 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

## Great Citizen Advisory Meetings

Ann G. Macfarlane, Professional Registered Parliamentarian  
Jurassic Parliament

City of Mercer Island, Washington  
By videoconference  
Wednesday, March 29, 2023

1


 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Our topics

- I. Introduction
- II. Meeting discussion, Point of Order, Appeal
- III. How to do this?
- IV. Motions and Amendments
- V. Authority and role of chair, members, and staff
- VI. Citizen advisory committee pitfalls
- VII. Public hearings and public comment
- VIII. The right kind of control
- IX. Conclusion

2

 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## I. Introduction

### Why are we here?

To invigorate you to run effective meetings  
to serve your community

3


 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## After taking this training you will be able to:

1. Apply the principle that the authority of the group is more important than any single individual
2. Follow best practices for discussion.
3. Respond to disorder and difficult people.
4. Make Motions and Amendments.
5. Avoid common citizen advisory committee pitfalls.
6. Run effective public comment sessions.

4


 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Disclaimer

The material contained in this presentation is based upon the principles and practices of parliamentary procedure. I am not an attorney and nothing in this presentation constitutes legal advice.

5

 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Call meeting to order

- Sit in the chair reserved for the person running the meeting.
- Rap the gavel lightly one time (if you have one) and announce, "This meeting of the Bonny Dino Planning Commission is called to order."
- Ask the clerk to take the roll.
- Announce that a quorum is present (or not).

6

## Quorum

- The “quorum” is the minimum number of voting members who must be present for business to be done.
- For local governments, usually it is a majority (more than half) of the fixed positions in the body.
- “Quorum” is different from “votes cast.”
- If you lose your quorum, you can't do business.

7

7

## Serial meeting

- Local government bodies must not create a “walking quorum” or a “serial meeting.”
- When members of the body talk or email with each other outside of meetings, such that a quorum is discussing the body's business, the Open Public Meetings Act has been violated.
- You can talk to other people, as long as the number is less than a quorum.

8

8

## Agenda

- Prepared by leadership, but within control of the body (subject to notice requirements, of course).
- Robert's Rules says that if you follow the standard “Order of Business,” you don't need to vote to adopt an agenda.
- However, many bodies do vote. Takes a majority vote to adopt, and a 2/3 vote to change later in the meeting.

9

9

## *Simplified* Standard Order of Business

- Approval of minutes
- Officers' remarks and reports
- Committee reports
- Unfinished business (not “old” business)
- New business (if your body includes this)

10

10

## Regular agenda/consent agenda

**Question:** *What's the difference between the regular agenda and the consent agenda?*

- The regular agenda lays out the items to be taken up at a particular meeting.
- It follows your “Order of Business.”
- The agenda may include, as a single item, “Adoption of the consent agenda.”

11

11

## Consent agenda

- A “consent agenda” lists items that are expected not to be controversial.
- If any member requests that an item be removed from the consent agenda, it is done on request.
- The item is then placed at its proper place in the regular agenda.
- Some bodies create a line item to process removed items right after the consent agenda.

12

12

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Consent agenda

- The consent agenda CANNOT BE DISCUSSED OR DEBATED.
- It is adopted with a single vote.
- The minutes must list all the items that were approved.

13

13

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Purpose of minutes

According to Robert's Rules, the purpose of minutes is:

**to record the actions taken by the body.**

Minutes record what is DONE, not what is SAID.

14

14

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Meeting minutes

- We recommend "action" or "summary" minutes, not detailed minutes.
- Should record what is done, not what is said.
- For certain topics such as conflict of interest, main points made should be included.
- Do not include "he said, she said." This is a waste of time and effort and makes minutes less useful.

15

15

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Detailed minutes are a bad idea because...


- It violates the fundamental purpose of minutes.
- It can create liability for the organization or individuals in case of a lawsuit.
- It tends to personalize and politicize the discussion.
- It can intimidate participants, preventing them from speaking freely.
- It absorbs too much staff time and takes the group's time.
- It makes it harder to find the actions taken.

16

16

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Guidelines for Meeting Minutes in Local Government



Meeting minutes recording the actions taken by your council or board are a fundamental part of the meeting process. These are our guidelines for local government meeting minutes. They refer to ordinary business and work or study meetings of councils, boards and committees. Public hearings are governed by different rules.

▶ WHAT KIND OF MINUTES?

17

17

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## II. Meeting discussion, Point of Order, and Appeal

18

18

## Principle of Equality

All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations.

19

19

## Key Point

Discussion in committee and commission meetings IS NOT A CONVERSATION. It has its own rules.

20

20

## Fundamental guideline

**No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.**

21

21

## Why don't we follow this?

- Committees and commissions tend to discuss their affairs in conversational mode.
- In conversations, dominant people tend to dominate.
- Agreeable people tend to let them.
- Must have a structure to make sure that everyone has an equal chance to speak.
- This is both fair and efficient.

22

22

## Equity and inclusion

- This rule is also the best way to ensure that each person has an equal voice.
- The system is formal but inclusive.
- It will make for robust discussion and advance your equity goals.

23

23



Point of Order  
*flying dinosaur*

24

## Point of Order

*flying dinosaur*

- When ANOTHER MEMBER breaks one of the rules, a member may make a POINT OF ORDER.
- Chair rules on the point.

25

25

## Point of Order

- A motion claiming that a procedural mistake has been made.
- According to Robert, can be made only by a member.
- We recommend that key staff be authorized also.
- Public may not raise a Point of Order.

26

26

## Process Point of Order

1. Member: *Point of Order!*
2. Chair: *State your point.*
3. Member: *That remark breaks our rules of decorum.*
4. Chair: *The point is well taken. Members may not use this term.*

27

27

## Point of Order

- You can make this at any time, except during voting.
- Do not have to be recognized.
- May interrupt a speaker if necessary.
- Must be timely – made at the time of the offense.

28

28

## Language tip

- Use the “third person” to keep things neutral and lessen conflict.
- Note that the chair states the general rule.
- The chair is speaking on behalf of the rules of procedure.
- DO NOT SAY “You are out of order” or “You made a mistake.”

29

29

## If someone is confused...

- If a member has trouble explaining what the Point of Order is about, you can ask:

*What rule has been broken?*

30

30

## When in doubt, ask the group!

- Chair can always ask the group to decide if a Point of Order is correct (“well-taken”) or not.

31

31

- Member A: *That statement is just a bunch of baloney!*
- Member B: *Point of Order!*
- Chair: *State your point.*
- Member B: *The word “baloney” is insulting!*
- Chair: *The chair is in doubt and will ask the group to decide.*

32

32

- Chair: *All those who believe that the word “baloney” is insulting, say “aye.”*
- Members in favor: *Aye!*
- Chair: *All those who believe it is not insulting, say “no!”*
- Members opposed: *No!*
- Chair: *The ayes have it, the word baloney is insulting and may not be used, OR The noes have it, the word baloney is not insulting and may be used.*

33

33

## Chair doesn't have to say “Point of Order”

- The chair has the duty of maintaining order and decorum, so doesn't need to say “Point of Order.”
- Just needs to take appropriate action.

