

# City of Middleton

## Parliamentary Procedures for Local Government Meetings



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION, DIVISION OF EXTENSION**

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# Meetings

“Meetings are  
indispensable when you  
don’t want to do  
anything.”  
- John Kenneth Galbraith



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# What is a Meeting?



- Meeting is a gathering of members of a governmental body for purposes of exercising its responsibilities *Wis. Stat. Sec. 19.82(2)*

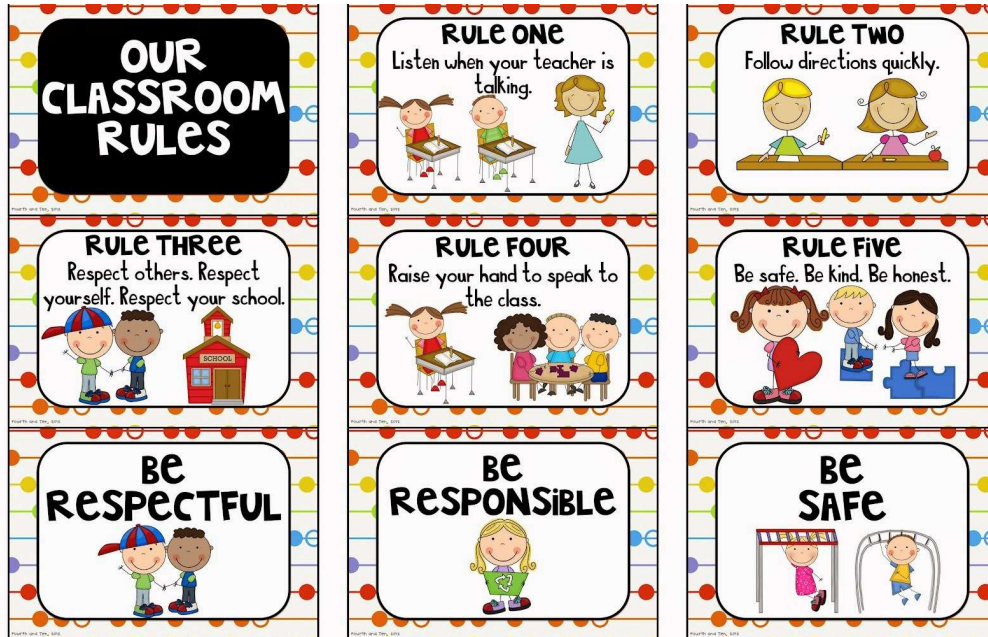


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# Meeting Rule Sources



- Wisconsin Statutes
  - Quorum, Motions, Second, Voting
  - Mayor may only vote in case of a tie vote
- Middleton Local Rules
  - CHAPTER 1 COMMON COUNCIL MEETINGS
  - References current edition – Roberts Rules of Order



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# City of Middleton Meeting Rules

## CHAPTER 1 COMMON COUNCIL MEETINGS

### • 1.01 MEETING TIME AND DATE

- (4) Quorum Two-thirds (2/3) of the membership of the Common Council shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may adjourn from time to time or compel the attendance of absent members

### • 1.06 GENERAL RULES

- The proceedings of the Common Council shall be conducted in accordance with the parliamentary rules set forth in Robert's Rules of Order as from time to time revised, which are incorporated herein by reference.
- No citizen or other person shall address the Common Council except during that part of the agenda entitled "Comments from Citizens Present", or unless invited or requested to speak by the Mayor or an Alderperson.
- No motion shall be amended or withdrawn without the consent of the Alderperson making the same and the Alderperson seconding it.



