

# Parliamentary Procedure: Efficient and Respectful Meetings

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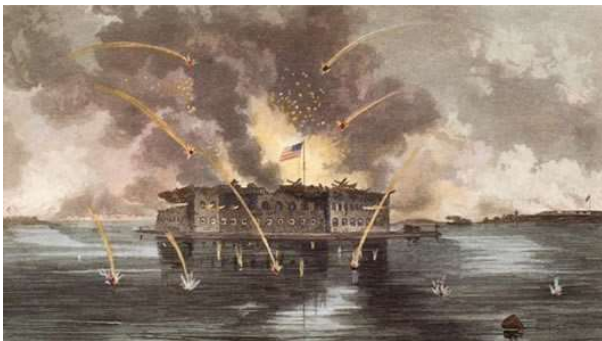
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## U.S Civil War

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Fort Sumter, SC



Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard

## New Bedford, Massachusetts



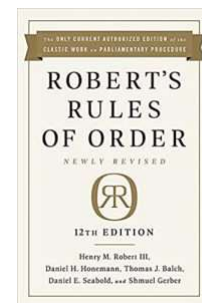
First Baptist Church



Gen. Henry M. Robert

## Parliamentary Procedure is intended to:

- Maintain decorum
- Ascertain the will of the majority
- Preserve the rights of the minority
- Facilitate the orderly transaction of business.



## The Basics

All members have the same or equal rights.

Each item presented for consideration is entitled to a full and free debate.

Only one subject (motion) may be discussed at a time.

Only one person may speak at a time.

Everyone gets a turn to speak.

The rights of the minority must be protected, but the will of the majority must prevail.

## Today's topics

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- I. Agenda
- II. Motions
- III. Debate
- IV. Enforcing the Rules

# Agenda

1. A well-organized, well-prepared agenda is one of the most crucial items in providing for orderly meetings. A systematic order of business may be the difference between haphazard wrangling and a well-run, well-timed meeting.
2. The agenda must be handled so that members are given adequate notice on items to be considered. They should get that information far enough in advance to give it appropriate study.
3. The agenda keeps everybody focused.

## *Who controls the agenda ?*

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1. The Mayor presides at all meetings of the Board of Commissioners
2. The ultimate authority for establishing an agenda rests with the Commission under their authority to adopt standing orders.
3. The Commission can establish formal rules and regulations for the preparation of the agenda and can indicate in those rules who may place items on the agenda and how they are to be placed on the agenda.

## *Who controls the agenda ?*

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1. Board of Commissioners approves the agenda.
2. A single Commissioner may call for the orders of the day. Is in order when another has the floor, even if it interrupts a person speaking.
3. Suspension of the rules.

# Motions

## Motion Procedures.

1. Commissioner is recognized
2. Commissioner makes a motion.
3. Another Commissioner seconds the motion.
4. The Mayor re-states the motion thereby formally placing it before the assembly.
5. Commissioners debate the motion.
6. The Mayor closes debate and puts the question for a vote.
7. The Mayor announces the results of the vote.

*1<sup>st</sup> - A member must be recognized before s/he can speak.*

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Before a member can speak, s/he must be recognized as having the exclusive right to be heard at that time.

The chair must recognize any member who seeks the floor while entitled to it.



## *2<sup>nd</sup> – There is no discussion without a pending motion on the floor.*

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Until a matter has been brought before the assembly in the form of a motion proposing a specific action, no debate is in order RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 4:20.

After a motion has been made, the Chair endeavors to alternate and recognize between speakers in favor of the motion and those opposed to the motion.

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## *Seconding a motion.*

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A second merely implies that the seconder agrees that the motion should come before the meeting and not that s/he necessarily favors the motion.





### *If a motion is not in order.*

The Chair states: “the motion is not in order because...” or “the motion is out of order because ....” (never “the member is out of order” or “your motion is out of order”).

### *If a motion is in order.*

The Chair re-states the motion thereby formally placing it before the assembly

## *Amendments.*

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An amendment is a motion to modify the wording and sometimes the meaning of a pending motion.

1. A motion to insert or add a word, phrase or sentence.
2. A motion to strike out a word, phrase or sentence.
3. A motion to strike out and insert a word, phrase or sentence.

## *Amendments.*

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The amendment is debated and voted on FIRST, and then the main motion as amended is debated and voted on SECOND.

The presiding officer must not only state the amendment, but how the motion will read if adopted. For example, "It is moved and seconded that \_\_\_\_\_ be inserted between the words \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. **If adopted**, the motion will be that \_\_\_\_\_."

**Adopting the amendment does not adopt the main motion.** Both the amendment and the main motion need to be voted upon separately. First the amendment is voted on, then the main motion.

## *Improper Amendments.*

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Amendments that are not germane.

