

Parliamentary Procedure

Quick Overview:

In conducting business, it is important that you know how to make a motion, second the motion, hold a discussion about the motion, and vote on it.

A motion is necessary anytime the chapter has to decide by vote on an issue. Examples would be: paying bills against the chapter, approving minutes of meetings, accepting the Treasurer's report, agreement to hold an activity or attend a particular function, or to make a decision that cannot be reached by consensus of the membership.

MOTION

When a motion is necessary, the Master Councilor can ask for it to be made by saying:

“I will entertain a motion to _____.

(Note: While the Master Councilor can state the motion, he cannot make it.)

A Member would then rise and say:

“Brother Master Councilor, I so move.”

A chapter member may rise and when recognized by Master Councilor, say:

“Brother Master Councilor, I move _____.

SECOND

To second a motion, a chapter member may rise and when recognized by the Master Councilor, say:

“Brother Master Councilor, I second the motion.”

(Note: Every motion needs a second. If nobody seconds the motion, the motion “dies” and is thus defeated at that time. Motions should not be confused with nominations, which are not motions and therefore do not need a second.)

DISCUSSION

The Master Councilor calls for discussion:

“Brethren, it has been moved and seconded to _____.
Is there any discussion?”

At this time, members may rise, and after being recognized by the Master Councilor, discuss the motion.

VOTE

When the discussion is at an end, the Master Councilor will call for the vote:

“Brethren, there being no further discussion (there being no discussion), we will proceed to a vote. It has been properly moved and seconded to

All in favor of the motion, will signify by saying ‘Aye.’”

After response, the Master Councilor says:

“Those opposed, will signify by saying ‘Nay.’”

The Master Councilor decides whether there were more “Ayes” or “Nays.”

The results should be stated by the Master Councilor as:

“The motion passes.” Or “The motion fails (or is defeated).”

If the result is unclear to the Master Councilor, he may call for a “Division of the House” and a show of hands must be taken to determine the outcome. The same procedure as outlined above for a voice vote is followed, with the exception that the Master Councilor calls upon members to raise their hand either in favor or opposition to the motion. The Master Councilor and the Scribe should count hands, compare their totals, and then the Master Councilor announces the vote in the manner stated above.

Parliamentary Procedure Fundamentals

What Is Parliamentary Procedure?

It is a set of rules governing the conduct of business meetings, which allows everyone to participate in the decisions making process without confusion or disruption.

How Did Parliamentary Procedure Come About?

It originated in the English Parliaments, as a way to conduct business. Parliamentary Procedure came to America with the colonial settlers. In 1876, Henry M Roberts published a manual on the procedures. Today Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised is the book of procedure adopted by most organizations to conduct business. There are, however, several other books on Parliamentary Procedure. Your chapter may wish to consider adopting The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, by Alice Stigges. The language and structure of this book makes it a more easily used reference.

Why Do We Need Parliamentary Procedure?

Any group, which meets for the purpose of presenting proposals, discussing them and then reaching a decision, is referred to as a “Deliberative Assembly.” These deliberative assemblies should adopt a set of rules as to how business should be conducted. These rules should include the following:

1. Each member has the right to speak, vote, and make his or her own decision.
2. A decision is reached when a majority of the members agree on it.
3. An agreed upon number of members required to meet before a decision for the group can be made.

Parliamentary Procedure is a tested method of conducting business, which can be adapted to the needs of any organization. It is designed to protect the rights of the individual in a group, yet provide a way to quickly resolve issues in dispute. A group, whose members are familiar with and follow the rules of Parliamentary Procedure, can quickly make decisions.

What Are the Rules that Govern an Assembly (i.e. a club, fraternity or other organization)?

1. A Charter – this is the legal document from a government or national organization authorizing the local group to meet and conduct business.
2. A Constitution and/or By-Laws – These are the document(s) agreed upon by the organization to regulate the conduct of the group, such as where do they meet, when do they meet, when elections are held, and what is the purpose of the organization (i.e. the purpose of the business club is to promote professional growth of its members).
3. Adopted a Set of Parliamentary Procedures – the rules governing the conduct of the group, not covered by the Charter, Constitution, or By-Laws.

