Conducting Effective Meetings
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Conducting an effective meeting

Why is it important?
Because.....
You are a locally elected board member and your goal is to make the best decisions for your school that result in increased student achievement.

Conducting an effective meeting

What is important?
To.....
Conduct your meeting in public and provide for public input, but remember it is your meeting in a public setting that provides for transparency.

Open Meetings Act AS 44.62.310
Conducting an effective meeting

What is important?

How...
- Most school boards use *Roberts Rules of Order*
- facilitates a meeting for efficiency and fairness to each member
- Provides the opportunity for fair and respectful participation

When in doubt; Know your Board bylaws

Bylaws are:
- Your Ground Rules
- Your Expectations
- Your Processes
- Your Responsibilities

If nothing else, know how to access your bylaws (usually section 9000 of your board policies)
Basic Principles of Robert’s Rules of Order

• Provides a structure to facilitate the efficient, fair and respectful conduct of a meeting – get your work done!
• One thing at a time, one person at a time, one time per meeting
• All discussions should be germane to the pending question
• No interruptions

• Majority rules (not consensus)
• No surprises
• Right to know what will be discussed (Agenda)
• Everyone is equal (including the chair)

Does Your Board Really Need To Follow Robert’s Rules of Order

It is usually specified in your bylaws (BB 9323)

In small boards (less than 12), most Parliamentary Rules apply, but certain modifications permitting greater flexibility and informality are commonly allowed.

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Most Common Protocol Mistakes School Boards Make

- Understanding what the chair’s role is and is not
- Allow surprises (items not on agenda or information withheld until the meeting)
- Poor agenda planning
- Requiring proper respect and protocol by all board members (develop decorum & culture)
- Forgetting that board member conduct sends messages to your community

The board must NOT forget.

that someone is always watching!!
The Agenda is a Map

- Regular Meeting
  1) Call to Order
  2) Pledge of Allegiance
  3) Roll Call
  4) Introduction of Visitors
  5) Persons to be Heard (public comment on non-agenda items)
  6) Approval of Consent Agenda Items
  7) Adoption of Agenda
  8) Communications
  9) Reports
  10) Unfinished Business
  11) New Business (public may comment on each item)
  12) Personnel
  13) Miscellaneous
  14) Executive Session
  15) Future Agenda Items
  16) Adjournment

The agenda provides structure for the board to work from, a plan for everyone to see.

The Agenda is:
- Developed by the superintendent & chair
- Not final until the full board approves it
- “Belongs” to the members – not the Chair or Superintendent
- Once adopted, can only be changed in a regular meeting (requiring a 2/3 vote is a good idea)
- Handling board member general comments and concerns
- Is limiting in what can be proposed that evening

Agenda Continued...
- Is meant to:
  - Inform members
  - Lock in business
  - Alert the public of issues to be discussed
- Be careful about indicating “action” items versus “information” items
- Asking members for agenda items should be routine
- Consent agendas
Public Participation During Board Meetings

- A meeting held in public is not a meeting for the public meeting!
- Have sign-up procedure and other “rules” (outlined in your policies)
- Time limits – be consistent but you may need to be flexible
- Comments limited to issues – not individuals
- No debate with the public during the meeting
- Establish follow-up procedures - IMPORTANT

The agenda can provide portals of opportunity for the public to speak to the board

**Regular Meeting**
1) Call to Order
2) Pledge of Allegiance
3) Roll Call
4) Introduction of Visitors
5) Persons to be Heard (public comment on non-agenda items)
6) Approval of Consent Agenda Items
7) Approval of Agenda
8) Communications
9) Reports
10) Unfinished Business
11) New Business (public may comment on agenda item)
12) Personnel
13) Capital Projects
14) Educational Services
15) Future Agenda Items
16) Adjournment

Accurate board meetings minutes are critical

- Date, time and place of meeting
- Record of board members present as well as members of the public who speak
- All motions and their disposition
- Each member’s vote must be recorded by name
  - Members (including chair) must vote or abstentions should be rare
  - Record of what was done, not what was said
What to Leave Out of Minutes

- Opinion or interpretation of secretary
- Judgmental phrases
- Flowery language
- Motions that are withdrawn
- Name of person seconding the motion (optional)
- Language of reports (use attachments)
- Transcript-style writing

