

Activity 6

MEETINGS BY THE “RULES”:
A GUIDE TO PARLIAMENTARY
PROCEDURE

Formal meetings, such as the Ryan White CARE Act planning body meetings, are usually organized by a set of procedures called Robert’s Rules of Order. These “rules” establish the ways that things get accomplished at meetings. They ensure that meetings are conducted in an organized way.

Robert’s Rules of Order are based on three important principles, or “rights”:

- ❖ the right of the majority to rule
- ❖ the right of the minority to be heard, and
- ❖ the right of the individual to have a voice in the decision-making process

Robert’s Rules of Order are sometimes referred to as *parliamentary procedure*.³ Under this system, business is conducted by acting on **motions**—ideas or actions that committee members suggest.

IN THEIR
OWN WORDS...

“The structure of the meeting can make it hard to keep consumers involved.”

³ In this section we explain the process by which planning groups make decisions using Roberts Rules of Order. We decided to use a light-hearted example – serving ice cream and cake at meetings – because we wanted to emphasize the **process** of making motions and amendments, rather than the content of the subject under discussion.

This is what happens:

A member of the planning group introduces a main **motion**.

- *“I move that we have ice cream and cake at all meetings.”*

Another member then **seconds the motion** (supports it).

- *“I second the motion.”*

The person in charge of the meeting then **restates the motion**.

- *“It has been moved that ice cream and cake be served at meetings.”*

And opens the meeting to **discussion** about the motion.

- *“Is there any discussion?”*

Discussion takes place.

- *“I think it is a really good idea. I’m always hungry when I come to these meetings, and it would be great to have ice cream and cake to look forward to.”*
- *“I’m not so sure about this. Ice cream and cake are not healthy foods. I think we should have carrot sticks instead.”*
- *“I’m in favor of the motion. These meetings are so long. It would be great to have a break and have ice cream and cake at each one.”*

After a while, when discussion is finished, or when it is time to stop the discussion, the person in charge of the meeting asks if participants are ready to **vote** on the motion. If there is general agreement (consensus), the person in charge restates the motion and takes a vote.

- *“All those in favor of the motion?”* (People can vote with their voices or by raising their hands.)
- *“All those opposed?”* (Again, people can vote verbally or by raising their hands.)

In the case of the ice cream and cake motion, all the members of the committee voted “Aye!” They were in favor of the motion and it passed unanimously! In the future, ice cream and cake will be served at meetings.

Sometimes, though, the process is not so simple. For example:

During discussion one committee member was concerned about the expense of having refreshments served at meetings.

- *“I don’t think our committee can afford to have ice cream and cake at every meeting. I would like to **amend** the motion to have ice cream and cake at every other meeting.”*

There are various rules about whether the original motion can be **amended** (changed).

- ❖ Sometimes the person who made the original motion is asked to accept a **friendly amendment**. In this case, to change the wording of the original motion to have ice cream and cake at every other meeting.
- ❖ In more formal meetings, the person in charge may ask that the original motion be withdrawn, and then restated to include the proposed changes.
- ❖ Or the person in charge may require that the original motion be voted on. If it is defeated, a new motion, which includes the proposed changes, can then be introduced.

In our example, the **friendly amendment** was not accepted. The original motion was put to a vote, and it passed. Ice cream and cake will be served at all meetings!

Here’s another example:

There were many concerns about the cost of ice cream and cake at committee meetings. Discussion continued. Finally, someone suggested that the matter be **referred to a sub-committee**.

- *“We have so many questions about this issue. I propose that we **refer** the motion to a sub-committee to find out exactly what it will cost.”*

If there is general agreement, the person in charge of the meeting refers the motion to a subcommittee.

- *“Please gather the necessary information and report back to the full committee at next month’s meeting.”*

And one more example:

Discussion about ice cream and cake dragged on and on and on. Some people were concerned about the cost; others worried about the nutritional value. Many, however, thought it was a splendid idea. No one could agree. After quite a long time, someone acts to end the discussion and require the members to vote on the **motion** to have ice cream and cake at all meetings.

