

Robert's Rules of Order

Executive Administrative Assistants Training

December 9, 2021

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Disclaimer

The material contained in this presentation is based upon the principals and practices of parliamentary procedure. I am not an attorney and nothing in this presentation constitutes legal advice.

Most Outrageous Governmental Board Meeting Ever

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFeA-pMoo8Y>

Why Use Robert's Rules?

Quorum

- The “quorum” is the minimum number of voting members who must be present for business to be done
- Usually it is a majority (more than half) of the members in office – the members who are actually serving on the board.
- “Quorum” is different from “Votes cast”
- If you lose your quorum, you can’t do business



Walking Quorum

- Local government bodies must not create a “walking quorum” or a “serial meeting”
- When members of the body talk or email with each other outside of meetings, such that a quorum is discussing the body’s business, the Open Meetings Act has been violated
- You can talk to other people, as long as the number is less than a quorum



Agenda

- Prepared by leadership, but within control of board (subject to notice requirements, of course)
- You don't need to vote to adopt an agenda, but many bodies do vote
- Takes a majority vote to adopt, and a 2/3 vote to change later in the meeting
- Do not need to include approval of agenda, or other minor procedural motions, in minutes



Regular Agenda/Consent Agenda

Question: *What's the difference between the regular agenda and the consent agenda?*

- The regular agenda lays out the items to be taken up at a particular meeting
- It follows your “Order of Business”
- The agenda may include, as a single item, “Adoption of the consent agenda”



Consent Agenda/Calendar

- A "consent agenda" lists items that are expected not to be controversial
- If any member requests that an item be removed from the consent agenda, it is done on request
- The item is placed on the regular agenda, EITHER immediately after the consent agenda, or at its proper place in the regular agenda
- Items on consent agenda CANNOT BE DISCUSSED

Unanimous consent

- Form of voting – a type of “fast track”
- Very efficient for minor procedural matters
- Presider suggests something, and if you agree, REMAIN SILENT. Silence means consent.
- If you disagree, say “OBJECTION”
- Presider then knows that everyone does not agree, and abandons the fast track to use the regular method



Language Tip

“Without Objection...”

“If there is no objection...”

Purpose of Minutes

According to Robert's Rules, the purpose of minutes is:

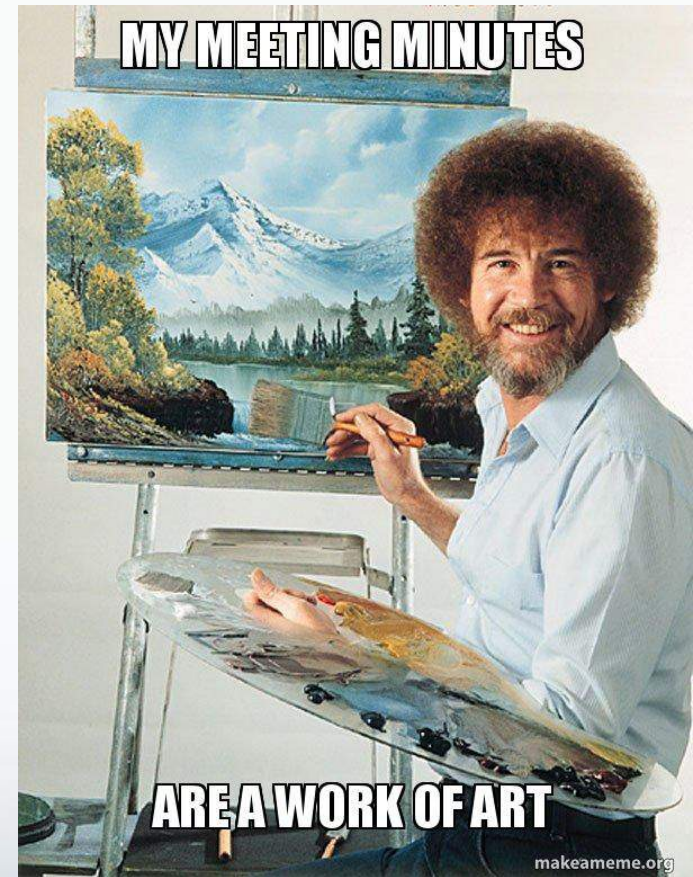
To record the actions taken
by the body

Minutes record what is DONE, not what is SAID



Detailed Minutes Are A Bad Idea Because...