34

34

## Chair subject to same rules

- If the chair breaks one of the rules, a member may raise a Point of Order.
- The chair rules on own behavior, which seems odd, but is the way the system works.

35

35

## Why make a Point of Order?

- Make a Point of Order if a rule has been broken.
- DO NOT make a Point of Order because you think someone has made a factual mistake, or you disagree with what they said.
- Speak about that when it is your turn to discuss.

36

36

## No further discussion

- Once the chair has ruled on a Point of Order, the only allowable form of discussion is to appeal the ruling.

37

37

## Appeal

The most important motion in all of Robert's Rules – and the least known!

38

38

## Chair's rulings can be appealed

- The CHAIR enforces order and decorum.
- The GROUP is the final authority.
- Any TWO MEMBERS can appeal a ruling of the chair (one member appeals and one seconds the appeal).
- EXCEPTION: If the ruling is a matter on which there cannot be two reasonable interpretations, the ruling cannot be appealed.

39

39

## Appealing a ruling of the chair

- Member A: *Chair, Point of Order.*
- Chair: *State your point.*
- Member A: *My esteemed colleague has used the term "cream-faced loon" in referring to the Secretary. According to Robert's Rules, insults are not allowed in debate.*
- Chair: *The point is well taken. Members will refrain from using improper language.*

40

40

- Member B: *Chair, I appeal the Point of Order on the grounds that "cream-faced loon" is a literary reference and not an insult.*
- Member C: *Second!*
- Chair: *Very well, since the ruling of the chair has been appealed, the group will decide. Note that appeals pertaining to proper use of language and decorum may not be debated.*

41

41

- Chair: *All those who believe that "cream-faced loon" is an insult, say "aye."*
- Members who agree: *Aye!*
- Chair: *All those who believe that this phrase is not an insult, say "no."*
- Members who believe it is not an insult: *No!*

42

42

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

- Chair: *The ayes have it, the ruling of the chair is sustained, and members may not use this term, OR The noes have it, the ruling of the chair is not sustained, and members may use this term.*
- Clerk, please record this outcome in the minutes.

Note that the vote is on WHETHER THE RULING OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE SUSTAINED.

43

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

### Further points

- Point of Order is made by one member, but an Appeal needs a second.
- Point of Order and Appeal are processed immediately. No other business can take place until they are dealt with.
- Points of Order and Appeals do not count against a member's turn to speak in debate.

44

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Point of Order and Appeal are the heart of democracy



In our view, the motions Point of Order and Appeal are the heart of our democracy. They provide the mechanism to stop a dictatorial chair who's acting like a "boss." They are essential for every level

45

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

### III. How to do this?

- Seek recognition before speaking.
- No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.
- No interrupting (in general)
- No sidebar conversations.
- Set time limits.
- Courtesy and respect are required.

46

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

### Seeking recognition

- Raise your hand and wait to speak until the presider (chair) calls your name, nods at you, or gives some other sign that you have permission to speak (you "have the floor")
- Online, you can use the "raise hand" function or raise your physical hand.
- For Zoom on the telephone, press \*9 (star nine).

47

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

### Duty to remain silent

- When you have not been recognized, you have a duty to remain silent.
- The exception is a Point of Order when essential.

48



**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Rights and Responsibilities of the Member



Weldon L. Merrin, FRP, CPP, has graciously authorized Jurassic Parliament to publish this listing of the rights and responsibilities of ordinary members of an organization.

Please note that neither the list of member rights nor the list of member responsibilities is intended to be exhaustive. In addition, neither the rights nor the responsibilities are necessarily absolute in every instance. For example, the right to debate may be cut off or limited by motions for the Previous Question or to Limit Debate. And, while a member should not vote on a matter of direct personal interest, under Robert's

49

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Fundamental guideline

**No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.**

50

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## NO CROSS TALK BETWEEN MEMBERS!

51

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## HOW to do this?

- Chair can keep track of who has spoken and who wishes to speak, using a chart.
- Chair can empower vice-chair to do this – good training for them.

52

**SPEAKING CHART**

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	etc.
Garcia							
Jackson							
Juma							
Lee							
Patel							
Smith							
Young							

53

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## A great method – the “round robin”

- The chair goes around the table, asking each person in turn for their opinion. People may pass and speak at the end.
- Important to have a pencil in hand, to jot down points or questions for when your turn arrives.
- Chair must wait their turn also!
- This rule applies to questions and answers also, and to discussions with staff.
- Don't let any two people “hijack” the meeting.

54

## Interrupting

- When a member has the floor, they have the right to speak until they have completed their comments.
- Members may not interrupt each other.
- Chair may interrupt members when necessary to bring them to order.
- Members may interrupt to make a Point of Order when essential.

55

55

## No sidebars or texting

- No “sidebar conversations”
- No whispering! Disable the chat.
- No texting to each other or people outside during meetings.
- No posting on social media during meetings.

56

56

## Keep your camera on

- Unless technical considerations prevent it, all members should keep their camera on while participating online.
- Otherwise you are “lurking,” observing your colleagues without yourself being observed.
- This is disturbing and creates an unpleasant emotional imbalance.
- This also ensures that you maintain a quorum.

57

57

## Frustrating

- Structuring discussion in these ways can be frustrating.
- Members sometimes say, “I wish we could just hash it out and have a free-form discussion.”
- The Open Meetings Act, and the press of time, mean that usually, this won’t serve your committee well.
- However...

58

58

## An occasional exception...

- Sometimes there is benefit in the conversational style or “informal discussion.”
- Chair must ensure that no one dominates.
- Do not make the conversational style your ordinary or “default” style of discussion.

59

59

## It is the duty of the chair...

*To expedite business in every way compatible with the rights of members.*

*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12<sup>th</sup> edition, Section 47:7 (7)*

60

60

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Set time limits

- Jurassic Parliament recommends that bodies set estimated times for agenda items.
- We recommend time limits on individual member speeches – 3 or 5 minutes.
- Time limits cannot be debated.
- They can be suspended or changed by a two-thirds vote without debate.

61

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Time limits create productive meetings



The mayor of Alexandria, Virginia began council meetings by responding to each person giving public comment, sometimes delaying the start of regular business three hours or more. Was this reasonable? No. We need time limits to establish structure and create productive meetings. Robert's Rules says that members have the right to an efficient meeting. It takes effort to do this, and for the chair to maintain the limits, but the effort will pay off big time.

**SET AN OVERALL TIME LIMIT FOR THE MEETING**  
If you are a private nonprofit board, a good target for a regular board meeting is two hours. After

62

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Unanimous consent

- Form of voting—a type of “fast track.”
- Very efficient for minor procedural matters.
- Presider suggests something, and if you agree, REMAIN SILENT. Silence means consent.
- If you don't want to proceed in this way, say “OBJECTION.”
- Presider then abandons the fast track to use the regular method.

