

BASIC Parliamentary Procedure using Robert's Rules of Order

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Applicable Rules

State Statutes

(Title 29 – OMA, Ethics)

Code of Ordinances

(Rules of Order)

Special Rules of the Governing Body (policies and procedures)

Adopted parliamentary authority

(Robert's Rules of Order)

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Basic Statutory Requirements

All members vote unless required to abstain by the chair

•(AS 29.20.160(d))

Meeting must be properly noticed to the public

•AS 44.62.310

Public has the right to be heard

•AS 29.20.020(a)

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The purpose of an Assembly, Board, or Commission meeting is to conduct the people's business.



The public is an important part of the democratic process, and the officials need to hear from their constituents.



There are rules in place for meeting to serve the best interests of the citizens and resources of the municipality. Certain rules address the way the public is involved in the meeting.



The public should be provided a specific time to be heard, such as Citizen Comments at the beginning of the agenda.



There are parliamentary provisions if the body wishes to extend those rights to a different time on the agenda.

Public Participation

Alaska Open Meetings Act - the right for the public to be informed and attend – AS 44.62.310-312

The right for the public to be heard - AS 29.20.020(a)

Roberts Rules of Order (RONR) 12th Edition– Section 43.10

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What is parliamentary procedure?

A system designed to help a group of people to hold a meeting in an organized manner and make decisions effectively and courteously.

It is designed so that the voice of the minority is heard, and the will of the majority is accomplished.

The system keeps the members on track and stay focused.

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Who was Robert?



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Basics of Robert's Rules

One thing at a time.

One person at a time.

Only one time per meeting.

Minimum for making a decision.

Vote requirements based on member rights.

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First Things First

There should be an organized agenda properly provided to all members according to your rules or bylaws

Know which of your members are voting members and which are ex-officio or non-voting members.

Know the voting rules in your bylaws.

Make sure you have a quorum according to the requirements in your bylaws or rules of procedure.

If your bylaws do not specify a number, a quorum is a majority of the total membership.
Quorum = Majority

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Special Rules



City of Saxman Rules of Procedure COS 2.05.160-250




Conflict of Interest COS 2.05.070

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General Meeting Protocol

- **Until a motion has been stated by the chair, no proposal may be debated**
- **The member who made the motion has the right to speak first**
- **Members address the chair and wait to be recognized**
- **All remarks must be addressed through the chair/presiding officer**
- **Each member has the right to participate and to share equally in the discussion**
- **No member may monopolize the discussion**



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General Meeting Protocol, cont.

Members cannot speak more than twice or more than the allotted time (policy may establish different rule)

Members may not interrupt, except to raise legitimate points of order

Motives or personalities may not be attacked during debate

All remarks must be relevant to the subject (germane)

Members must accept the will of the majority

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The Role of the Chair / Presiding Officer

Keep meeting on track

- ✓ Keeps discussion germane
- ✓ Discourage repetition
- ✓ Keep it rolling by eliminating side conversations
- ✓ State, Restate, and State the Result

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The Role of the Chair / Presiding Officer

Maintain DECORUM

- ✓ Determines who has the right to speak
- ✓ Be neutral and allow other members to speak first.
- ✓ Impartially permits “pro” and “con” equal time
- ✓ Explains/clarifies issues without bias
- ✓ Refrains from debate unless passing the gavel

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Respect the Role of the Chair

Remember all comments are made through the Chair

It is appropriate to use, “Your Honor...”

If a member disagrees with a ruling of the chair, a point of order can be raised. (More on that later)

Most members will likely have the opportunity to serve as chair at some point

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A member makes a motion.

Another member seconds the motion.

The chair states the motion, formally placing it before the body.

The members debate the motion.

The chair puts the question to a vote.

The chair announces the results of the vote.

Processing a Motion

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Making a Motion

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Seek
Recognition
from the Chair.

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Be Precise

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Only Make
Motions You
Agree With

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Keep language
positive and
worded in the
affirmative.

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Second the Motion

1. A member makes a motion

2. Another member seconds the motion

- The purpose of this step is to make sure that at least two members want to discuss the issue before the body spends time on it. The member who is the Second does not have to agree with the motion – only believe that it should be discussed and acted on.
- **No second, no debate.** If there is no second, then the motion dies for lack of a second. The group then proceeds to the next item on the agenda.

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Processing a Motion – The Chair States

After a motion has been made and seconded, the Chair states the motion.

The ownership of the motion has now been transferred from the maker to the body.

In order to withdraw a motion, the chair must ask permission from the body and there must be no objection.

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Debate on the Motion

Germane

- Debate must be germane (relevant) to the motion.