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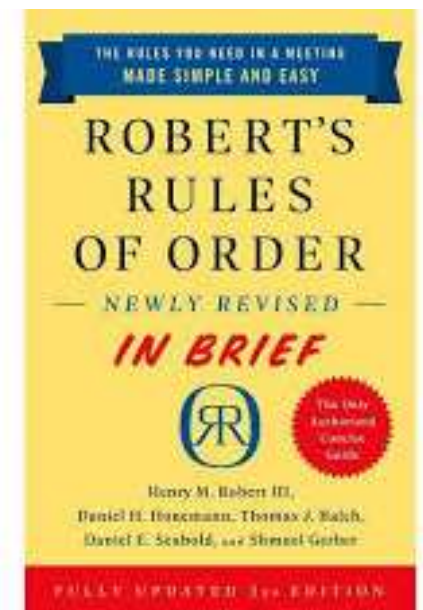
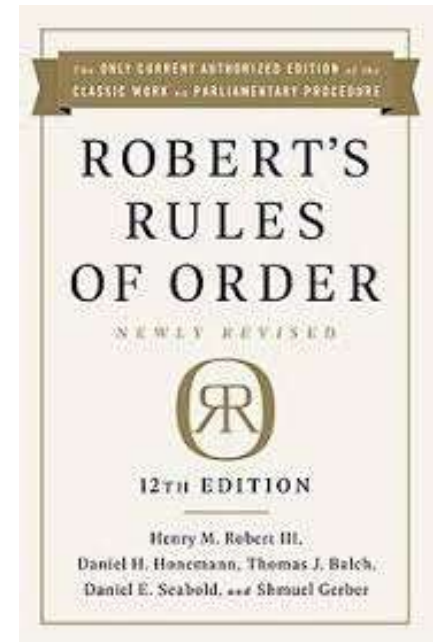


# Roberts Rules of Order

- Facilitate Discussion, Not Obstruct It
  - Justice and courtesy to all
  - Each proposition is entitled to full and free **debate** discussion
  - Address only one issue at a time
  - Common understanding
  - Substance over process
- Fairness to All
  - Majority
  - Respect the rights of the minority & individual Members
- Provide Order
  - The majority rules
  - Organizational Stability



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# What is a Motion?



- A Motion is a formal proposal by a member of the body, in a meeting, that the body take certain action.  
(RONR p. 27 1. 7 to p. 35, p.62, ll. 18-21; p.100, ll. 3-5)



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# Motions

- Required on substantive issues
- Avoid negative motions, accepting informational reports, reaffirming existing policy
- Should be stated fully and repeated by chairperson, once seconded
- Must be seconded, unless incidental



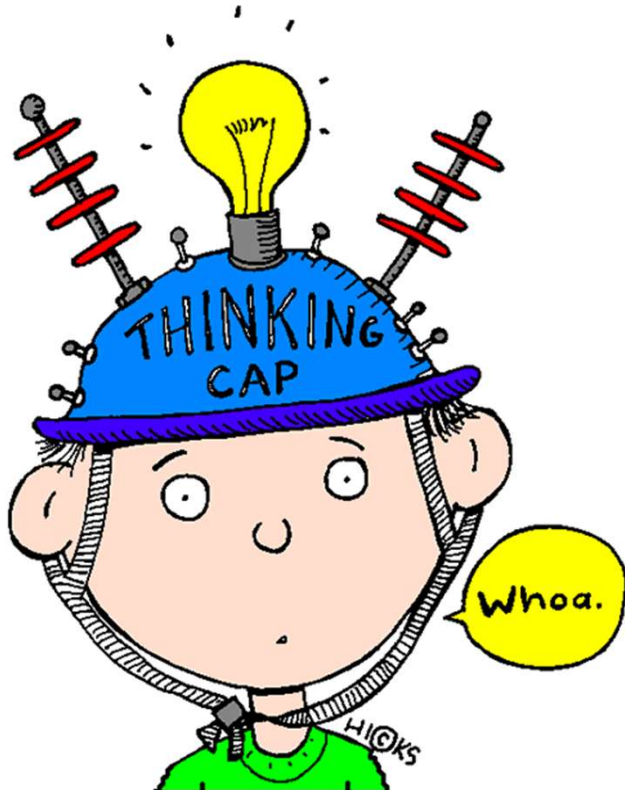
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# Motions