- *“I move the previous question.”* (make a motion to end discussion and take a vote)

Someone else supports the idea to end discussion.

- *“I second the motion.”*

The person in charge then asks for a vote. Two-thirds of the people vote to end the discussion. They then take a vote on the original motion. And, finally, it is agreed that ice cream and cake will be served at all meetings!

Remember, Robert’s Rules of Order are intended to provide a fair decision-making structure. They are not meant to stop important discussions or to take up lots of valuable time. They are meant to help groups work toward consensus in the fairest and most efficient way possible. Table 7 presents the terms you are most likely to hear during meetings. Keep it as a handy reference on parliamentary procedure.

Table 7 Robert’s Rules of Order: A Glossary of Terms

Motion — an idea or action that a planning body member suggests or recommends

Second the motion — support a suggestion or recommendation that has been made

Amend the motion — offer a change or addition to a motion

Amendment — a proposed change to a motion

Refer the motion — ask a subcommittee to gather additional information about a motion

Postpone the motion — delay a motion until a stated future time

Move the question — bring an end to discussion and take a vote on the motion

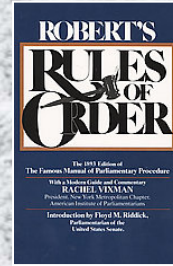
Point of order — suggest that a “rule” of parliamentary procedure has been broken

WHO IS ROBERT?

Henry Martyn Robert was an officer in the United States Army. One day, without any warning, he was asked to run a meeting at his church. It was a disaster! People wouldn’t listen to each other; they wouldn’t take turns speaking. He was very embarrassed, and he vowed never to attend another meeting until he understood proper meeting procedures. He studied many books on British parliamentary procedure and in 1876 published the first edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order*.

Adapted in part from *10 Minutes to Better Board Meetings* by Norah Holmgren (1997), Planned Parenthood Federation of America

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER



Parliamentary
Procedures
for more
Productive
Meetings

Formal meetings, such as the Ryan White Planning Council and committee meetings, are usually organized by a set of procedures called Robert's Rules of Order.

These "rules" establish the ways that things get accomplished at meetings and ensure that meetings are conducted in an organized way.

Robert's Rules of Order are sometimes referred to as parliamentary procedure. Under this system, business is conducted by acting on motions - ideas or actions that committee members suggest.



Robert's Rules of Order are based on three important principles, or "rights":

- ❖ **the right of the majority to rule,**
- ❖ **the right of the minority to be heard, and**
- ❖ **the right of the individual to have a voice in the decision-making process.**



When a motion is made, the Chair will say "So moved" and call for someone to SECOND the motion. The chair will ask for discussion of the motion. Once discussion is complete, the motion is voted on.

If the motion passes, the chair will say "Motion Carried"; if it does not, "Motion Failed".

Going Through the Motions...



To Introduce a Motion you should say:
“I move that...”

EXAMPLE:

To adopt the Agenda for a meeting you would say:

“I move to adopt the agenda”.



To Introduce a Motion From a Committee say:
“The (name of committee) moves that...”

EXAMPLE:

To present a committee work product such as the Needs Assessment for endorsement by the full Council you would say:

“The Comprehensive HIV Planning Committee moves to endorse the 2023 Needs Assessment”.



To Amend a Motion you would say:

“I move to amend the motion by... ”

EXAMPLE:

To add a caveat to a motion you would say:

*“I move to amend the motion by adding
‘with the understanding that it will go
directly to Council for approval’.”*



When a motion is made, the Chair will say “So moved”
and call for someone to **SECOND** the motion.
The chair will ask for discussion of the motion.
Once discussion is complete, the motion is voted on.

If the motion passes, the chair will say “Motion
Carried”; if it does not, “Motion Failed”.