Concise

- Debate should be concise and productive, not repetitive.

Courteous

- Opposing comments should be given and received with respect and objectivity.
- Honor the role of the Chair. All comments are made through the Chair.

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Debate, Cont...



Only the members of the body engage in debate. Roberts Rules of Order (RONR) 12th Edition– Section 43.10

Rights in regard to debate are not transferrable. An assembly member cannot yield any expired portion of his time to another member, or to anyone else. **RONR** has no allowance for the public or anyone outside of the body to participate in debate or discussion during a meeting. There is no proper motion to yield a seat or yield time to a member of the public.



Refer to your Order of Business in Code or Policy for:

Citizen Comments
Public Hearings



The public does not have the right to speak during any other portion of the agenda, unless specifically allowed by the Assembly. This could occur one of three ways:

Through a ruling of the chair with no objection raised.

Through a motion to suspend the rules which requires a 2/3 vote to pass.

During a work session when formal rules are relaxed, and with no objection raised.

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Call for the Vote on the Motion

- **The Chair puts the motion to a vote.**
 - The chair should restate the motion to remind members what they are voting on.
 - The chair (or secretary) should call for votes in favor of and votes against the motion.
 - The chair determines if the motion passed or failed and announces the determination to the members by saying “the motion is adopted” or “the motion failed”.
 - Move to the **next** item on the agenda.

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Unanimous Consent / General Consent

- May be used for items of little importance or when there appears to be no opposition to a motion.
- If one member objects, the chair must go through the full motion process.

*“If there is no
objection...”*

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Types of Motions

Main

Privileged

Subsidiary

Incidental

Bring Back

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Main Motion

- **Original Main Motion.**
 - Introduces a substantive question as a new subject
 - Object: Bring business before the board
 - Form: I move that...or I move to.....
- Rules:
- Needs a second.
 - Is Debatable.
 - Is amendable.
 - Needs a majority vote.
 - Can be reconsidered



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Privileged Motions

- Privileged motions are a class of motions that are important enough to warrant interrupting all other motions. Because they are urgent issues, debate on them is not allowed.
 - Fix the time to which to adjourn
 - Adjourn
 - Recess
 - Questions of privilege
 - Call for orders of the day

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Subsidiary Motions

- Lay on the table
- Previous Question
- Limit or extend limits of debate
- Postpone to a certain time
- Commit or refer
- Amend
- Postpone indefinitely

Subsidiary motions aid the body in treating or disposing of a main motion.

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Subsidiary Motions – Lay on the Table

(This motion clearly wins the award for the most overused and abused of all of the motions. It is too often used to kill a motion. It is also improperly used to postpone a motion to the next meeting.)

Designed for unexpected urgent situations. It is also designed for setting something aside when you do not know when it will be time to bring it back again.

- Needs a second
- Is NOT debatable
- Is NOT amendable
- Needs a majority vote
- To bring the tabled motion back before the group a member must make the motion to “take from the table” by the end of the next regularly scheduled meeting.

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Subsidiary Motions – Difference Between “Lay on the Table” and “Postpone”

- If you want to kill a motion, you should use the motion to **postpone indefinitely**.
 - Why? Because the motion to lay on the table is NOT debatable, therefore you can’t talk about it or amend it before you vote on it. Those are two things you would want to do before killing an idea; if you don’t you run the risk of violating the rights of the members.
- If you want to put something off until the next meeting, the proper motion is to **postpone to a certain time**.
 - The difference? Lay on the table is not debatable, is not amendable (so you can’t set a time and date for when to address it again) and when you do bring it back up it needs a motion to “take from the table” to accomplish that.

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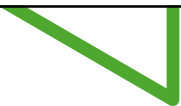
Subsidiary Motions – Previous Question

- **Previous Question**
 - Used to stop debate on a motion and any subsidiary motions.
- **The motion must be seconded, no debate is allowed, and a two-thirds vote is needed.**
- This is the second most overused and abused of all of the motions.
- It is often misused to call it out, as a command, and intimidate the presiding officer into stopping debate without a vote.

QUESTION!



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Subsidiary Motions – Previous Question, cont...

- **Script:**
 - Member: I move the previous question
 - Chair: Is there a second?
 - Member: I second the motion
 - Chair: The previous question is moved and seconded, this is not a debatable motion and takes a two-thirds vote. If you want to close debate, vote in favor of the motion. If you want debate to continue, vote against the motion.

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Subsidiary Motions – Postpone to a Certain Time (Postpone Definitely)

- Allows for more information to be gathered before making a decision.
 - The time set to postpone is limited to the current meeting, and up until the close of the next regularly scheduled meeting.
 - Needs a second
 - Is debatable
 - Is amendable
 - Needs a majority vote
- The item will come back on the agenda at the next regular meeting as “Unfinished Business”, with the main motion still on the floor. At that time, the Chair will read the *motion pending* prior to postponement and discussion will resume.