- Main Motion - Starts the discussion
  - Only one MAIN motion can be pending at any given time
- Other classes of motions take precedence over main motions
  - Privileged Motion - Relates to the meeting itself
  - Subsidiary Motions - Relates to the treatment of main motion
  - Incidental Motions - Relates to the conduct of the meeting



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# Main Motion



*"This meeting was called in order to discuss the meat. It has been pointed out that there is no more meat. A motion has been made to fight over the bones."*

- Main Motion - Starts the discussion process
- I move that  
" \_\_\_\_\_ "



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# Privileged Motions

Typically  
immediate  
action and  
chair rules

- Privileged Motion - *Relates to the meeting itself*
- Raise a Question of Privilege – *chair responds*
  - Call for orders
  - Stick to the Agenda
  - Pressing issue
  - Raise a question of Privilege
  - Recess
    - specified length of time
  - Fix a time to adjourn
  - Adjourn – *majority vote*



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# Subsidiary Motions

Typically to  
amend the  
main motion or  
procedure

- Subsidiary Motions - *Relates to the treatment of main motions*
- Lay on the Table (table motion) – *majority vote*
- Previous Question (close discussion) – *two-thirds vote*
- Amend – *majority vote*
- Postpone - majority
- Refer to Committee - majority
- Extend Debate – *two-thirds vote*



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# Incidental Motions

Typically to  
change  
motion  
procedure, or  
make a Point  
of Order

- Incidental Motions - *Relates to the conduct of the meeting*
  - Division of a Question – *chair responds*
  - Point of Order – *chair responds*
  - Withdraw a Motion – *majority vote*
  - Appeal a Decision of the Chair - *Member motion & second*
  - Suspend the rules
  - Split a Main Motion containing two or more separate parts.
  - Decide amendments to complex main motions in separate parts



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## Robert 's Rules of Order Motions Chart - <https://robertsrules.org/motions.htm>

**Part 1 - Main Motions. These motions are listed in order of precedence.  
A motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.**