63

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Language tip

*Without objection...*  
*If there is no objection...*

64

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Fundamental guideline

**Courtesy and respect towards everyone are required.**

65

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## These remarks are inappropriate

1. Personal remarks about other members (except for conflict of interest)
2. Discourteous remarks – insulting language, attacks
3. Inflammatory language
4. Criticizing past actions of the group (unless subject is under discussion, or member is about to propose to amend or rescind the action at the end of their speech)
5. Remarks that are not germane (relevant) to the discussion

66

## Inappropriate Remarks on Local Government Councils



If you serve as an elected official on a local government council or board, you should know the types of remarks that are inappropriate during discussion at a meeting, Robert's Rules of Order and the common parliamentary law it is based on require that:

- Members of a council or board must be courteous to one another.

67

## Personal remarks

*The measure, not the member, is the subject of debate...The moment the chair hears such words as "fraud," "liar," or "lie" used about a member in debate, he must act immediately and decisively to correct the matter and prevent its repetition.*

*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12<sup>th</sup> edition, Section 43:21*

68

68

## CHEAT SHEET

### WAIT! WAIT! WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

	If you are the chair, say...	If you are a member speaking about another member, say...	If you are a member speaking about the chair, say...
<b>BIG MISTAKES</b>			
speaking twice in a row	Members are reminded that no one may speak a second time until everyone who wants to do so has spoken once.	Point of order. The member has spoken twice while others are waiting to speak.	Point of order. The chair does not have the right to dominate the discussion, but must speak in turn.
not seeking recognition	Members will kindly seek recognition before speaking.	Point of order. Members must seek recognition before speaking.	Not applicable.
speaking directly to another member	Members will kindly address all remarks to the chair.	Point of order. Members are supposed to speak to the chair.	(not applicable)
interrupting another person	Members will kindly refrain from interrupting one another.	Point of order. Interrupting is not allowed.	Point of order. The chair does not have the right to interrupt a member.
<b>INAPPROPRIATE REMARKS</b>			
personal remarks	Members will refrain from making personal remarks.	Point of order. Personal remarks are not allowed.	Point of order. Personal remarks are not allowed.
insulting language, vulgarities, attacks	Insulting or vulgar language is not allowed at our meetings.	Point of order. The language used by the member is insulting/vulgar.	Point of order. The chair is using insulting/vulgar language.
inflammatory language	Inflammatory language is not allowed.	Point of order. That remark is inflammatory.	Point of order. That remark is inflammatory.
criticizing past actions	Members may not criticize a past action of the group during a meeting, with two exceptions.*	Point of order. Members may not criticize a past action of the group during a meeting, with two exceptions.*	Point of order. The chair may not criticize a past action of the group during a meeting, with two exceptions.*

Note that this is proprietary information. Do not duplicate.

69

## The focus of our meeting is...

- Words on paper.
- Focus on the motions and not on the people who make the motions.
- We recommend that members take this approach outside the meeting also.
- Focus on actions taken and do not criticize colleagues outside the meeting.

70

70

## Who decides?

- If any question arises whether a remark is appropriate or not, or a comment is germane, the chair rules, subject to appeal.
- The chair may also turn immediately to the group to ask the members to decide.
- Ultimately it is the GROUP'S CALL.

71

71

## Important note

- We are speaking here about discussion within your meetings.
- These prohibitions DO NOT APPLY to the public when they are giving public comment.

72

72

## SAMPLE DISCUSSION GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

*Permission is granted to modify these guidelines as your organization prefers. Note that these guidelines refer to discussion within the body, not to comment by the public.*

1. The chair of the meeting runs the meeting in the service of the body. The chair serves as the facilitator for the meeting and has the primary responsibility for maintaining order. The chair may take part in discussion, but may not answer each individual speaker back, nor lecture or criticize the members. When discussing substantive questions, the chair will usually speak and vote, if entitled to do so, after others have spoken.

73

## IV. Motions and Amendments

74

74

### MOTIONS

- In large groups, you must have a motion before any discussion begins.
- In small boards (up to about 12 people), it is fine to discuss things in a more casual way.
- Even so, it's best to begin with a motion.

75

75

### Main Motion

We recommend this sequence:

- Staff presents proposal in writing and answers any questions. Each member may ask one or two questions, then the next member has a turn.
- Motion is moved and seconded.
- Members discuss motion and may amend it.
- Members vote on motion.

76

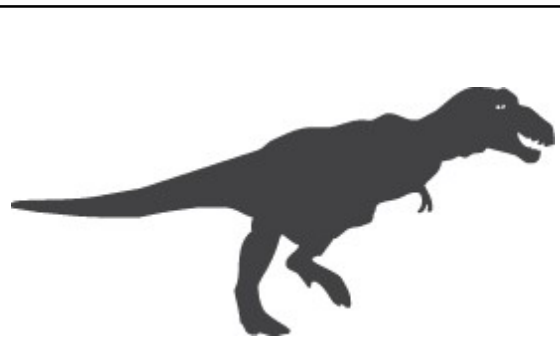
76

### MAIN MOTIONS

- A main motion is a proposal to do something. It "starts the action."
- It should be in writing if at all possible!

77

77



Main Motion  
*Tyrannosaurus rex*

78

## Main Motion

- It should be in writing if at all possible (project on screen, use 3-part form).
- It should be **clear and unambiguous**. Don't say, "I move what he just said," or "so moved."
- It should be phrased in the grammatical **positive**.
- It must comply with the **bylaws** and the **procedural** law of the land.
- You can have only **one main motion** at a time.

79

79

## Fundamental guideline

**One thing at a time.**

80

80

## Draft motions

- It is perfectly fine to include proposed or "draft" motions in an agenda.
- This can be very helpful in advancing the work of the body.
- The body is not obliged to take them up.
- Someone must "move" the motion – propose it – for the body to consider it.

81

81

## To make a main motion

- At the right time, any member says, "I move that..." and states, as clearly and concisely as possible, what is proposed.

82

82

## Member must be clear

- The member has the responsibility of formulating the motion.
- Don't mix up your ideas about the subject with the motion itself. Save those for debate.

83

83

*I've been noticing that the number of wild cats is increasing in our city, and they're getting stomped on by bigger dinosaurs, so I think allowing catios would be great, it would make a huge difference to the safety of our little feline friends.*

84

84

## Main Motion *Tyrannosaurus rex*

*I move that we recommend to council that residents be authorized to build catios in their private yards.*

85

85

## Eight steps to process a motion

1. **Member makes motion.**
2. Another member seconds motion.
3. **Chair states motion.**
4. Members debate and/or amend motion.
5. **Chair restates motion and calls for vote.**
6. Members vote on motion.
7. Chair states results of vote, whether motion passes or fails, and what happens next as a result of the vote.
8. Chair states next item of business.

86

86

## Second

- *Second the motion!*

87

87

## Second the motion

- You “second a motion” to show that you would like to talk about it.
- No need to be recognized. Just call out “second.”
- It is OK to second a motion you disagree with, if you want to explain why it’s a bad idea.

88

88

## If no second...

- If there is no second, the chair says, “There being no second, the motion will not be considered.”
- Then moves immediately to next item of business.

89

89

## You can't speak against your own motion

- Under Robert's Rules, the maker of the motion cannot speak against it.
- If the discussion has changed their mind, they should request permission to withdraw the motion.
- The maker CAN vote against their own motion.

