". If there is any objection, the chair may ask for a motion, or a member may make such a motion. The motion to vote by ballot cannot be debated, and as soon as the motion is made and seconded, the chair must call for the vote. This motion should be used in all cases where the question is such that members would hesitate to express their viewpoints openly.

The chair does not vote, except in case of a tie, or when the vote is by ballot. While there can only be one main motion before the meeting at a time, we see that there can be two motions, a main motion, and the motion to vote by ballot.

There are several "Secondary" motions that can be made when a motion is before the meeting: vote by ballot, amendments, motion to refer to a committee, and the motion to adjourn.

Amendments

Any motion can be amended by:

1. Adding or inserting
2. Striking out
3. Striking out and inserting

A pending question is one that has been stated by the chair, though not yet voted on. An immediately pending question is the one last stated by the chair. A vote on the immediately pending question must always be taken before the vote on the pending question.

The amendment to a motion is the immediately pending question, and must be discussed and put to a vote before any discussion of, or action on, the main motion. Discussion must relate to the amendment. When the chair is ready to call for the question, the vote on the amendment is called. If the amendment is carried, there follows a discussion of, and a vote on, the amended motion. If the amendment is lost, another amendment may be offered, or there follows a discussion of and a vote on the main motion. A friendly amendment, where a vote is not necessary, may be made if the maker of the main motion agrees to it.

Postponement

If a main motion needs to be studied more carefully than is possible in the meeting, the motion to commit should be made. "I move to refer the motion to a committee". This motion can be debated, but the discussion must refer strictly to the desirability of having the motion considered by a committee. The motion can be amended.

The motion to commit may take the complete form: "I move that the question be referred to a committee of five, to be appointed by the chair, with instructions to report at the next meeting". The member making the motion to commit is usually made chair of the committee.

Committee Reports

The Committee Reports may be placed on file if it merely gives information to the meeting. If it contains specific recommendations, the committee chair should move that it be adopted as soon as it is read.