



Board, Commission, Committee and Corporation Orientation Manual

PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCTING A MEETING

To ensure that board, commission and committee meetings are conducted in a fair and orderly fashion, there are a number of rules and procedures that should be followed. The following sections describe these procedures, which when used, create a cordial yet formal atmosphere for conducting meetings.

ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND THE AGENDA

The function of the chairperson is to provide leadership to the group in the following ways:

1. To maintain order by enforcing the established rules
2. To ensure that the meeting proceeds smoothly and follows the agenda

If the group is indecisive, the chairperson should exercise leadership and make suggestions. When debate is concluded, he/she should summarize the major points made. In general, the chairperson should maintain order and try to bring the group to a conclusion on matters before it.

To facilitate the chairperson's duties, staff should **always** provide copies of the agenda to all board, commission, committee or corporation (board) members before the meeting, if possible. Agendas should also be provided to any members of the public in attendance. The agenda should be prepared by the department head or staff person assigned to work with the board. (See Appendix A at the end of the manual for a sample agenda.)

RULES OF THUMB

Here are a few obvious points that should be followed but are often forgotten:

3. Discuss only one point at a time.
4. The chairperson should recognize the person or persons who wish to speak and only they should be allowed to speak. Others should hold their comments until they have the floor.
5. If the meeting is a public hearing, the board or commission should hear the public without making comments until questions are allowed by the chairperson.
6. If a large number of people wish to speak on a topic, some time limit should be set on each presentation.

PROCEDURAL RULES OF ORDER

NOTE: While this review of parliamentary procedures has been designed to cover the most common situations a board member may encounter during the course of a meeting, these procedures may not always apply. They may be superseded by the by-laws adopted by the board or because of legal constraints if the meeting is a public hearing. However, these basic procedures are usually acceptable during most meetings. Answers to complicated procedural questions can be found in **Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised**.

1. **Making a motion** - Begin the discussion by having a member make a motion. Motion should be made and seconded. After this, debate can be conducted. Example of proper form: "Mr./Madam Chairperson, I move the following..."

2. **Amending a motion** - Any motion may be amended as follows: “Mr./Madam Chairperson, I move that we amend the motion by adding, deleting, etc. the following...” The amendment must be seconded before discussion can ensue. When discussion ends, the amendment is voted on first. If the amendment passes, the original motion is then put to vote as amended. If the amendment fails, the original motion is put to a vote.
3. **Change by a Substitute Motion** - Another way to change an original motion is by use of the **substitute motion**. A substitute motion is simply an amendment that changes an entire sentence or paragraph. It must be seconded before discussion can take place. It may be amended and differs only from an amendment in that if the substitute amendment passes, it eliminates the original motion.
4. **Table a Motion** - Occasionally, a board may wish to defer action on a motion until a later meeting. One way to accomplish this is to make a motion to table the item being considered. To table an item requires a motion and a second. A vote is immediately taken without discussion. Once it has been decided to table a motion, it cannot be brought up again until the board votes to do so, unless the motion to table specifies a date. Then the item shall be placed on the agenda for that date. A tabled motion is not debatable and must be voted on immediately. If it is decided to remove a motion from the table, the motion can then be discussed, and a vote taken. A tabled motion can be removed from the table during the same meeting but is usually done so at a later meeting when unfinished business is being considered.
5. **Postpone a Motion** - Another method of delaying a decision on a matter is to postpone to a certain day the consideration of a motion. This is accomplished by simply making a motion to postpone consideration of the motion until a definite future date and having it seconded. The motion to postpone is then open for discussion. Following discussion, a vote is taken.
6. **Motion to Refer** - A motion may also be delayed by making a motion to refer the main motion to a committee or person for further study. After the motion to refer is moved and seconded, it is open for discussion, and motions to amend can be made as to whom the main motion should be referred. The motion to refer as amended is then voted on. If the motion to refer passes, the discussion on the main motion begins.
7. **Point of Order** - Any time a member feels an incorrect procedure is being used, he/she can interrupt with a point of order request which requires the chairperson to decide the correct procedure.
8. **Suspension of the Rules** - Occasionally, board members may want to discuss a business item without the constraints of any rules. Unless the by-laws require otherwise, a two-thirds () vote of the members is needed to suspend the rules. This motion is not debatable and must be voted on upon being seconded.

QUORUM and ACTION

- (A) Except as otherwise provided by ordinance, a majority of the total number of the members constitute a quorum for the conduct of business.
- (B) An action must be adopted by an affirmative vote of the majority of the quorum present and voting.
- (C) All Members necessary to provide a quorum must be physically present at a meeting to conduct business.
- (D) An ex officio member may participate in discussions at meetings but may not vote or bring a motion and does not count towards calculation of a quorum or any other minimum vote count required by city code or state law.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, it stands to reason that if a meeting is to be held in a fair and orderly manner, all the members of the board must be willing to cooperate. They must be informed of the established rules and act accordingly. The chairperson has final responsibility for ensuring that the meeting is properly conducted. Unless the chairperson understands the basic parliamentary procedures discussed and is willing to use them in the best interest of all concerned, the board or commission will be unable to adequately carry out its responsibilities.