90

90

# Eight Steps To Process A Motion

**Member A:** *I move that we hold a cruise on Dino Bay.*

**Member B:** *I second the motion!*

**Chair:** It has been moved and seconded that we hold a cruise on Dino Bay. We will now debate the motion. [debate]

**Chair:** Are you ready to vote?

The motion is that we hold a cruise on Dino Bay. All those in favor say “aye.” All those opposed say “no.” The “ayes” have it, the motion passes, and we will hold a cruise on Dino Bay. The Social Committee will make the plans for this event. Our next item of business is...

## Eight steps to process a motion

1. Member makes a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Another \_\_\_\_\_ seconds motion.
3. Chair states \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Members \_\_\_\_\_ and/or amend motion.
5. Chair restates \_\_\_\_\_ and calls for the vote.
6. Members \_\_\_\_\_ on motion.
7. Chair states results of vote, whether motion \_\_\_\_\_, and what happens as result of vote.
8. Chair states next item of \_\_\_\_\_.

In taking the vote, the presider must call for the \_\_\_\_\_ or the vote is not legitimate.

The presider has a duty to make things clear so that members understand what they are doing.

© Jurassic Parliament 2019. All rights reserved.

P.O. Box 77553, Seattle, WA 98177  
TEL 206.542.8422 | EMAIL [info@jurassicparliament.com](mailto:info@jurassicparliament.com)  
[www.jurassicparliament.com](http://www.jurassicparliament.com)





## No second required?

- Robert's Rules states that no second is needed in small boards (up to about 12) or in committees.
- We recommend seconds on boards, but believe they are not necessary on committees.
- Nevertheless, most local governments do require a second.

91

91

## Step #3 is very important!

- Presider **MUST** repeat the motion, or have the clerk repeat it.
- **WHY?** So that everyone knows what we are actually discussing.
- After step #3, the motion belongs to the group as a whole, not to the person who made it.

92

92

## Main Motion needs discussion

*I move that we recommend to council that residents be authorized to build catios in their private yards.*

[The maker of the motion has the right to speak first.]

93

93

## General contractor

*Catios are a safe and effective way to protect cats from predators, and birds from cats. Here is an example of a nice little catio. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this motion.*

94

94

## Photographer

*I'm in favor! My cousin has built a catio, and her little pet Fuzzy is completely at home in it, as you can see from this picture.*

95

95

## Architect

*I think this is a terrible idea! Catios are intrusive and will ruin the look of our city. Here's an example I saw when I visited Dinodome last week. We don't want this kind of ugly building in beautiful Bonny Dino.*

96

96

## Moving to vote

- When it seems that discussion is finished, chair asks, "Is there any further discussion" or "Are you ready to vote?" If no one speaks up, take the vote.

Note that these are rhetorical questions, to see if there is any further discussion.

97

97

## Voting

- Chair repeats the motion.
- Chair says, "*All those in favor say 'aye,' all those opposed say 'no.'*"
- Chair announces results of vote, whether motion passes or fails, and what will happen next as a result of the vote.
- Chair announces next item of business.

98

98

## Voting

- *The "ayes" have it, the motion passes, and we will recommend to council that residents be authorized to build patios in their private yards, OR*
- *The "noes" have it, the motion fails, and we will not recommend this proposal to council.*

Note that the chair must call for the negative vote, even if it seems unanimous.

99

99

## Step #5 is also very important!

- Chair must repeat the motion before the vote is taken.
- WHY? So that everyone knows what we are actually voting on.
- Have you ever been at a meeting when once the vote is taken, someone says, "What did we just approve?" and no one knows exactly what it was?

100

100

## No debate during voting

- Nothing can interrupt the voting process.
- Members are not allowed to explain their vote during the vote, or afterwards.
- Even a Point of Order must wait until the result of the vote is announced.

101

101

## Changing your vote

- A member may change their vote up until the time the chair announces the result.
- After that time, it takes unanimous consent of the body (everyone agreeing) for the member to change their vote.
- Once the chair has moved on to the next item of business, it is too late to change a vote.

102

102

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Abstain

- Under Robert's Rules, to abstain is to do nothing.
- Abstentions are not counted.
- The chair does not call for abstentions.
- However, if you are a public body, likely you will call for and record abstentions.

103

103

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Conflict of interest

- If you have a conflict of interest, you should "recuse" yourself from the vote.
- Recusal is a special form of abstention.
- Talk with your attorney before the meeting! Don't spring it during the meeting itself.
- It may be that recusal is not enough.

104

104

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---


## See MRSC post

Resolving Financial Conflicts of Interest:  
Is Abstaining from Voting Enough?

[www.mrsc.org](http://www.mrsc.org)

105

105



*Amendment  
Dimetrodon*

106

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Amendment *Dimetrodon*

- You amend a motion to improve it.
- The Amendment applies to the main motion.
- The Amendment must be germane (relevant).
- Anyone may move to amend, even the person who made the motion.

107

107

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Photographer

*I move that we amend the motion by adding the words, "Provided that the plan for each patio has been approved by the Design Review Board."*

108

108

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## If adopted, will read:

The Commission will recommend to Council that residents will be authorized to build catios in their private yards, **provided that the plan for each catio has been approved by the Design Review Board.**

109

109

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Four ways to amend

1. Add or insert words.
2. Strike out words.
3. Strike out words and insert words in their place.
4. Substitute (not recommended!).

110

110

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Process Amendment

- The Amendment is processed using the same eight steps that we just saw for a main motion.

111

111


Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## The challenge is...

- We vote on amendments BEFORE we vote on the main motion, in order to make the main motion as good as possible—to PERFECT the motion.

112

112



Amendment blocks Main Motion

113

113

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Fate of the Amendment

- People sometimes get confused, and don't realize that after voting on the amendment, the process continues.
- Once the fate of the amendment has been decided, debate continues on the main motion.

114

114

### More amendments are possible...

- Once you've dealt with one amendment, you may have others...
- provided that they apply to a *different aspect* of the main motion.
- It takes special actions (reconsideration) to go back and change something we've already amended.

115

115

### The process continues

- After all amendments have been processed, the body still must vote on the AMENDED MAIN MOTION.

116

116

### "Friendly amendment"

- People often process "friendly amendment" the wrong way.
- DO NOT turn to maker and seconder to ask if they accept the amendment – this give them improper power.
- Handle this the same as any other amendment.
- Ask, "Is there a second?" etc.
- Once a motion has been stated by the chair, the maker and seconder have same rights as any other member.

117

117

### No amendments in minutes

- According to Robert's Rules of Order, details of each amendment and how it was voted on ARE NOT INCLUDED in the minutes.
- "After discussion and amendment, the following motion was adopted..."

118

118

## V. Authority and role of chair, members, and staff

119

119

### Note on role of chair

- Robert has different rules for small boards (up to about 12 people).
- In a small board, chair may make motions, second them, discuss, and vote, unless law, regulations or bylaws say otherwise.
- We recommend that chair speak and vote last (this is a Jurassic Parliament suggestion).