RONR §	Purpose	You Say:	Interrupt	2nd	Debate?	Amend?	Vote?
§21	Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§20	Take a break	I move to recess ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§19	Register complaint	I rise to ask a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
§18	Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
§17	Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§16	Close debate (discussion)	I move the previous question ...	No	Yes	No	No	2/3rd
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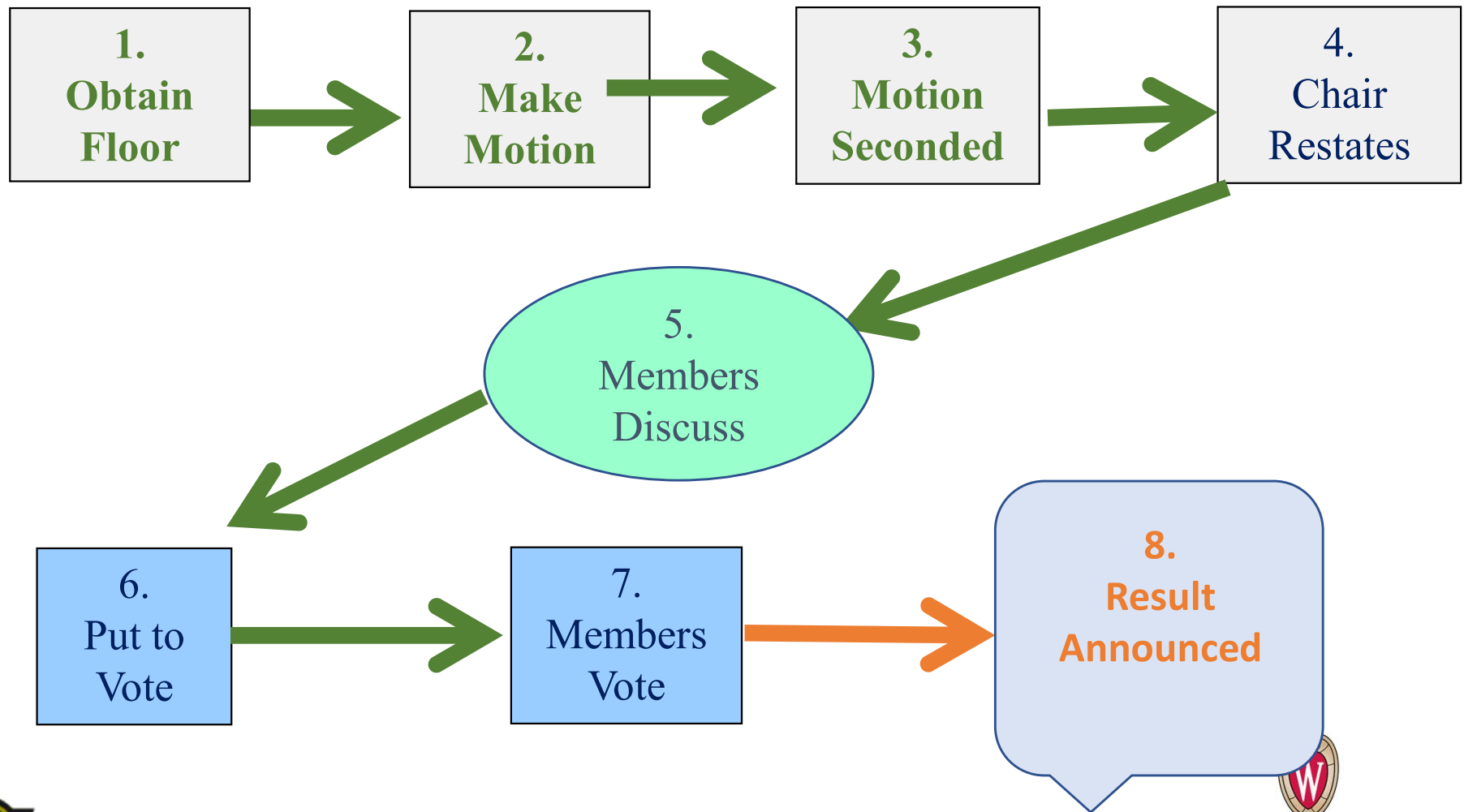
**Part 2 - Incidental Motions. No order of precedence.**  
**These motions arise Incidentally and are decided immediately.**

RONR §	Purpose	You Say:	Interrupt	2nd	Debate?	Amend?	Vote?
§23	Enforce rules	Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	None
§24	Submit matter to assembly	I appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	Varies s	No	Majority
§25	Suspend rules	I move to suspend the rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3rd
§26	Avoid main motion altogether	I object to the consideration of the question	Yes	No	No	No	2/3rd
§27	Divide motion	I move to divide the question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§29	Demand a rising vote	I move of a rising vote	Yes	No	No	No	None
§33	Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	Yes, if urgent	No	No	No	None
§33	Request for information	Point of Information	Yes, if urgent	No	No	No	None

**Part 3 - Motions that bring a questions again before the assembly**  
**No order of precedence. Introduce only when nothing else is pending.**

RONR §	Purpose	You Say:	Interrupt	2nd	Debate?	Amend?	Vote?
§34	Take matter from table	I move to take from the table...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§35	Cancel previous action	I move to rescind ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3rd or Majority with notice
§37	Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider...	No	Yes	Varies	No	Majority

# A Motion's Life – Start to Finish



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# 1. Obtain Floor

- Typically, raising hand
- Called upon or recognized by the presiding officer



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## 2. Make Motion

- Proposal to take action - “I move that...”
- Clearly stated
  - Make positive motions – not negative motions
  - “So moved” is not needed
  - Motion must include a brief description of what you are talking about





# 3. Motion Seconded

- By another member
  - Worthy of discussion
  - Does not have to “favor” the Motion
- Get in advance, especially for substantive motions
- Not needed if committee recommendation
- Should have, but do not need, before starting discussion
- “de-facto” or “ad-hoc” is where discussion has started before a “second” can be obtained
- Withdrawing a “Second” has no impact on a Motion’s validity. Once moved and seconded, presented to the body by the Chair, Motion is now owned by the body.