- It violates the fundamental purpose of minutes
- It can create liability for the organization or individuals in case of a lawsuit
- It tends to personalize and politicize the discussion
- It can intimidate participants, preventing them from speaking freely
- It absorbs too much staff time and takes the group's time
- It makes it harder to find the actions taken



Minutes

Meeting minutes record what is **DONE**, not what is **SAID**

By Ann Macfarlane | September 23, 2020

The biggest problem we encounter in meeting minutes is too much verbiage. Striving to do justice to their job, secretaries sometimes include the arguments that are made, what people say in response, and all the minutiae of discussion. There is a better way! According to Robert's Rules of Order, minutes should record what is **DONE**, not what is **SAID**.

If you follow this guidance strictly, you will prepare **action minutes**. These simply list the actions taken by the body.



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<https://jurassicparliament.com/meeting-minutes-record-what-is-done/>



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Guidelines for Minutes

Guidelines for Meeting Minutes in Local Government

By Ann Macfarlane | May 2, 2018



Meeting minutes recording the actions taken by your council or board are a fundamental part of the meeting process. These are our guidelines for meeting minutes in local government. They refer to ordinary business and work or study meetings of councils, boards and committees. Public hearings are governed by different rules.

[Download PDF](#)

<https://jurassicparliament.com/meeting-minutes-local-government/>

Principle of Equality

All Members have equal rights,
privileges and obligations

Key Point

Discussion in board meetings is

NOT A CONVERSATION

It is **DEBATE** and has its own rules



Rules for Debate

- No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once



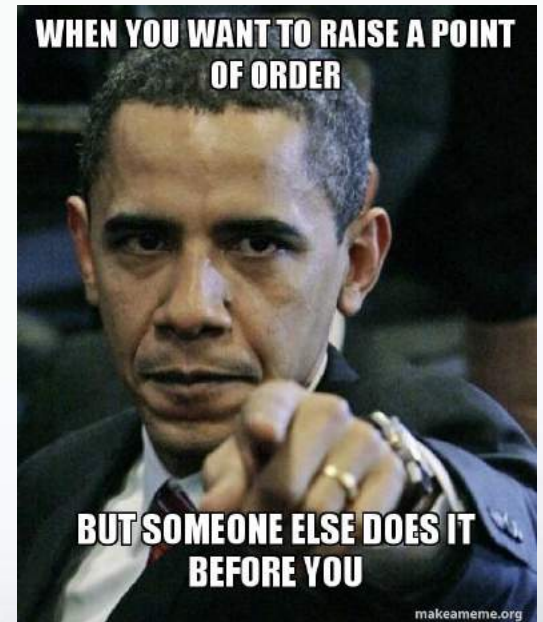
Why Don't We Follow This Rule?



- Boards tend to discuss their affairs in conversational mode
- In conversations, dominant people tend to dominate
- Agreeable people tend to let them
- Must have a structure to make sure that everyone has an equal chance to speak
- That is both fair and efficient

Point of Order

- When ANOTHER MEMBER breaks one of the rules, a member may make a POINT OF ORDER
- Chair rules on the point
- A motion claiming that a procedural mistake has been made
- According to Robert, can be made only by a member
- We recommend authorizing key staff to do so also
- Public may not raise a Point of Order
- **May interrupt a speaker if necessary**
- **Must be timely – made at the time of the offense**



Don't Weaponize Point of Order!