120

120

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

*The president...should, of all the members, have the least to say upon the substance of pending questions.*

*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12<sup>th</sup> ed., Section 47:19*

121

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12<sup>th</sup> edition*

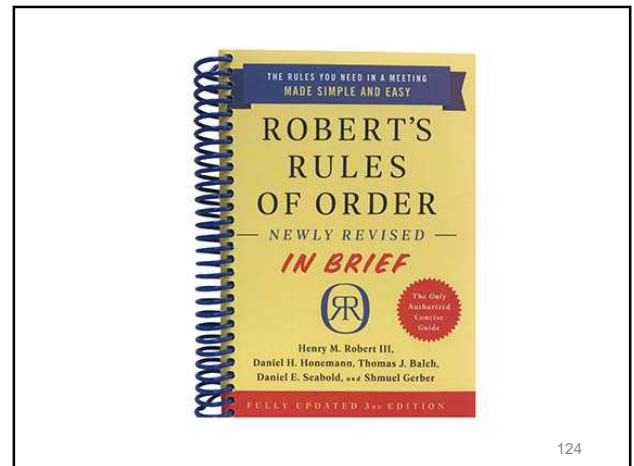
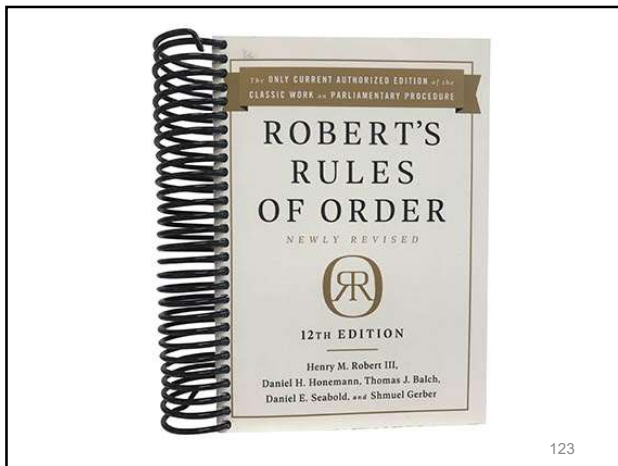
Abbreviated RONR

"Rules of Order Newly Revised"

122

121

122



123

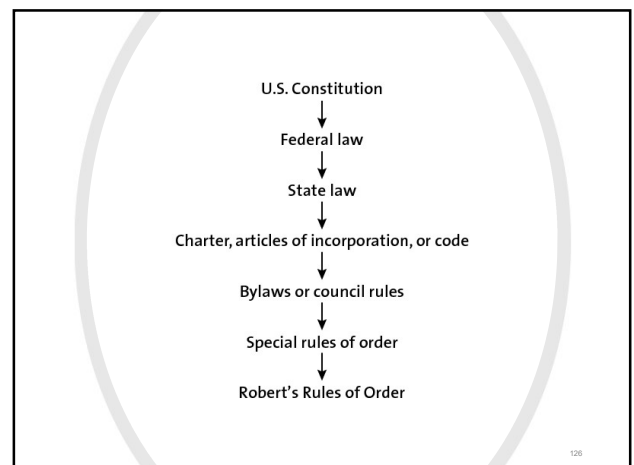
124

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

We recommend spiral-bound editions, available only from the National Association of Parliamentarians

[www.parliamentarians.org](http://www.parliamentarians.org)

125



125

126

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Accountability Hierarchy

127

127

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Voluntary Association

128

128

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Key Point

Each member has an equal right to speak and to try to persuade others to accept their view.

129

129

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Key Point

During meetings, the chair controls the process so the group can make the decisions.

130

130

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Fundamental guideline

During meetings, the chair is the servant of the group, and the group is the final authority.

131

131

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## You have both types of structure

- The citizen advisory commission, board or committee forms a voluntary association.
- The city manager and staff form an accountability hierarchy.

132

132

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## What is each person's individual authority?

*All members of a governing board share in a joint and collective authority which exists and can be exercised only when the group is in session.*

The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure

133

133

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Commissioners & committee members may not do the work of the city

- Citizen volunteers care deeply about their city.
- Sometimes they have special knowledge and expertise.
- They may make suggestions to the staff, but they may not do the work of the city themselves.
- Why? They must not cross the line between legislation and administration.
- This is a legal requirement!

134

134

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Staff

- Staff are advisers to the body, not members.
- The body may invite them to speak at its discretion.
- Staff should be empowered to make Points of Order and to speak up on own initiative on occasion.
- Staff and members should not enter into conversations that "hijack" the meeting.

135

135

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Commission must give clarity to staff

- Don't float an idea and expect staff to make it concrete. "The staff can look into this..."
- If an individual commissioner wants the staff to do something, presider of meeting must make sure that commission agrees by taking a vote.
- Commission as a whole has the responsibility of giving clarity to the staff.
- Simply say, "I move that the staff research this..."

136

136

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Successful staff interaction in local government meetings



© City of Shoreline WA, 2018.

137

137

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


## Vigorous discussion

- Discussion on your motions can and should be vigorous!
- Express your views freely and don't hold back.
- Once the vote has been taken, however, things change.

138

138



 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

## It's OK to disagree

- The fact that people have different opinions is a strength. It's a good thing!
- BUT we tend to identify with our own position.
- When we are defeated, we sometimes take it personally.
- This is a mistake.

139

139

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

## At the end of the day, the body must unite behind its decision.

- It is a basic democratic principle that the decision of the majority, voting at a properly called meeting, is the decision of the body as a whole.
- The minority must make it their decision as well.

140

140

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

*Democracy is the worst system of government in all the world, with the exception of those others that have been tried from time to time.*

Winston Churchill

141

141

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

## Bottom line

- In a democracy, HOW we decide things is more important than WHAT we decide.
- Courtesy and respect, no surprises, no unilateral action, no end-runs...these are essential for the system to work.

142

142

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

## Members have a duty

- When serving on a public body, members have a duty to uphold the decision of that body, even if they disagree with it.

143

143

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Disagreement

- Members may express their disagreement in public, but may not attempt to UNDERMINE the decision.
- They are free to try to persuade their colleagues, during the meeting, to change the decision (within limits).

144

144

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## We all want to be right

- It's human nature to be unhappy when you oppose the decision.
- Our current culture places a strong premium on individuality.
- I invite you to commit yourself to a bigger principle than your own views.

145

145

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## WHY?

After everyone's voice is heard, including the minority, it is the majority that make the decision.

146

146

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Lost the vote? Don't sabotage the council's action



We've had inquiries recently about elected officials who lost a vote, and then actively worked against the outcome. This amounts to trying to sabotage the council. It is wrong, wrong, wrong.

**THE MAJORITY RULES**  
General Henry Martyn Robert, the original author of *Robert's Rules of Order*, expresses it this way:

147

147

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## What is the alternative?

*The ballot box is sacred because the alternative is blood.*

Elias Canetti, writer and Nobel Prize winner

148

148

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## VI. Citizen Advisory Committee Pitfalls

*With thanks to Ric Stephens, Portland, Oregon*

149

149

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Confusion about your job

*The work of the Planning Commission is to carry out the instructions of the Council.*

City of Bellevue Planning Commissioner

150

150

## What is a citizen advisory committee ?

- A citizen advisory committee is a body that has been established in order to do a job ASSIGNED BY SOMEONE ELSE.
- This can be a challenge!