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Subsidiary Motions – Commit or Refer

- This motion sends the main motion to a smaller group (a committee) for further examination and refinement before the body votes on it. Be specific.
- Item comes back to the members under “Unfinished Business” along with the committee report. Chair should read main motion which was made prior to sending to committee and discussion resumes.
- **Make sure to establish a due date, or deadline for the committee to report back.**

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Amendments to Motions

Primary Amendment – amends the main motion, must be germane to the main motion.

There is a limit on the number of amendments that can be pending. There can be only one main motion, one primary amendment, and one secondary amendment pending at a time.

Secondary Amendment – amends the primary amendment, must be germane to the primary amendment.

After a primary amendment has been voted on, if it passed, it becomes a part of the motion it was amending. At this point a new primary amendment could be offered. Same is true for a secondary amendment.

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The motion on the floor: “I move that we censure our president.”

Amendment: I move to amend the motion by striking the word “censure” and inserting the word “thank” so that the motion will read “I move that we thank our president”.

Subsidiary Motions – Amendments, cont.

Although the amendment must be germane, it does not have to maintain the intent of the main motion.

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Amendments, Cont.



An amendment to a motion can take three forms:



Insert or add. This involves inserting or adding words or paragraphs.



Strike out. This involves cutting words or paragraphs.



Strike and insert. This involves substituting a word, paragraph, or the entire text with new text.

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Amendments, Cont.

Limited number. To avoid confusion there is a limit on the number of amendments that can be pending.

There can be only one main motion, one primary amendment, and one secondary amendment pending at a time.

*Primary amendment amends the pending main motion.

*Secondary amendment can only amend the primary amendment.

*After a primary amendment has been voted on, if it passed, it becomes a part of the motion it was amending. At this point a new primary amendment could be offered. Same is true for a secondary amendment.

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Subsidiary Motions – Postpone Indefinitely

Used to “kill” a motion with a definitive motion and vote.

A member who is opposed to a motion cannot make the main motion, but may make a motion to postpone the motion indefinitely.

Makes the body aware of the intent to kill the main motion without having vote on the main motion.

Exception to “motion ladder”. If the motion to postpone indefinitely passes, you do not take the final step down the motion ladder. You do not vote on the main motion.

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Incidental Motions

- **Point of Order**
- **Appeal from the Decision of the Chair (Appeal)**
- **Suspend the Rules**
- **Division**
 - Division of the motion
 - Division of the assembly
- **Requests and Inquiries**
 - Parliamentary Inquiry
 - Point of Information
 - Withdrawal of a Motion

Incidental motions usually relate to matters of the business meeting rather than directly to the main motion.

They may be offered at any time when they are needed.

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Point of Order and Appeal

- **Point of Order**

- Requests that the rules be followed
- May interrupt speaker, No second needed, Not debatable
- Ruled by Chair

- **Appeal from the Decision of the Chair**

- Challenges a ruling of the chair
- Requires a second
- Question becomes, "Shall the ruling of the chair be upheld?"
- Majority vote needed



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Point of Order and Appeal, cont.



Appeal from the Decision of the Chair

Any member who disagrees with the ruling of the Chair may move to appeal the decision of the Chair. If the appeal is seconded, the Chair must state the question on it, explain the exact Parliamentary question at issue, allow for debate and put the question to a vote.

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Bring Back Motions

The bring back motions are used to bring back a motion that has already been before the body, just in case once wasn't enough.



Rescind



Amend Something Previously Adopted



Take from the Table



Reconsider

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Bring Back Motions – Take from the Table

- A motion that was laid on the table can only be taken from the table during the remainder of the meeting at which it was laid on the table or before the conclusion of the next regularly scheduled meeting. The motion to take from the table can be made by any member, and it requires a majority vote to pass
- Rules:
 - Needs a second
 - Is NOT debatable
 - Is NOT amendable
 - Needs a majority vote
 - May be made during the Unfinished or New Business portion of the agenda.