Amendments that are hostile to the main motion

Amendments dealing with settled matters.

Amendments that are frivolous or absurd.

## *Competing motions or the hierarchy of motions.*

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### Undebatable motions

Fix time to which to adjourn the meeting

Adjourn

Recess

Raise a question of privilege

Call for orders of the day

Table the motion

Previous question or call the question

Limit or extend limits of debate

### Debatable motions

Postpone an item to a certain time

Refer to a committee

Amendment

Postpone indefinitely

Main motion

## *Renew a motion.*

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No motion can be renewed during the same session in which it has already been before the assembly (the settled rule).

Any motion can be renewed at any latter session.

## *Rescind or amend something previously adopted.*

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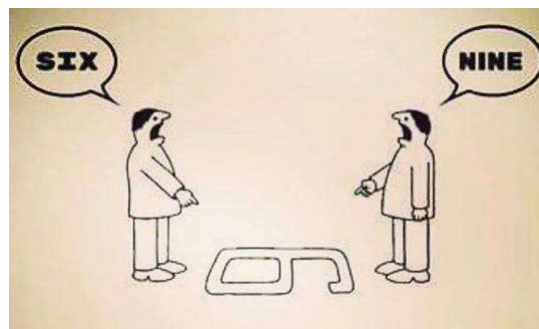
- (a) a two-thirds vote; or
- (b) a majority vote with notice; or
- (c) A vote of a majority of the entire membership

## *Reconsider a motion.*

If the motion is adopted, the original vote is cancelled. The effect is – to the extent practicable – to place before the assembly again the question on which the vote has been reconsidered, in the exact position it occupied the moment before it was voted on originally.

It can be made only by a member who voted on the prevailing side.

## Debate



## *Fundamental principle.*

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1. Each member has the right to make the maximum effort to have his or her position declared the will of the assembly.
2. to the extent that can be tolerated in the interests of the entire body.



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## *Rules of debate*

1. A member must be recognized before they can speak.
2. The maker of the motion has the right to speak first.
3. No one may speak more than twice for more than 10 minutes at a time
4. No one may speak a second time if someone new wants to speak for the first time.
5. Debate must be germane to the motion.
6. Debate can be limited by a 2/3 vote either limiting the number of times to debate, the time allowed for each debate, or the total time to be allowed for the debate of a particular motion.

## *IMPORTANT!*

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When a member has been assigned the floor and has begun to speak, s/he cannot be interrupted by another member,

### UNLESS

When a member notices that a **significant** procedural mistake has been made, s/he should call out loudly, "Point of Order." The chair then has the **duty** to rule as to whether it is correct or "well taken," or incorrect or "not well taken".



## *Rules of speaking*

1. As much as possible, the use of names should be avoided in debate.
2. Keep in mind: The measure, not the member, is the subject of debate. No impugning of member's motives.
3. Speak through the Chair.
4. Remarks must be germane. When remarks are not germane, try this useful sentence: "Members will kindly keep their comments strictly to the topic under discussion."
5. No attacks on personalities. No name calling.

## Enforcing the rules





## *Standing Rules.*

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Standing rules are set by the assembly. They are rules concerning the administration of the meeting.

Some examples of standing rules might be:

1. How long and how many times a speaker can speak.
2. The time when the meeting will adjourn.

## *Suspend the rules.*

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When a member wishes to do **something** during a meeting that it cannot do without violating one or more rules, the member may move to "suspend the rules".

The motion to suspend the rules sets aside the rule so the member may go forward with the desire action.

## *The presiding officer preserves order and decorum.*

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The Chair determines all points of order, subject to the right of any member to appeal the Chair's decision.

If an appeal is taken, the question for the commission is:

*"Shall the decision of the Mayor be sustained?"*

## *Unanimous Consent.*

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- No opposition
- Routine business
- Questions of little importance

The chair states, "If there is no objection...[or, without objection]", or s/he may ask "Is there any objection to..."

## *Slight breaches of order.*

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Rap the gavel lightly – such as (1) Speaking without being recognized, (2) addressing another member by first name, or, in a single instance, (3) failing to confine his or her remarks to the merits of the pending question

The chair raps the gavel lightly, points out the fault, and advises the member to avoid it.

The member can then continue speaking if s/he commits no further breaches.