When does my organization use Parliamentary Procedure?

In order to understand when to use Parliamentary Procedure, you must be familiar with the typical meeting agenda. A meeting agenda is the outline or schedule of how a meeting will proceed. A meeting agenda generally follows the following format:

- Call to Order
- Roll Call
- Minutes of Last Meeting
- Report from the Secretary
- Report from the Treasurer
- Announcements
- Standing Committees Report
- Special Committees Report
- Unfinished (Old) Business
- New Business
- Adjournment

To conduct a business meeting, a quorum of the assembly must meet. A quorum is the least number of members necessary to conduct business as stated in the By-Laws.

While Parliamentary Procedure applies to all areas in the agenda, issues as to procedure most often come up during Unfinished and New Business. For example, a member makes a motion during New Business: “I move that we purchase a new banner for our Chapter.” Or “I move that we pay the registration fee for our sports team to enter the State Softball Tournament.” At this point the Chairperson inquires if there is a Second to the motion. The Chairperson or President (Master Councilor) is the person in charge of the meeting. What the Chairperson is asking, when he asks, “Is there a second,” is there a second member who is in favor of the motion. If no one is willing to second the motion, no further action on the motion is necessary. A member can second a motion by saying, “I second the motion.” Once the motion has been

made and seconded, the Chairperson will call for discussion or debate. In other words, this is the point where the members talk about the motion. After the discussion has ended, the Chairperson will call for the vote. This is the time when the group gets to vote whether to accept or reject the motion. The vote is generally taken orally of the group. A member will say “Aye” if in favor of the motion, and “Nay” if opposed to the motion. The Chairperson will decide how the vote went.

Not all motions are resolved this easily. What happens if the assembly agrees to purchase a new banner, but disagrees as to the size of the banner or the cost? What if some of the members think the assembly should only pay for half of the team registration and the players pay the other half? What if one of the members wants to have the vote taken at the next meeting so more of the members can be present? After voting, what if one of the members wants to change his vote? The Rules of Parliamentary Procedure allows for the efficient resolution of these questions through the use of various types of motions.

So What Are These Rules and Motions?

The Fundamental Rule of Parliamentary Procedure is that only one “issue” may be heard at a time. What happens, however, when a motion (one issue) is being discussed and one of the members wants the group to take a recess (a different issue)? In order to resolve these problems, Parliamentary Procedure has ranked motions (issues). The highest ranked motion is heard and resolved before a lower rank motion is heard. It is sort of like the card game, War. The highest ranked motion wins the floor.

Thus, in order to understand Parliamentary Procedure, you must have an understanding of the various types of motions that can be made and you need to know their standing or ranking, so you can determine, which motion has to be resolved first.

The following are the most commonly encountered motions, starting with the lowest ranked motion and moving up to the highest ranked. Generally, motions can be placed into four categories. They are:

1. Main Motions
2. Subsidiary Motions
3. Incidental Motions
4. Privileged Motions

A Main Motion (or Principal Motion) is a motion to accomplish something.

A Subsidiary Motion is a motion to change a Main Motion.

An Incidental Motion is a motion to affect how the Main Motion is handled.

A Privileged Motion is a motion designed for the benefit of a member(s).

Note: There is some disagreement as to which category some motions fall into, but these disputes are not important for our purposes here.

MAIN MOTIONS

A Main Motion directs an action to be taken. “I move that we...” is the method in which a member can present a proposal for consideration to the group. The motion must be stated in the positive. For example:

“I move that we send our sports team to the State Softball Tournament.” Not, “I move that we don’t send our sports team to the State Softball Tournament.”