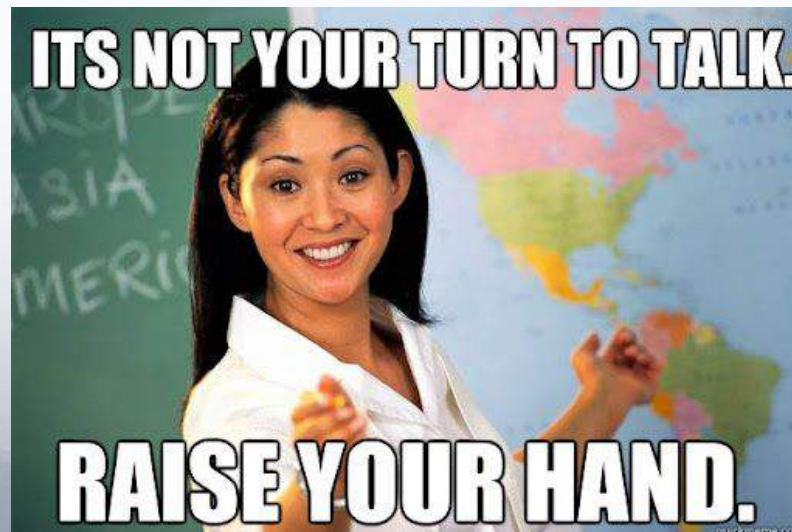
- You may interrupt to make a Point of Order
- Sometimes to have to
- Usually it is NOT NECESSARY TO INTERRUPT, and you should hold back
- Usually it is best NOT TO CALL A POINT OF ORDER FOR GERMANENESS
- Point of Order does not count as a turn in discussion
- Once the chair has ruled on a Point of Order, the only allowable form of discussion is to appeal the ruling

Seeking Recognition

**Members must seek
recognition from the presider
before speaking**

Seeking Recognition

- Raise your hand and wait to speak until the presider (chair) calls your name, nods at you, or gives some other sign that you have permission to speak (you “have the floor”)
- Online, you can use the “raise hand” function or raise your physical hand.



Duty to Remain Silent

- When you have not been recognized, you have a duty to remain silent
- The exception is a Point of Order when essential.



Are We Having Fun Yet?

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Making Motions

- A member makes a motion
- Another member seconds
- The Chair states the OFFICIAL language for the motion
- The fun begins!