Minutes Are Critical

- Minutes are legally binding once approved
- Minutes are recording of actions of the board and not of an individual
- Everyone’s job to ensure the minutes accurately reflect actions of the board
- The “I didn’t mean it” board member

Robert’s Rules of Order

Getting your business done!
Handling motions and amendments

There are six steps for adopting a motion.
Step 1~ A member makes a motion
Step 2~ A member seconds a motion
Step 3~ The chair states the question
Step 4~ The members debate
Step 5~ The members vote
Step 6~ The chair announces the vote

Step 1
A Member Makes a Motion

- Motions written out to avoid confusion
- When motion poorly worded, chair has the option to assist in clarifying
- Maker says a few brief words if needed
- Chairs CAN make motions – cautiously
- Be Precise

Main motions are out of order if:

- Not germane to the pending question
- Conflicts with local, state or federal law
- Presents same question dealt with earlier in that meeting
- Action outside the scope of the organization
Step 2

Second the Motion
- Implies a member wishes to hear discussion not necessarily that they are in favor
- If no one seconds the motion, it FAILS
- Some items do not require a second
  - Any ideas on what those are?
- No need for recognition for seconds but most do and most record it in the minutes

Step 3

Chair States the Motion
- Formally places motion before members
- Transfers ownership to the full board
- Chair should restate the motion during debate
- Chair reminds board if straying from question
- After this step, the board must do “something” with the motion

Step 4

Members Debate
- Maker of motion should speak first
- Debate focus on immediate pending question
- Debate alternated between pros & cons and must remain germane
- Members who have not yet spoken recognized before members speaking a second time
Step 5
Members Vote

- The chairperson repeats motion before calling for vote
- Secret ballots cannot be used
- The vote of each member on each item required in the minutes. The chair may ask for unanimous consent or "without objection" to speed things along.
- All votes regarding fiscal issues require a roll call vote.

Step 6
Announcing the Vote

- Announce outcome of vote - give number of those in favor and those opposed
- Announce "next steps"
The 10 “Must-Know” Motions for School Board Meetings

1. Adjourn
2. Recess
3. Lay on the table
4. Previous question
5. Limit/extend limits of debate
6. Postpone to a certain time
7. Commit or refer
8. Secondary amendment
9. Primary amendment
10. Main motion

Simplified Chart of Most Used Parliamentary Motions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motion</th>
<th>Debatable</th>
<th>Amendable</th>
<th>Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjournment</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay on the table</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close debate</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postpone definitely</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer to committee</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second amendment</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary amendment</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main motion</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simplified Chart of Common Procedural Motions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motion</th>
<th>Debateable</th>
<th>Amendable</th>
<th>Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amend previously</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/3 or majority adopted w/ previous notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescind</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/3 or majority w/ previous notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconsider</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divide question</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspend</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The motions, points and proposals listed above have no established order of preference; any of them may be introduced at any time except when meeting is considering one of the top three matters listed from the first chart (Motion to Adjourn, Recess or Point of Privilege).

ROBERTS RULES CHEAT SHEET

Characteristics of a well run meeting:

- A well developed, clear agenda is available well prior to any meeting
- Appropriate materials are available for board members and the public
- Board members have done their homework and are prepared
Conducting a good meeting

Characteristics of a well run meeting:

- The board chair understands their role is to serve the board.
- Be familiar with Robert's Rules and be prepared to keep the meeting on track with respect, civility and a firm hand.

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Characteristics of a well run meeting:

- The chair ensures all members get the opportunity to be heard.
- Limits unnecessary duplication of comments.
- Keeps the discussion germane to the topic at hand.
- Board members understand the role of the chair and the meeting rules.

Conducting a good meeting

Characteristics of a well run meeting:

- The board cultivates and demonstrates a decorum of respect even during vigorous debate and disagreement.
- When a decision is made it belongs to the entire board even if you did not agree with it.
Conducting a good meeting

Characteristics of a well run meeting:

- Only the board acting as one legal unit has authority, no single member has any more authority than another.
- The board works and acts in an ethical manner (as per policy and bylaws) that is transparent to the public.

References:


Board Basics – A primer for nonprofit board members, Jerry Covey


Recommended Reading