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Bring Back Motions - Reconsider

- This motion wins the award for the “most challenging”!
- The effect of the adoption of this motion is to erase the original vote on the motion and put the assembly in exactly the place it was in right before the vote occurred. If the motion to reconsider passes, the motion is put back on the floor, as if the original vote had not occurred, and discussion continues.
- **The motion to reconsider can be made only by a member who voted on the prevailing side. So, if the motion passed, you had to have voted “yes” on it to move to reconsider it; if the motion failed, you had to have voted “no” to move to reconsider it.**

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The Order of Precedence of Motions



1. Fix time to which to adjourn
2. Adjourn
3. Recess
4. Raise a question of privilege
5. Call for orders of the day
6. Lay on the table
7. Previous question
8. Limit/extend limits of debate
9. Postpone to a time certain
10. Commit or refer
11. Secondary Amendment
12. Primary Amendment
13. Postpone indefinitely
14. Main motion

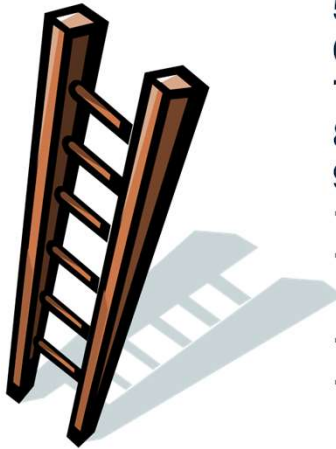
When any of the motions on this list is the immediately pending motion, any motion above it on the list can be made at that time.

The motion below it on this list cannot be made at that time.

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The Order of Precedence of Motions



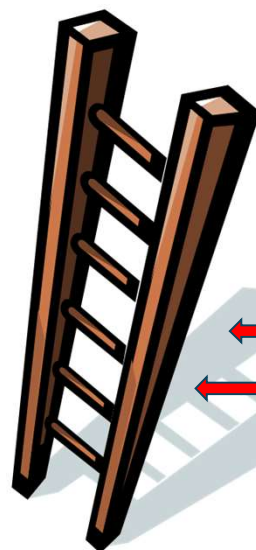
1. **Fix time to which to adjourn**
2. **Adjourn**
3. **Recess**
4. **Raise a question of privilege**
5. **Call for orders of the day**
6. **Lay on the table**
7. **Previous question**
8. **Limit/extend limits of debate**
9. **Postpone to a time certain**
10. **Commit or refer**
11. **Secondary Amendment**
12. **Primary Amendment**
13. **Postpone indefinitely**
14. **Main motion**

Every motion that is pending is a step up the rung of the ladder. When it is time to vote on the motion, you must come down the ladder, in reverse order of the steps taken up.

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Practice Climbing the Ladder



- ← 4. Postpone to a Time Certain
- ← 3. Secondary Amendment
- ← 2. Amendment
- ← 1. Motion

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The Vote and the Ladder



Vote on the motion to postpone to a certain time.

If this motion passes, the main motion and the amendments that are pending will be postponed along with it to the next meeting. At the next meeting, you will have three motions still pending.

If the motion to postpone fails, you move down to the next pending motion on the ladder, which is the secondary amendment.



Vote on the secondary amendment.

If the secondary amendment passes, *the primary amendment is now changed*. If it fails, you move down to the primary amendment as it was originally stated.

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The Vote and the Ladder, Cont...

- **Vote on the primary amendment.**
 - If the vote on the primary amendment passes, the main motion on the floor is now amended. If the primary amendment fails, the main motion on the floor is the original main motion.
- **Vote on the main motion.**
- **If you skip any of those steps, you violate the rules and fall off the ladder!**

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Ladder of Motions

You Can Go Back Up the Ladder

- The voting ladder in the precedence of motions is not a one-way ladder. You can move up and down it, and then up and down again before finally processing the main motion and getting off the ladder.

Basic Steps on the Ladder

- The immediately pending motion is the motion that was last stated by the chair.
- The precedence of motions indicates which motions precede other motions during debate.
- Motions that don't follow the precedence of motions should be called out of order.
- Don't skip steps on the ladder of motions!

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Ladder of Motions - Exception

The exception to the ladder voting rule is the **Motion to Postpone Indefinitely**.

- The purpose of the motion to postpone indefinitely is to kill the motion that is pending.
- If the motion to postpone indefinitely passes, the main motion is thus killed and there does not need to be a vote on the main motion. You do not come down the final rung of the ladder, and you do not vote on the main motion.

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Summary

- **Follow** ALL Applicable Rules
- **Voice** of the Minority, **Will** of the Majority
- **Respect** the Role of the Chair
- Debate must be **Germane, Concise, Courteous**
- **Stay** on the Ladder
- **Privileged** motions can interrupt
- **Subsidiary** motions dispose of main motion
- **Incidental** motions relate to matters of business and can happen at any time
- **Main** motions bring business before the body
- **Bring-Back** motions bring items again before the body



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Questions?



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Resources

- Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th Edition; Henry M. Robert III
- The Complete Idiot's Guide to Robert's Rules; Nancy Sylvester, PRP, CPP-T

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