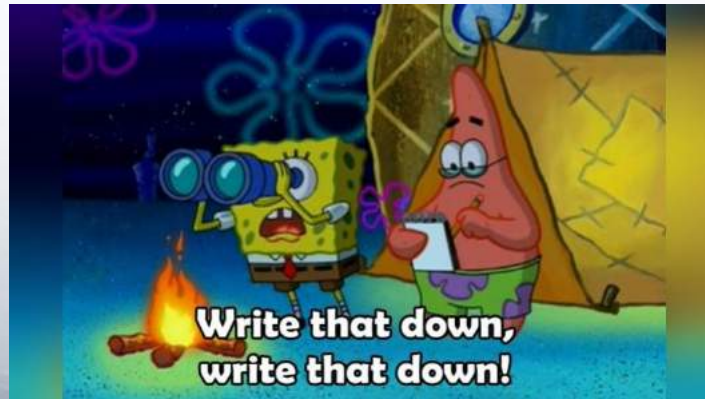


Main Motion

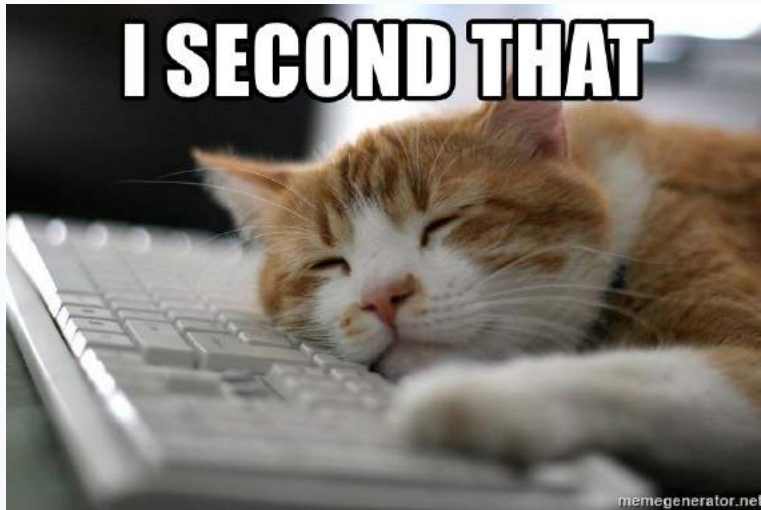
- It should be **in writing** if at all possible
- It should be **clear** and unambiguous. Don't say "I move what he just said" or "So moved"
- It should be phrased in the grammatical **positive**
- It must comply with the **bylaws** and the **procedural** law of the land
- You may only have **one main motion** at a time

You Can Request a Moment to Write It Down

- May I have a few minutes to write this motion down?
- Chair may also request that a motion be written
- Can use 3-part motion forms



Second the Motion



- You “second a motion” to show that you would like to talk about it
- No need to be recognized. Just call out “second”
- It is OK to second a motion you disagree with, if you want to explain why it is a bad idea.

Language Tip

If there is no second, the Chair says:

There being no second, the motion will not be considered

Then moves immediately to the next item of business

You Can't Speak Against Your Own Motion

- Under Robert's Rules, the maker of the Motion cannot speak against it
- If the discussion has changed their mind, they should request permission to withdraw the motion
- The maker CAN VOTE against their own motion



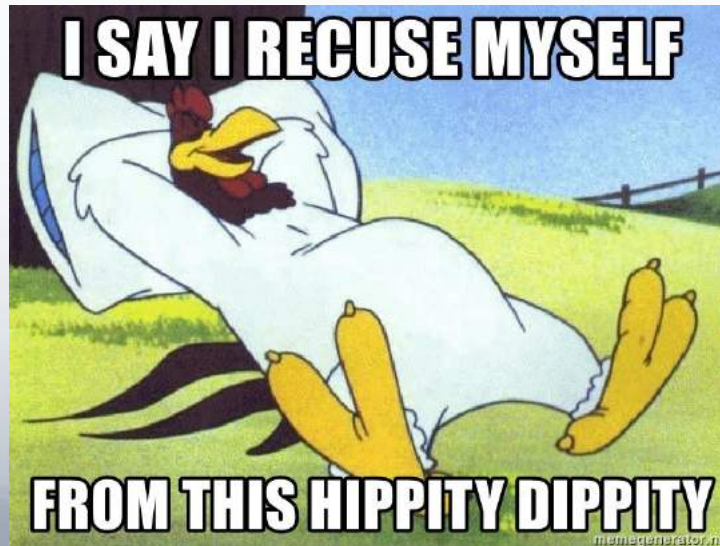
Eight Steps to Process A Motion

1. **Member makes motion**
2. Another member second motion
3. **Chair states motion**
4. Members debate and/or amend motion
5. **Chair restates motion and calls for vote**
6. Members vote on motion
7. Chair states results of vote, whether motion passes or fails, and what happens next as a result of the vote
8. Chair states next item of business



Other Points on Voting

- On a voice vote, the chair must call for the negative vote, even if it seems obvious that the motion is unanimous
- A tied vote fails
- Under Robert's Rules, if you abstain from a vote, it means you took no action
- If you think you have a conflict of interest, check with the attorney in advance. During the meeting, you “recuse yourself” by leaving the room and taking no part in the discussion or vote.