## 4. Chair Restates

- Clarifies
  - “It has been moved and seconded that...”
- Transfers ownership of the motion to the body
- Once the chair restates it, it belongs to the body and can not be taken back or withdrawn if even only one person objects
  - A motion can only be withdrawn, by a separate motion/second and a vote to withdraw



# Withdrawing a Motion

- RONR
  - Can a Member withdraw his/her motion at any time?
  - Once a Motion is made, seconded, and restated by the Chair, any changes to the Motion are subject the will of the Body
- Middleton
  - No motion shall be amended or withdrawn without the consent of the Alderperson making the same and the Alderperson seconding it.



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## 5. Members ~~Debate~~ - Discuss

- Fine tune the motion
- May occur prior to a motion
- Even if there appears to be plenty of discussion before a motion is made, an opportunity for discussion must be given to all



## 5. Members Discuss - Amendments

- Amending not substitution Motion
- Main motions may be amended
- Amendment must be germane
- Amendments require a motion stating the amendment, a second and a vote
- Amendments take precedence over Main motions
- Amending is a body decision
  - No Friendly Amendment



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# 5. Members Discuss - Amendments

- Amendments are debatable
- Amendments are amendable – keep track
  - Only one amendment to an Amendment at a time
  - Any additional amendments to the amendment should be brought up after the original amendment is decided
- Once voted on, the matter is “settled”, not up for additional amendments covering the same context or effect



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# 5. Members Discuss – Refer to Committee

- During discussion, it may become apparent that the Motion should be referred to a Standing or special committee for further study and input
- A member may then make a Motion to refer the matter to Standing or special Committee
- Such Motion is amendable
- Usually made with a response within a date certain



# 5. Members Discuss – Postpone & Table

- A pending Motion may be postponed to a time later in the same meeting or a later time
- Postponing is NOT tabling
  - Tabling requires another motion to bring it back
  - Postponed brings the Motion back at the time specified
    - Postponing “indefinitely” effectively “kills” the motion
    - Chair should NOT allow a Motion to table to “KILL” a motion
- Role of the chair in clarifying the member’s intent – “postpone or table.”



# Exercise

- The Order of Precedence is an important part of parliamentary procedure. How does it work?
  1. Member A makes a main motion, I move to buy a new computer for the Clerk – Member D seconds
  2. Member C thinks the entire city staff needs a new computer and moves to amend the motion accordingly - Member D seconds
  3. Member B has a chicken dinner waiting and moves to limit discussion to 10 minutes - Member D seconds
  4. Member B is now getting hungry and wants a 10-minute recess to eat a candy bar, but cleverly disguises the intent by noting a need for a restroom break - Member D seconds
- How does the Chair handle these various motions?



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# Side Trip on Discussion



- Chair guides debate
  - Chair may comment or amend motion – but then should remove themselves from “CHAIRING” the meeting 1.03 (3)
- Discuss
- Focus on problem-solving
- Listen to understand
- Get Facts
- Respect each other



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# Single Person or Minority Dominating Discussion



Passive



Assertive



Aggressive

- The Chair is responsible for administering the body's deliberations
- Advisable to seek balanced participation
- Advisable to recognize members who have not yet spoken
- RONR says 10 minute limit and twice to any issue – May make own rules



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## 6. Ending Discussion

ONE PERSON  
CAN MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE,  
AND EVERYONE  
SHOULD TRY

-JOHN F. KENNEDY-

- Chair can seek unanimous consent of the body
  - “Any further discussion?”
  - “Are you ready to vote?”
  - “Any new points, before we vote?”
  - “Council member \_\_\_\_\_ is ready to vote, is it the unanimous view of the Council to close discussion and move to a vote on the main motion.”
- Presiding officer may not end discussion on her/his own
- Motion to end discussion
  - Needs a two-thirds vote to pass
  - This motion is not debatable
- If any objection, ending discussion requires a motion, second and 2/3rds of the body voting to approve