151

151

## Situation

The planning commission is considering a request to lower the setback from 50 feet to 20 feet.

152

152

## Commissioner asks:

*Isn't there a better place in the city to site this hotel?*

153

153

## Pitfall: Confusion about scope

You must answer the questions assigned to you by the Council, not propose unrelated alternatives.

154

154

## Situation

The environmental commission is considering recommending setting aside some wetlands.

155

155

## Commissioner says:

*I think we can't address this until the University report comes out in five years.*

156

156

### Pitfall: Asking for the moon

- It is an unfortunate fact of governance that sometimes bodies must make decisions with less than adequate information.

157

157

### Situation

The staff have made a recommendation to purchase a historic farm site as a museum.

158

158

### Commissioner says:

*Why are the staff making this recommendation? I think we're wasting our money on staff salaries. Only citizens really understand the issues here.*

159

159

### Pitfall: Confusion about staff role

- Staff are employees of the city.
- The commission or committee may not direct them independently of their assigned tasks.
- Staff have a duty to remind citizen volunteers of the laws, regulations, and fiscal constraints that apply.
- This is not "sticking an oar in," it is doing their job.

160

160

### Be definite and get a grip

- Commissions and committees must come to closure with their issue and define a specific action that they recommend.
- Don't say, "I move what he just said."
- Don't say "so moved!" unless the motion is crystal clear.
- Staff can help bring things to closure.

161


161

### Situation

The staff has carried out a survey.

162

162

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

**Commissioner says:**

*Since I'm a professional surveyor, I can re-do the survey to verify it.*

163

163

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

**Pitfall: Confusion about your job**

- A commissioner may have valuable particular expertise, but they are recruited to the commission as a citizen, not as a technical expert.
- Let staff be staff and citizens be citizens!

164

164

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

**Situation**

There has been a public outcry about changes to the irrigation district boundaries.

165

165

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

**Commissioner says:**

*Six of my neighbors are very upset about this. They've taken the trouble to come to our meetings, so we should do what they want.*

166

166

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---


**Pitfall: Deafened by decibels**

*Being swayed by the emotional power of a presentation is a common problem. Decisions should be rational, not determined by decibels.*

Ric Stephens

167

167

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

**Your responsibility?**

- Listen to your constituents, while accepting your own responsibility.
- You must vote based on your own best judgment, not solely in response to crowd opinion.

168

168

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

When public pressure is intense



At a recent workshop, a director from a school board split by pandemic-related decisions asked me what board members can do in the face of intense public pressure. These are tough times for local non-partisan government bodies, for sure. Here are some thoughts about what can be done.

169

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

**Situation**

There is mixed public opinion about a developer's plans to site a shopping center near the main road.

170

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

**Commissioner says:**

*When we're getting so many different conflicting views on this, I think we should just punt for another six months.*

171

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

**Pitfall: Decision delay**

*A planning commission is expected to render decisions in a timely manner. Some applications suffer "death by a thousand nicks"....This is related to "death by a thousand days," which is the continuation of projects like a soap opera.*

Ric Stephens

172

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

**Situation**

The arts commission is considering a report about the museum.

173

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

**Commissioner says:**

*I was on my honeymoon in Norway and I just haven't had time to study this.*

174

### Pitfall: Failure to read packet

- Commissioners MUST read their packets before the meeting!

175

175

### Situation

The commission is discussing plans for a new hiking trail along the river.

176

176

### Commissioner says:

*I think we have to analyze what kind of paving stones are best, so teeny-tiny rocks don't get stuck in the paws of our dinosaur residents.*

177

177

### Pitfall: Lost in the weeds/ analysis paralysis

- We all have a human tendency to delve into the details.
- Sometimes this leads citizen commissions astray, as they spend too much time discussing details that are not relevant to their assignment.

178

178

### Situation

There doesn't seem to be an attractive option for the new community swimming pool. Both sites have environmental issues.

179

179

### Commissioner says:

*The planning commission and the city can't resolve this issue. I move that we recommend that the city carry out a referendum!*

180

180

### Pitfall: Shrinking from hard choices

- A commission does not have the right to decline to do its job.
- That is a waste of public resources.

181

181

### Situation

There's a lot of dubious activity going on the 110-acre park to the east of town.

182

182

### Commissioner says:

*I move that all parks commissioners be issued T-shirts saying "Parks Commission" and be authorized to issue tickets to offenders.*

183

183

### Pitfall: Confusion about scope

- The parks commissioners are not police officers.
- They have a much more limited job!

184

184

### Pitfalls

- Asking for the moon
- Confusion about scope
- Confusion about staff role
- Confusion about your job
- Deafened by decibels
- Decision delay
- Failure to read packet
- Lost in the weeds/analysis paralysis
- Shrinking from hard choices

185

185

### VII. Public hearings and public comment

186

186



## Another disclaimer

Robert's Rules of Order contains very little guidance on public comment. In general, this information comes from Jurassic Parliament's experience over 15 years of working with local governments.

187

187

## Public hearing

- A PUBLIC HEARING is an administrative procedure governed by law and regulation.
- It is a meeting OF THE PUBLIC.
- It must be carefully managed.

188

188

## Public hearing

- You can request people to sign in and give their name and, sometimes their address.
- Their testimony, or a summary, is recorded in the minutes.
- There are 2 major types of public hearings.

189

189

## 1) Quasi-judicial hearings

- Your body meets to determine a land-use issue or some other matter in which you function as if you were a bank of judges.

190

190

## What is a quasi-judicial hearing? City of Safety Harbor Florida

- In a quasi-judicial hearing, the body making the decision must apply specific rules or criteria to a particular situation or application as opposed to formulating policy. The decision must be based on the evidence presented at the hearing.

191

191

## What is a quasi-judicial hearing?

- This means that the decision-making body must follow carefully laid out procedures which take into account oral, written and demonstrative testimony or evidence presented at the hearing. Opposing sides may also ask those presenting testimony questions, similar to cross-examination in a courtroom.

192

192

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Examples?

- Zoning of one parcel
- Conditional use
- Variance
- Site plan

193

193

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## No “ex parte” communications

- This legal term refers to a situation where a judge (you on the body) communicates with a litigant (the person bringing the issue to your body) outside the meeting or courtroom.
- Once a process has begun, you may not chat with your neighbor about it. If communication happens inadvertently, you must let the body know.

194

194

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Minutes

- These minutes must include details of who spoke and what they said, or a summary of the positions taken.

195

195

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## 2) Legislative hearings

- Your body functions as a legislative body, hearing public testimony in order to be aware of relevant issues before passing an ordinance or taking other legislative action.
- It is fine to talk with citizens and residents about these matters.
- Public hearings may be required for budget adoption and other matters.

196

196

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Public hearing vs public comment

- A PUBLIC HEARING is an administrative procedure governed by state law and your city's rules.
- You must include testimony in the minutes.
- The PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD is an agenda item governed by your own rules.
- We strongly recommend NOT including public comment in your meeting minutes.