Get Additional Information...



To Request Information (or clarification) before voting on a motion you would say:

“Point of Information”

EXAMPLE:

To better understand the rationale behind a motion you would say:

“Point of information” The chair will then recognize you and call on you to ask your question.



To ask to Have Something Studied Further:

“I move to refer the motion to (name of committee)... ”

EXAMPLE:

If you want the Quality Improvement Committee to present documentation regarding changes made to a service category during How To Best Meet the Need you would say:

“I move to refer the motion to the Quality Improvement Committee for further study”

***Slow the Process
or Stop it...***



To Postpone Consideration of something you would say:

“I move to postpone the motion to...”

EXAMPLE:

To postpone the vote on a motion you would say:

“I move to postpone the motion to give the committee time to gather additional information on this issue”.



To Suspend Further Consideration of something you would say:

“I move we table this matter”

EXAMPLE:

To suspend further consideration of an issue you would say:

“I move we table this matter due to lack of sound information on this issue”.



To End Debate on an item you would say:
“I move to call for the question”

EXAMPLE:

To end a lengthy discussion and vote on an issue you would say:

“I move to call for the question”.



To Consider Something out of the Scheduled Order you would say:

“I move to suspend the rules and consider... ”

EXAMPLE:

To discuss an item earlier in the meeting than it is listed on the agenda you would say:

“I move to suspend the rules and consider the report from the Quality Improvement Committee before the one from the Steering Committee”.

***Hey, you can't
do that...***



To Object to Considering Something that is Undiplomatic or Improper you would say:

“I object to the consideration of the question...”

EXAMPLE:

A Priority & Allocations committee member is asking questions about Appletop Agency's use of Ryan White funds, you would say:

“I object to the consideration of the question; the Council is not allowed to discuss agency business”.



To Object to a Procedure you would say:

“Point of Order”

EXAMPLE:

A motion was made and seconded but a rather heated debate ensues regarding an earlier motion that failed, you would say:

“Point of Order”. The chair will then recognize and call on you to state what you are objecting to.

Not necessarily the final word...



To Vote on a Ruling by the Chair you would say:
“I appeal the Chair’s decision”

EXAMPLE:
In the interest of time the chair of the Operations Committee decides to cancel public comment for today’s meeting, you would say:
“I appeal the Chair’s decision” and the committee will vote on whether or not to let the decision stand.



To Adjourn the Meeting you would say:
“I move we adjourn”

EXAMPLE:
Committee business is done, announcements have been made and there is nothing left to discuss:
“I move we adjourn.”
Just like the motions discussed earlier, someone will second and the Chair will call for a vote on whether or not to end the meeting. 😊

Robert's Rules of Order – Parliamentary Procedures

To Do This:	You Say This:	May you interrupt the Speaker?	Must you be Seconded?	Is the Motion Debatable?	Can the Motion be Amended?	What Vote is Needed?
Introduce a motion	I move that ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce a motion from a committee	The (name of committee) moves that...	No	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Request information	Point of information.	Yes	No	No	No	None
Have something studied further	I move to refer the motion to (name of committee) ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Suspend further consideration of something	I move we table this matter.	Yes	Yes	No	No	Majority
Postpone consideration of something	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
End debate (call for the question)	I move the previous question.	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Consider something out of the scheduled order	I move to suspend the rules and consider...	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Object to considering something undiplomatic or improper	I object to the consideration of the question.	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
Object to a procedure	Point of Order.	Yes	No	No	No	None
Ask for a vote by actual count to verify a voice vote	I call for a division of the house.	No	No	No	No	No
Vote on a ruling by the Chair	I appeal the chair's decision.	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	Majority
Complain about noise, room temperature, etc.	Point of privilege.	Yes	No	No	No	None
Recess the meeting	I move that we recess until...	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Adjourn the meeting	I move we adjourn.	No	Yes	No	No	Majority