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# 7. Members Vote

**VOTE EARLY  
and  
VOTE OFTEN**

- Presiding officer restates the question and effect of a “yes” or “no” vote
- Votes can be taken in a variety of ways
  - Viva-Voce (Aye/Nay)
  - Show of hands
  - Rising vote
  - Division of the assembly or the house
  - Roll-call (required if requested)
  - Ballot
- Ask for votes on both sides



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# Side Trip on Voting



- Quorum (2/3rds attending) must vote
- Unless a roll call vote, there is no record of an individual abstaining from a vote
- Not required to vote, *Wrezeski v. City of Madison*, 558 F. Supp. 664 (W.D. Wis. 1983)
- Tie Vote – the Mayor may break the tie



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# Conflict of Interest

- Conflicts of interest
  - Remove oneself from participation or voting
  - Do not have to disclose
  - Treated as absent for quorum and voting purposes, *Ballinger v. Door County*. 131 Wis. 2d 624 (Ct. App. 1986)
- Suggest a roll call vote to note the member has removed themselves
- A member can change his/her vote if before the final result is announced. 45 RONR 408
- Where there is a tie vote, the motion fails as there is no majority in favor



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# Abstentions



- Suggest voting present, versus abstaining
- Avoids potential quorum issues,
- Citizens expect your representation



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## 8. Result Announced



- Presiding officer announces results
  - Motion carried or failed
  - Number of votes on each side, if known



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# Point of Order

- Mayor or Chair decides (1.03)
  - Points out a discrepancy in the meeting rules
  - Needs to be made when the infraction or mistake occurs
  - Member states reason for the Point of Order
    - I make a Point of Order that
- 
- Chair – determines “for” or “against” the Point of Order



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# How to Appeal the Chair's Point of Order Ruling



- Member – I appeal the Chair's decision
- Chair
  - The decision of the Chair is appealed
  - Clearly state the exact question at issue and reasons for the Point of Order decision
- The vote is on: “Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained”