197

197


**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## WHY public comment?

- A commission meeting is NOT A MEETING OF THE PUBLIC.
- It is a MEETING OF THE COMMISSION held in public.
- The purpose of the “public comment” period is to allow the commissioners to become informed about the views of the public.
- It should be carefully structured.

198

198

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

## Be consistent

- Best to announce rules at beginning of each session, and provide written handout.
- For the sake of fairness, rules for public comment **MUST** be enforced consistently.
- Public must address remarks to chair, not to individual commissioners or the audience.

199

199

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

## Follow time limits

- Ask staff to time speakers so chair is not distracted.
- Some bodies have a visible timer so speakers know when their limit is approaching.
- Speakers may not donate their time to someone else.

200

200

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Do not dialogue

- This is not a dialogue.
- Do not get into back-and-forth with the public. If chair starts dialoguing with the public, the situation can quickly become confusing.
- If you respond to some speakers but not to others, it can be interpreted as showing bias.

201

201


 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

*We tell the public it is  
a one-way communication  
to the commission.*

202

202

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

## Differing expectations

- The public may have different expectations.
- They may come to the meeting looking for answers to specific questions.
- They may want to argue.
- They may want their remarks “on the record.”
- They may want to raise a “Point of Order,” which they cannot do.
- Education is critical!

203

203

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Have a staff member ready

- Some bodies have a staff member at the side, who can take the resident’s questions and get back to them.
- Be sure to get contact information, and be sure to follow up!

204

204

## Audience relations

- Only the chair may speak to the audience as a whole.
- In general, individual members may not speak to the public or recognize people in the audience.
- Discourage demonstrations—clapping, booing, whistling, stamping of feet, etc. These can chill free speech, both for commissioners and public.

205

205

## Time, place and manner

- The courts have found that local governments may limit the time, place and manner of public comment.
- All such restrictions must be viewpoint-neutral.
- We recommend setting a time period for public comment (for example, 30 minutes).
- We recommend setting a 3-minute limit for individual speakers.

206

206

## If a speaker runs over...

- If a speaker runs over the limit, interrupt and request that they conclude their remarks, or simply inform them, "Thank you, your time is up."

207

207

## Comment vs. disruption

- Attendees do not have the right to DISRUPT the meeting.
- However, the courts have found that mere words do not usually constitute disruption.
- In general, residents can say whatever they like during public comment.
- Be VERY CAREFUL about ordering someone to leave the meeting.

208

208

## How to act on dais?

- Chair and members convey interest and concern by their body language.
- They should listen to each person speaking as if there were no one else in the room (this is hard!).
- Keep a warm and pleasant expression, or a neutral face if speaker is not complimentary.

209

209

## How to respond?

- Best approach is to thank each speaker, even if negative, and move on.
- Chair may provide brief factual information, if appropriate, which must not degenerate into lecturing or criticism.
- Don't put staff on the spot. Invite people to address questions to staff separately.

210

210

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Attacks on staff

- Commissioners must not criticize staff in public and must be courteous to them.
- If public attacks staff, do not get defensive.
- Do not get in a hostile exchange.
- Be prepared if appropriate to refer the matter to the city manager.

211

211

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Conclude with thanks

- At the end of the public comment period, the chair should thank the public for attending.
- Explain again that while this is not a time for dialogue, all comments and questions are taken seriously by the body.
- Sincerity and warmth on the part of the chair will make a big difference to the experience the public has at your meeting.

212

212

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Other channels

- It is essential for you to be in touch with your public, to be responsive, and to appear responsive.
- Given the limitations of the public comment period, we recommend maintaining other channels for dialogue with the public.
- Community forums, personal discussions, "coffee with the commission" (always less than a quorum), a form on your website, surveys, etc.

213

213

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Guidelines for Public Comment in Local Government



The public comment period is an essential part of local government meetings. These are our guidelines for public comment periods in local government. They refer to ordinary business and work or study meetings of councils, boards and committees. Public hearings and quasi-judicial hearings are governed by different rules.

214

214

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## SAMPLE PUBLIC COMMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Now is the time to hear from our public. We welcome your comments which are very important to us. Please go to the podium, speak into the microphone, and give your name and city of residence. Address your comments to the mayor/council as a whole, not to individuals. Courtesy is appreciated.

Comments are welcome on general city business or specific agenda items. Each speaker is limited to 3 minutes. You may not donate your time to another speaker. If several people are here to speak on the same subject, we invite you to choose a single representative who may speak for 5 minutes.

215

215


**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## VIII. The right kind of control

1. Knowledge of how this system works
2. A majority on your body in favor of civility and this system.
3. The personal moxie, chutzpah, energy and drive to put it all into practice.

216

216

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Chair must control who speaks when

- The chair serves as a BENEVOLENT DICTATOR, enforcing the rules the group has chosen.
- Individual members must SEEK RECOGNITION before speaking.

217

217

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


---

## Chair controls who speaks when

- If someone speaks up without being recognized, STOP THEM.
- If someone speaks out of turn, INTERRUPT THEM.
- If someone makes insulting remarks, CUT THEM OFF.

218

218

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Duty to obey the chair

- Members have a duty to obey the chair's directions.
- If they disagree, they can't argue back.
- What can they do?

219

219

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---


## Don't be intimidated by anger

- Evolutionary psychologists tell us that anger evolved "in the service of bargaining, to resolve conflicts of interest in favor of the angry individual."

Leonard Mlodinow, *Emotion: How Feelings Shape Our Thinking*

220

220

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Guide your members by stating the obvious

- You as chair know more about the process than anybody else.
- You must repeat yourself, and state the obvious, to help bring everyone along.

221

221

 Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

---

## Keep things moving! Be brisk! Speak crisply!

- *Well, I guess the agenda is adopted...*
- *I'll kind of get a thumbs up from the board next week...*

222

222

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Firm but not harsh.

223

223

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Language tips

- End your sentences on a falling tone.
- Phrase things in the positive.
  - We're not trying to hide anything here vs.*
  - We're committed to being transparent.*
- Give up on the word "but." Always say "and."
- Say "kindly" not "please," which sounds like pleading.
- Say "very well" and move on.

224

224

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## CHEAT SHEET

### LANGUAGE TIPS FOR MEETING MANAGEMENT

SITUATION	CHAIR CAN SAY
Call to order	<i>This meeting of the [name of organization] is called to order.</i>
Unanimous consent	<i>Without objection... if there is no objection...</i>
To begin discussion	<i>It has been moved and seconded that... Is there any discussion?</i>
If there is no second	<i>Since there is no second, the motion will not be considered.</i>
To end discussion	<i>Is there any further discussion? or Are you ready to vote?</i>
Process Point of Order	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Member says, "Point of Order"</li> <li>2. Chair says, "State your point."</li> <li>3. Member explains issue.</li> <li>4. Chair says, "The point is well taken," or "The point is not well taken."</li> </ol>
When someone says "Point of Order" but can't explain what they mean	<i>What rule has been broken?</i>
Process Point of Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Member says, "Point of Information."</li> <li>2. Chair replies, "State your question."</li> </ol>

225

225

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## When in doubt, ask the group!