Four Ways to Amend

1. Add or insert words
2. Strike out words
3. Strike out words and insert words in their place
4. Substitute (tricky!)



The amendment is processed using the same eight steps that we just saw for a main motion

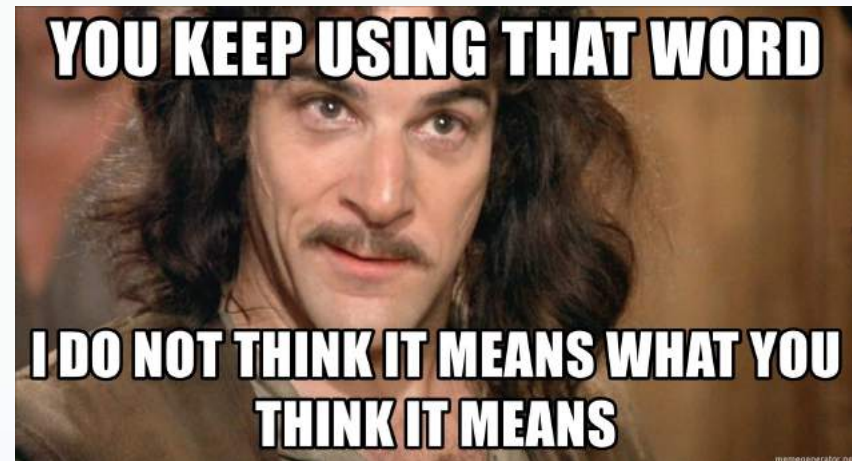
“Friendly Amendment”

- People often process “friendly amendment” the wrong way
- DO NOT turn to make an seconder to ask if they accept the amendment – this gives them improper power
- Once a motion has been stated by the chair, the maker and seconder have the same rights as any other member
- Handle this the same as any other amendment
- Ask, “Is there a second?” etc.



Call the Question

- Motion requesting that we stop debate and vote
- This motion requires a **second**
- **HOWEVER** it cannot be **debated**
- It cannot be **amended**
- And, it takes a **two-thirds** vote to pass
- Once approved, no more discussion is allowed



Two-Thirds Vote

- Note that this means **AT LEAST TWO-THIRDS** of the voting members
- Different type from majority, which means **MORE THAN HALF**
- Robert specifies two-thirds when members' rights are limited or extended. Must be taken so you can see the result, not by voice.

Process Call the Question

1. Member A: *I call the question!*
2. Member B: *Second!*
3. Chair: *The question has been called, so we will vote immediately on whether to end debate and vote on the pending motion, which is [state motion]. A those in favor of stopping de bate now, please raise your right hand.*
4. [Members in favor raise right hand]

Process Call the Question

5. Chair: *Thank you, hands down. All those opposed, please raise your right hand.*
6. [Members opposed raise right hand]
7. Chair: *Thank you, hands down. There are two-thirds in favor of ending debate, so we will vote immediately, OR There are not two-thirds in favor of ending debate, so discussion will continue.*

Personal Remarks

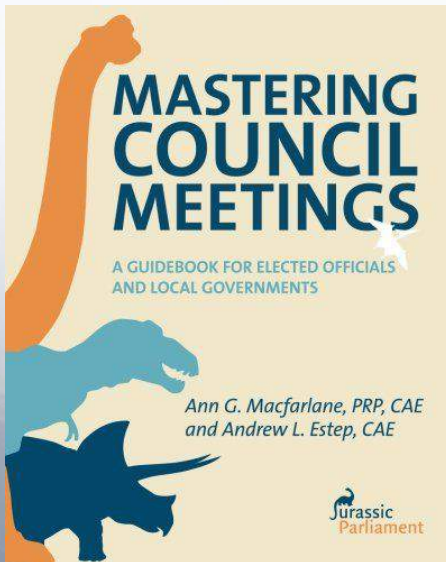
*The measure, not the member, is
the subject of debate.*

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th ed., 43:21



Resources!

- Ask AASB portion of our website: <https://aasb.org/ask-aasb/>
- Subscribe to free Jurassic Parliament monthly newsletter
- Subscribe to the free Jurassic Parliament blog for weekly insight, tips, and inspiration
- Email any time



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Any Questions



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