The Chairperson then decides if the motion is proper – i.e. is it procedurally correct to bring it before the group. If the motion is determined to be proper, then it is discussed. If the motion is improper, the Chairperson can declare it to be “Out of Order.” That means that the motion violates one of the following: 1) a rule of procedure, 2) is in conflict with the Charter, Constitution, or By-Laws, or 3) has been substantially heard and decided previously. The motion will then be brought before the assembly for discussion. Additionally, if the motion is too long or complicated, the Chairperson can require that it be presented in writing.

If the motion is determined proper, then the Chairperson will inquire if there is a Second. A member can second a motion by simply stating “I second the motion.” By seconding the motion, the member is telling the group that they are also in favor of the motion. On occasion, a member will state “To allow discussion, I second the motion.” This means that the member is neither in favor nor opposed to the motion, but wants to hear discussion on it.

Once the motion has been made and seconded, the Chairperson will open the meeting for discussion. The Chairperson will state, “It has been moved and seconded that we send our sports team to the State Softball Tournament. Is there any discussion?” After discussion or debate has ended, the Chairperson will state, “There being no further discussion, I will call the issue for vote.” The Chairperson then restates the motion and the vote is called, “It has been moved and seconded that we send our sports team to the State Softball Tournament. All those in favor will say “Aye” (Done), all those opposed say “Nay” (Done). Depending on the outcome, the Chairman will say, “The ‘ayes’ have it and the motion is approved (or adopted).” Or “The ‘nays’ have it and the motion is defeated.”

Once a Main Motion has been moved and seconded no other Main Motion can be heard until the motion before the group (or the Motion on the Floor) is resolved. A Main Motion can be resolved by voting upon it or by way of a Subsidiary Motion.

There is one other type of Main Motion, which is properly discussed here. That is the Motion to Reconsider. The Motion to Reconsider is a special type of Main Motion, which allows the assembly to reconsider a motion, which has been passed, as though no vote had ever been taken on it. The Motion to Reconsider must be made at the same meeting the original motion was made. The member proposing reconsider must have voted for the motion initially. The member would say, “I move to reconsider the vote taken to purchase a new chapter banner.” A Second is required and so is discussion. If the motion passes, then the original motion is back before the assembly for consideration and a vote.

SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

A Subsidiary Motion is a motion, which is connected to a Main Motion, as a way to resolve it. It is designed to clarify or change the Main Motion. Since a Subsidiary Motion is dependent upon the Main Motion, it does not violate the fundamental rule that only one main motion (issue) can be heard at a time.

The most frequently encountered Subsidiary Motion is the Motion to Amend. The Motion to Amend requires a second, discussion and a majority vote to pass. The purpose of the Motion to Amend is to change a Main Motion to better reflect the intent of the membership. A Main Motion may be amended by

inserting, by changing or by deleting part of the Main Motion. For example, the member would say, “I move to amend the motion by inserting the word “Oregon” before the word “banner.”

The Chairperson at this point should determine if the amendment is in order (proper). An amendment can be declared “out of order,” if it is not relevant or directly related to the nature of the main motion or if it seeks to change the motion type. For example, if the proposed amendment to add the following language after the word “banner,” is “and that we celebrate the purchase by buying everyone after this meeting,” then the amendment is not directly related to the purchase of a banner and the Chairperson should declare the amendment “out of order.”

Once the amendment has been determined to be proper and has been seconded, the Chairperson will then restate the motion as it was amended. The Chairperson will say “It has been moved and seconded to amend the motion by inserting the word ‘Oregon’ before the word ‘banner’ in the main motion. If the motion to amend is adopted, the main motion would read “That we purchase a new Oregon banner.” The group would then be opened up for discussion as to the amendment.

Additionally, the amended motion can be amended. For example, “I move to amend the amendment to insert the word “traditional” before the word “Oregon.” The amendment process would be repeated, as to the word “Oregon.” Parliamentary Procedure limits the number of amendments to an amendment to only one at a time, i.e. – only two levels of amendments can be considered at any one time.