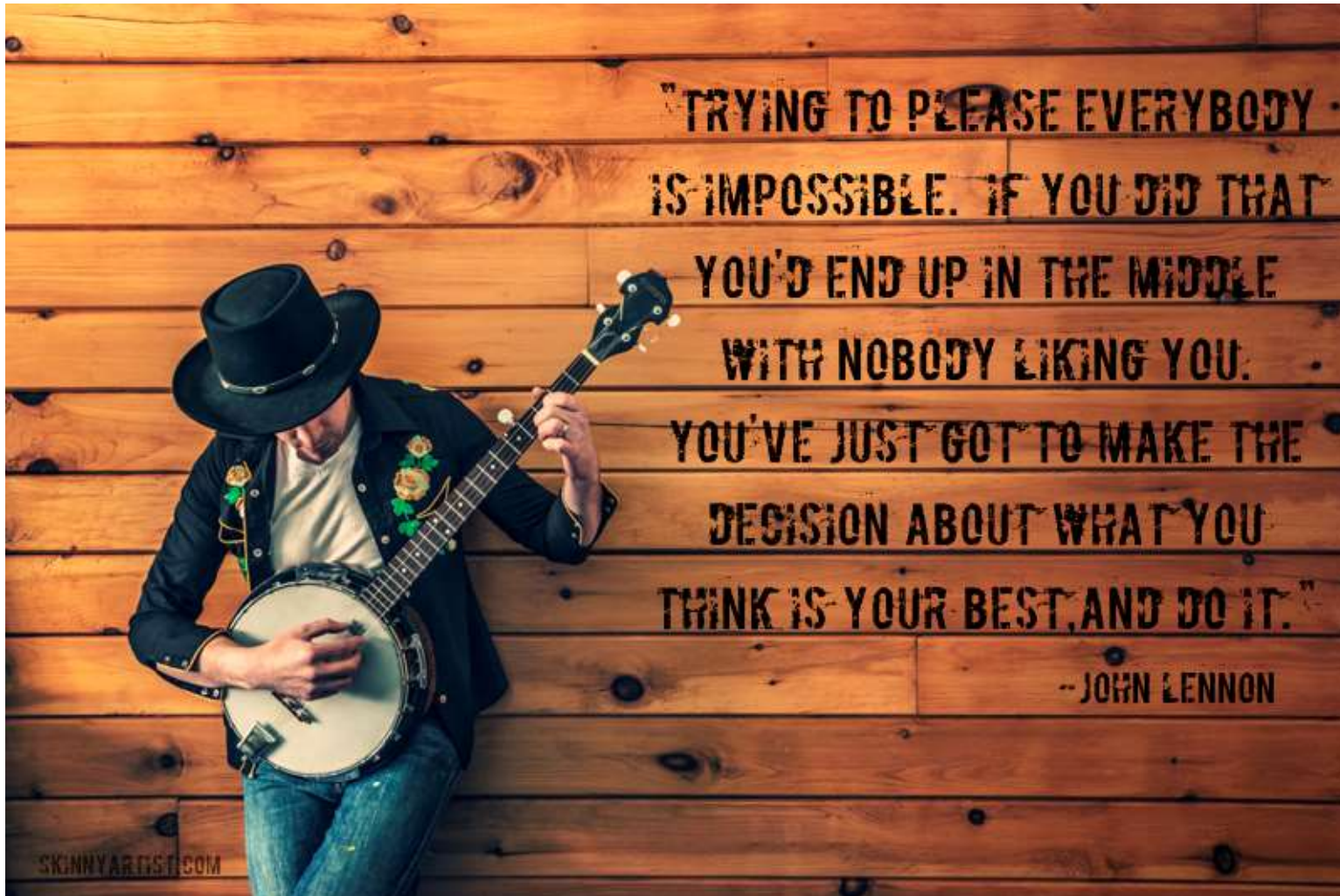


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# Consider!



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# Resources



- **Local Government Center Website** - <https://lgc.uwex.edu/>
  - Effective Meetings - <https://lgc.uwex.edu/effective-meetings/>
  - Provides wealth of Parliamentary Procedure information, written and video format
- **Electronic Meetings** - <https://lgc.uwex.edu/update-government-meetings-during-covid-19-pandemic/>
  - Provides OOG, resolution templates, and webinar resources
- **Deliberative Governance** - <https://lgc.uwex.edu/deliberative-governance/>
  - Provides deliberative governance tools, guides and web resources
- **League of Wisconsin Municipalities**,
  - Handbook for Wisconsin Municipal Officials
  - The conduct of City Council Meetings
  - The Conduct of Village Board Meetings
  - Local Government Options for Conducting Meetings Remotely
- **Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised** – 12<sup>th</sup> Edition 2020
- **Office of Open Government**, <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/office-open-government/office-open-government>. Public Records/Open Meetings (PROM) Help Line: 608-267-2220
- **Daniel Foth**, Local Government Center, UW Madison - Division of Extension [Daniel.Foth@wisc.edu](mailto:Daniel.Foth@wisc.edu)



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Madison or West Allis, WI







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Systemic Integration



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Public staff, managers  
and supervisors ready  
to move their careers  
to the next level

## **Past participants include:**

- State, County, City, Village, Town, Tribe, Special District managers, administrative and program staff
  - Including administration, program, police, fire, EMS, parks, public works, IT, planners, clerks, finance, and utilities
- Municipal decision-makers and program leads
- Nonprofit leadership



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# Thanks!

## **Local Government Education University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension**

Daniel Foth

[Daniel.Foth@wisc.edu](mailto:Daniel.Foth@wisc.edu)

Local Government Education

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