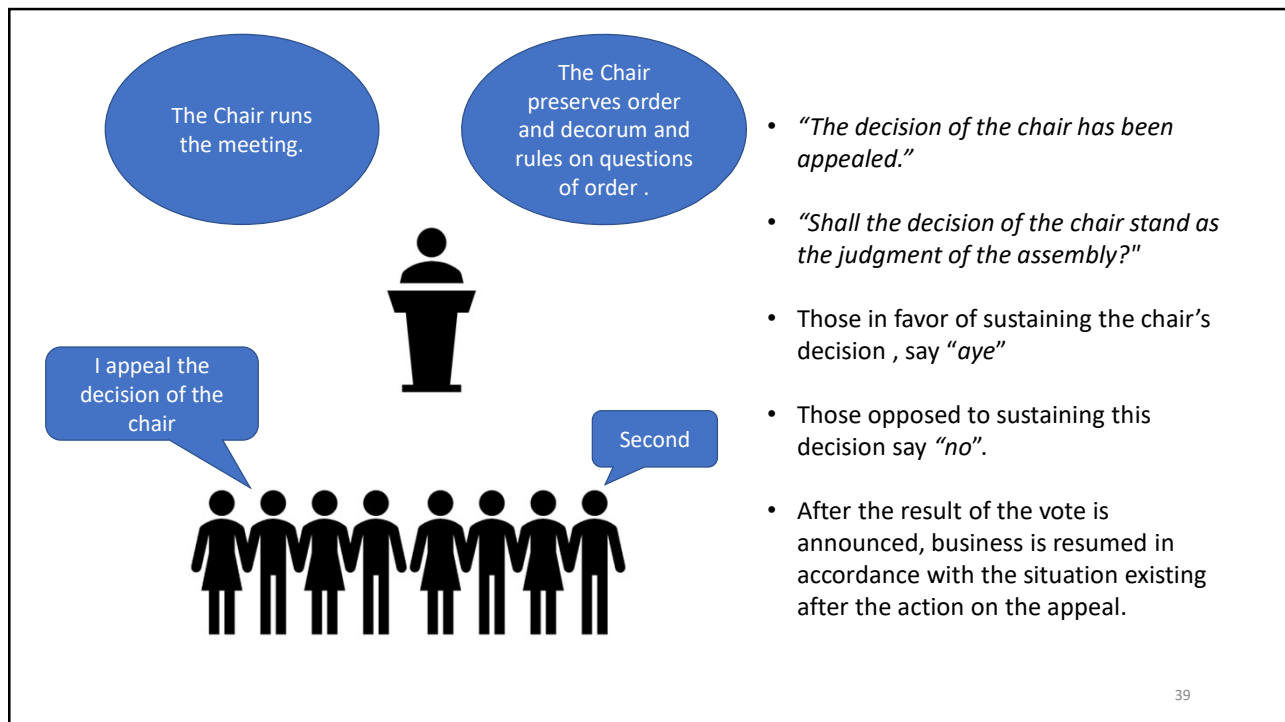
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## *More serious offenses.*

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- When a member notices a breach of order **that may do harm** if allowed to pass, s/he without waiting for recognition, immediately addresses to the Chair “Point of Order!”
- WHEN A POINT OF ORDER IS RAISED, THE CHAIR MUST STOP THE SPEAKER OR THE PROCEEDING AND RULE ON THE POINT OF ORDER.
- The Chair either sustains the point of order or overrules it.

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## *"Naming" an offender.*

Obstinate or grave offenses – after repeated warnings, the chair can "name" the offender.

Before taking such action, when it begins to appear that it may become necessary, the chair should direct the secretary to **take down objectionable or disorderly words** used by the member. The direction of the chair, and the words taken down pursuant to it, are entered in the minutes only if the chair finds it necessary to name the offender.

*Ex: "Mr. J! The chair has repeatedly directed you to refrain from offensive personal references when speaking in this meeting. Three times the chair has ordered you to be seated, and you have nevertheless attempted to continue speaking."*

## *Content of the minutes.*

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The minutes should contain mainly a record of what was done at the meeting, not what was said by the members.

A majority vote may direct the inclusion of specific additional information in the minutes of a particular meeting

## *“Naming” an offender – cont’d.*

- If the member obeys, the matter can be dropped or any member can move to order a penalty or the chair can first ask, “What penalty shall be imposed on the member?”
- The case may be sufficiently resolved by an apology or a withdrawal of objectionable statements or remarks given by the offender.
- the member may be required to leave the hall for all or part of the remainder of the meeting or until s/he is prepared to apologize.
- If a member denies having said anything improper, the words recorded by the secretary can be read, and if necessary, the assembly can decide by vote whether s/he was heard to say them.
- Censure.

## Duty of the presiding officer enforcing the rules

- Clearly point out the fault
- Suggest / offer ways to correct the fault or provide alternatives
  - A) an apology or a withdrawal of objectionable statements
  - B) take a break from speaking for a time
  - C) leave the hall for all or part of the remainder of the meeting
  - D) censure
  - E) amend the motion
  - F) reconsider the motion
  - G) renew a motion
  - H) rescind the motion
- 3 warnings – 3 opportunities to make good.
- Confer with the group if necessary - “What penalty shall be imposed on the member?”
- Discipline accordingly.

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Questions?

Thank you.

This presentation is adjourned.