Amendments are voted upon in reverse order. The last amendment is considered first. In the example above you would first vote to add the word “traditional” to the amendment. If the amendment to the amendment is approved, then, you would vote on the amendment, which would now read “traditional Oregon.” Assuming all amendments are approved, you would finally vote on the Main Motion, which would now read, “That we purchase a new traditional Oregon Banner.” All of this could take several votes, depending on the number of amendments, but the process will reduce confusion and allow for quicker decisions.

A second type of Subsidiary Motion is the Motion to Refer to Committee. This motion needs a second, discussion, and a majority vote. The purpose of this motion is to allow for additional time to study the Main Motion prior to a vote. For example, you might want to refer the motion, “To send the sports team to the State Softball Tournament” to the Athletics Committee to determine if this tournament is sanctioned. The member wishing to refer a Main Motion to committee would say, “I move to refer this motion to the Athletics Committee (or “I move to refer this motion to committee,”).” The only discussion as to this Subsidiary Motion should be in regards to whether the Main motion should be sent to a committee.

Additionally, a member may ask that a problem or an issue be referred to committee, even before a Main Motion is brought before the membership. The language of the motion may also include specific directions to the committee as to what they are to accomplish.

A type of Subsidiary Motion, which is often used is the Motion to End Debate. This motion requires a second and a 2/3 vote. There is no discussion. This motion is designed to expedite the proceeding by ending discussion or the bringing of amendments. The Main Motion is immediately voted upon. A member wishing to make this motion would say, “I move to close debate on the motion (or “I move the previous question” or “I call the question.”).”

Another type of Subsidiary Motion is the Motion to Postpone. This motion requires a second, discussion an a majority vote. The purpose of this motion is to put off the discussion of a Main Motion until a particular time. The member would say, “I move that discussion on the motion be postpone until....” A Motion to Postpone cannot be made to a date that would undermine the motion. For example, a member cannot continue the motion to send the Sports team to a softball tournament to a date after the tournament is held. Generally, the postponed motion would be brought up again under Unfinished Business at the next meeting.

A final Subsidiary Motion, which should be reviewed, is the Motion to Table. This motion requires a second, no discussion, and a 2/3 vote. This motion is designed to set aside the discussion of a Motion to later on in the meeting. The member would say, “I move to table the motion.”

INCIDENTAL MOTIONS

An Incidental Motion is a motion to raise an issue as to the procedural conduct of the meeting. They generally are ranked above Main Motions and should be heard when they are made.

One type of Incidental Motion is the Motion to Raise An Issue of Procedure (most commonly referred to as a “Point of Order.”). This motion requires no second, and the chairperson decides. This motion allows a member to address the Chairperson regarding a violation of the organization’s Constitution, Charter, By-Laws or adopted Parliamentary Procedure. The member says, “I rise to a Point of Order.” For example, “I rise to a Point of Order. Our By-Laws require a 2/3 vote in order to spend money to purchase paraphernalia, such as a banner.”

A similar Incidental Motion is the Motion to Appeal the Decision of the Chair. This motion requires a second, discussion, cannot be amended, and a majority vote. The motion is designed to allow the assembly to vote as to whether to uphold a decision of the Chairperson. The member will say, “ I appeal the decision of the Chair.” For example, “I appeal the decision of the Chair. My motion to purchase a new computer for our secretary has not been previously raised.”

A final type of Incidental Motion is the Motion to Call for a Division of the Assembly (commonly referred to as a “Division of the House”). This motion does not require second, discussion, or a vote. The purpose of this motion is to determine the actual vote outcome when a hand or voice vote is unclear. The member says, “I call for a Division of the House (or “I call for a standing vote.”).” The Chairperson will then ask for a standing vote of members.

PRIVILEGED MOTIONS

A Privileged Motion is one that relates to the rights of the individual or the assembly. This motion does not require a second, discussion, or a vote, and the Chairperson makes the decision. The urgency of the motion allows the member to interrupt the current business of the assembly. For example, a member wishes to be excused to call home. The Chairperson makes a decision if in fact the motion is privileged. The member will say, “I rise to a question of Privilege (or “I rise to a point of Personal Privilege”).” The Chairperson responds, “You will state your motion.”