- Chair can always ask the group to decide a question.

226

226

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

- Chair: *The chair believes that remarks about UFOs landing at our airfield are not germane, and will ask the council to decide whether the councilmember may continue speaking on this topic. All those who believe that the councilmember may continue speaking, say "aye."*
- Councilmembers in favor: *Aye!*

227

227

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

- Chair: *All those who believe that the councilmember may not continue, say "No."*
- Councilmembers opposed: *"No."*
- Chair: *The ayes have it and the councilmember may continue speaking, OR the noes have it and the councilmember will cease from speaking.*

228

228

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## HOW to control?

*The chair should never get excited.*

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12<sup>th</sup> edition, 47:19

229

229

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## WHY do we need rules?

*Win/lose is the only game most of us understand. We have a constant unspoken need for domination and actually find no enjoyment in win/win situations.*

Richard Rohr, Franciscan author

230

230

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Vision phase one

- Each member expresses their personal views on topics before your body with vigor, energy, commitment, and respect.

231

231

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Vision phase two

- Once the vote is taken, personal opinions and political views are LESS IMPORTANT than the majority vote of the body.
- Members accept the decision and move on without rancor or bitterness.

232

232

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## IX. Conclusion

233

233

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Keep in touch!

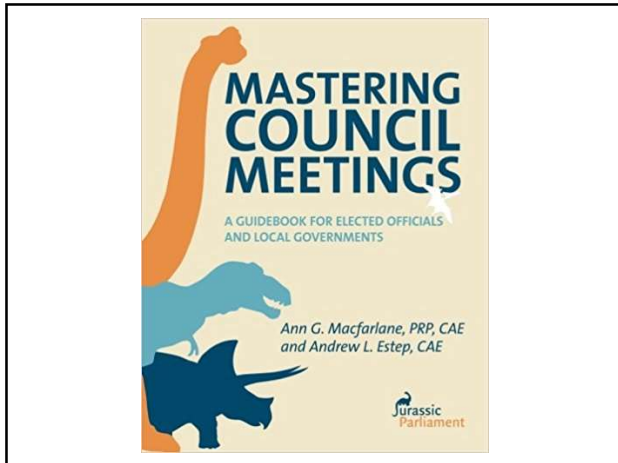
- You are invited to subscribe to our monthly newsletter.
- Subscribe to the blog on our website for insight, tips and inspiration, including our new advice column, "Dear Dinosaur."
- Email any time.

www.jurassicparliament.com  
[ann@jurassicparliament.com](mailto:ann@jurassicparliament.com)  
206-542-8422

234

234





235

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## After taking this training you will be able to:

1. Apply the principle that the authority of the group is more important than any single individual
2. Follow best practices for discussion.
3. Respond to disorder and difficult people.
4. Make Motions and Amendments.
5. Avoid common citizen advisory committee pitfalls.
6. Run effective public comment sessions.

236

236

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## The chair is not in charge of your meeting

It is a little-known fact that ultimately it is the board that is in charge of your meeting, not the chair. According to the principles of parliamentary procedure and Robert's Rules of Order, the chair runs the meeting while subject to the will of the body as a whole.

This is very different from the workplace, the military, or many other institutions in our society. Those institutions are structured as an ACCOUNTABILITY HIERARCHY, in which everyone reports, through the appropriate channels, to the BOSS at the top of the pyramid. The boss makes the ultimate decisions and is responsible for the organization's performance.

237

237

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Follow four fundamental guidelines for successful meetings

Robert's Rules of Order includes **four fundamental guidelines** that will create successful meetings. They are easy to say but take some effort to apply, since prevailing culture is often very different. Run your meetings according to these guidelines so your meetings—and your organization—will flourish.

238

238

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Process Point of Order

1. Member: *Point of Order!*
2. Chair: *State your point.*
3. Member: *That remark breaks our rules of decorum.*
4. Chair: *The point is well taken. Members may not use this term.*

239

239

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## These remarks are inappropriate

1. Personal remarks about other members (except for conflict of interest)
2. Discourteous remarks – insulting language, attacks
3. Inflammatory language
4. Criticizing past actions of the group (unless subject is under discussion, or member is about to propose to amend or rescind the action at the end of their speech)
5. Remarks that are not germane (relevant) to the discussion

240

240

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Motions review

- At the right time, seek recognition from the chair.
- State your motion.  
*Chair, I move that we issue each commissioner a \$500 bonus in recognition of their service during the pandemic.*
- After the motion is seconded by another member and stated by the chair, explain why you think it's a good idea.

241

241

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Seconding a motion

- After another member makes a motion, just call out "second!"
- You do not need to be recognized.

242

242

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Eight steps to process a motion

1. **Member makes motion.**
2. Another member seconds motion.
3. **Chair states motion.**
4. Members debate and/or amend motion.
5. **Chair restates motion and calls for vote.**
6. Members vote on motion.
7. Chair states results of vote, whether motion passes or fails, and what happens next as a result of the vote.
8. Chair states next item of business.

243

243

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Amending a motion

- During discussion on the motion, seek recognition.
- Once recognized, state your proposed amendment.  
*Chair, I move to amend the motion by striking out the number \$500 and inserting the number \$5000.*
- Once another member seconds the amendment, explain why it's a good idea.

244

244

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Remember...

- The amendment is voted on first.
- Once the amendment is resolved, discussion may continue on the main motion.
- Further amendments may be made.
- Finally, the vote will be taken on the **MAIN MOTION AS AMENDED.**

245

245

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Best practices for public comment

1. Set time limits for public comment and for individual speeches.
2. Have the public address the chair, and have the chair respond.
3. Don't engage in dialogue with the public, but have arrangements to answer their questions afterwards.
4. Speakers may not donate their time.
5. On the dais, make the effort to be, and to appear to be, listening intently to all speakers.

246

246

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Quick Guide for Planning Commissions



The work of the Planning Commission is to carry out the council's instructions. Follow this quick guide to parliamentary procedure to take the pain out of your meetings, hold productive discussions, and serve your community better.

247


**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

## Quick Guide for Citizen Advisory Committees



The work of the Citizen Advisory Committee is to carry out the council's instructions. Follow this quick guide to parliamentary procedure to take the pain out of your meetings, hold productive discussions, and serve your community better.

248



**Local Government Citizen Advisory Boards**

Examples, options, and model practices for the effective and efficient use of advisory boards by local governments

MRSC

249

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

*Kindness is within our power.  
Liking is not.*

Samuel Johnson, British author

250

250

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

*Serving on a local government board is like being in a marriage arranged by the citizens.*

Tami Tanoue, Colorado Intergovernmental Risk Sharing Agency

251

251

**Jurassic Parliament** Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Disclaimer: Nothing in this presentation constitutes business or legal advice.

© Jurassic Parliament 2023. All rights reserved.  
PO Box 77553, Seattle, WA 98177  
Tel: 206-542-8422  
Email: [ann@jurassicparliament.com](mailto:ann@jurassicparliament.com) Web: [www.jurassicparliament.com](http://www.jurassicparliament.com)

252

252