CONCLUSION

Parliamentary Procedure is not the awful monster of meetings, but a way to resolve disputes, protect the rights of members, and provide a quick and efficient handling of business. While at first these rules and procedures may seem overwhelming, when used, the membership will quickly learn them and use them.

GLOSSARY

AGENDA, Meeting – the outline or schedule of how a meeting will proceed.

AMEND, Motion to – a motion for the purpose of changing a Main Motion to better reflect the intent of the membership.

APPEAL the Decision of the Chair, Motion to – a motion designed to allow the assembly to vote as to whether to uphold a decision of the Chairperson. This motion requires a second, discussion, cannot be amended, and a majority vote.

CALL FOR DIVISION OF ASSEMBLY, Motion to - a motion to determine the vote when a hand or voice vote is unclear. This motion does not require a second, discussion, or vote.

CALL FOR THE VOTE – the term used to request that a vote be taken by the assembly, on the issue before it, without further discussion or debate. The group will then vote whether to accept or reject the motion. (See Motion to end Debate)

DELIBERATIVE ASSEMBLY – any group, which meets for the purpose of presenting proposals, discussing them, and then reaching a decision.

DISCUSSION or DEBATE – refers to the point in the handling of a motion when the members of the group will have the opportunity to give their opinions on the motion.

END DEBATE, Motion to – a motion, designed to expedite the proceeding by ending the discussion or the bringing of amendments, and have the Main Motion voted on. This motion requires a second, no discussion, and a 2/3 vote.

INCIDENTAL MOTION – a motion to raise a procedural issue as to how a motion or the meeting is being conducted.

MAIN MOTION – the principal or primary motion to accomplish something or to raise an issue.

MAJORITY – the principle by which decisions are made. In most cases, issues are decided and decisions are made by a “simple majority” – 50% plus one of those voting (this assumes a Quorum is first present). In some cases (such as motions to change or amend a Constitution, Charter, By-Laws, adopted Parliamentary Procedure, or membership or its requirements) a “special or super majority” is required – usually set at 2/3 of those voting or the total membership; however, the assembly can set other requirements such as “60%” or “3/4.”

MOTION ON THE FLOOR – the words used to indicate which “issue” is currently before the assembly for consideration.

OUT OF ORDER – the words used to indicate that the motion violates 1) a rule of procedure, or 2) is in conflict with the Charter, Constitution, or By-Laws, or 3) has been substantially heard by the assembly previously.

PRIVILEGED MOTION – the motion designed to protect the rights of or for the benefit of a member(s).

POINT OF ORDER – See Raise Issue of Procedure.

POSTPONE, Motion to – a motion to put off the discussion of a Main Motion until a particular time. This motion requires a Second, discussion, and a majority vote.

QUORUM – is the least number of members necessary to conduct business as stated in the By-Laws.

RAISE ISSUE OF PROCEDURE, Motion to (Point of Order) - a motion, which allows a member to address the Chairperson regarding a violation of the organization's Charter, Constitution, By-Laws, or adopted Parliamentary Procedure. This motion requires a second, no discussion, and the Chairperson decides.

RECONSIDER, Motion to – a special type of Main Motion, which allows the assembly to reconsider a motion, which has already been passed, as though no vote had ever taken place on it. The member making the motion must have voted for the original motion. Requires a second, discussion, and a majority vote.

REFER TO COMMITTEE, Motion to – a motion to allow for additional time to study the Main Motion prior to a vote. This motion needs a second, discussion and a majority vote.

SECOND – the term used to advise the Chairperson that you also believe the motion should be adopted (or at least discussed).

SUBSIDIARY MOTION – a motion which is connected to a Main Motion, as a way to change the Main Motion in order to resolve it. It is designed to clarify the Main Motion.

TABLE, Motion to – a motion to set aside discussion of a Motion until later in the meeting. This motion requires a second, no discussion, and a 2/3 vote.

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