



CITY COUNCIL
Special Called Meeting Agenda
Parliamentary Procedure Training

November 24, 2025
5:30 PM
6738 Dixon Street
Milton, FL 32570

- 1. Open Meeting**
- 2. Persons to Appear**
- 3. Special Called Meeting Subject**
 - Item # 2025-3742
 - Great City Council Meetings - Parliamentary Procedure Training for Board Members
- 4. Public Input**
- 5. Adjournment**

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this meeting is asked to advise the City at least 48 hours before the meeting by contacting City Hall, 6738 Dixon Street, Milton, or by calling 983-5410.

"If any person decides to appeal any decision made by the board, agency, or commission, with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based." FS 286.0105



Agenda Item # 2025-3742

Great City Council Meetings - Parliamentary Procedure Training for Board Members

MEETING DATE

November 24, 2025

PREPARED BY

Molly Turnes, City Clerk

BACKGROUND

GREAT CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

City Councils can face special challenges in these turbulent times. This workshop distills the best of Robert's Rules of Order to provide guidelines, tips and tools to run effective City Council meetings. The workshop is interactive and lively.

After taking this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Apply the principles of the authority and role of chair, members and staff
- Follow best practices for fair and inclusive meeting discussion
- Make motions and amendments
- Deal with disorder or difficult people
- Run effective public comment sessions
- Make better decisions for your constituency

SUMMARY

The workshop will take the form of a scenario modeling the meeting of a City Council, including reference to city advisory committees. The workshop is based upon adult learning principles. There will be ample time to practice making, amending, and debating motions. Participants have found the approach to be informative, engaging and entertaining.

RECOMMENDATION

ATTACHMENTS

1. Macfarlane Resume w photo
2. HANDOUT City of Milton FL 2025 11 24



ANN G. MACFARLANE, PRP

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Seattle WA 98177

Tel: 206-542-8422

Email: ann@jurassicparliament.com

Ann Griffin Macfarlane studied Russian and Ancient Greek at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She was awarded a Marshall Scholarship by the British government to earn a B.A./M.A. degree from Cambridge University, England. She began her career as a diplomat in the U.S. Foreign Service. Fluent in Urdu, Ann served in Lahore, Pakistan and on the Bangladesh desk of the State Department before becoming the first woman staff assistant in the Near East South Asia Bureau. In that position she supported Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East and supervised the flow of reporting and memoranda for other hot spots in the region.

After study at the Army Russian Institute in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Ann married fellow Foreign Service Officer Lew Macfarlane. She served on the Soviet desk before resigning her commission to devote herself to their family in the Congo, Tanzania, and Kathmandu.

The Macfarlanes returned to Seattle, Lew's native city, with their three sons. Ann became a professional translator and was elected President of the American Translators Association. She then served as Executive Director of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators before becoming a partner with Andrew Estep as an owner of ERGA, Inc., an association management company, from 2007 to 2014.

Ann developed "Jurassic Parliament" in 2000 as a way of helping people run productive meetings. The approach makes Robert's Rules of Order understandable, fun, and easy to learn and apply. Ann and Andrew published *Mastering Council Meetings: A guidebook for elected officials and local governments* in 2013. Over the past 24 years Ann has trained thousands of elected officials and nonprofit leaders across the nation.

Education and credentials:

- Professional Registered Parliamentarian, National Association of Parliamentarians
- Certificate in Nonprofit Management, University of Washington
- U.S. Army Russian Institute Certificate, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany
- B.A./M.A., Cambridge University, England
- Marshall Scholarship, Her Majesty's Government, United Kingdom
- B.A. with highest honors, University of California Santa Cruz

Great City Council Meetings

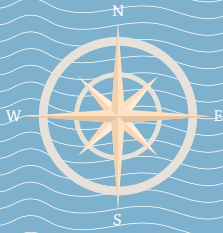
City of Milton, Florida

November 24, 2025

Presented by
Ann G. Macfarlane
Professional Registered Parliamentarian



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League of NORTHWEST DINO CITIES



 **Jurassic
Parliament**

 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Great City Council Meetings

Ann G. Macfarlane, Professional Registered Parliamentarian
Jurassic Parliament

City of Milton, Florida
By videoconference
Monday, November 24, 2025

1

 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Our topics

- I. Introduction
- II. Meeting discussion, Point of Order, Appeal
- III. How to do this?
- IV. Motions and Amendments
- V. Who's in charge?
- VI. Public comment
- VII. The right kind of control
- VIII. Conclusion

2

 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

I. Introduction

Why are we here?

To energize you to run effective meetings
to serve your community

3

 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

After taking this training you will be able to:

1. Describe how the authority of the group is more important than any single individual, even the chair.
2. Follow best practices for discussion.
3. Respond to disorder and difficult people.
4. Make Motions and Amendments.
5. Run effective public comment sessions.
6. Make better decisions for your community.

4

 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Disclaimer

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

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Call meeting to order

- At the right time (not earlier!) sit in the chair reserved for the person running the meeting.
- Rap the gavel lightly one time and announce, "This meeting of the Dinopolis City Council is called to order."
- Ask the clerk to take the roll.
- Announce that a quorum is present (or not).

MCM p. 13

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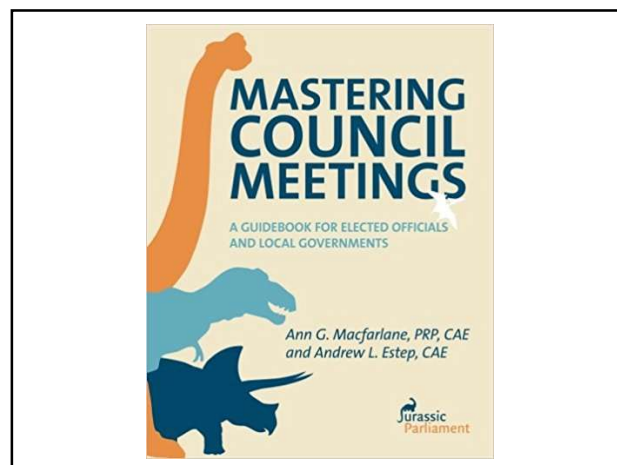
Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Note book citations

- At the right time ...
- Rap the gavel lightly one time ...
- Ask the clerk to take the roll....
- Announce that a quorum is present (or not)....

MCM p. 13

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Quorum

- The “quorum” is the minimum number of voting members who must be present for business to be done.
- For local governments, it is usually a majority of the fixed positions.
- “Quorum” is different from “votes cast.”
- If you lose your quorum, you can’t do business.

MCM pp. 22, 38

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Florida Sunshine Law

- Local government bodies must not create a “walking quorum” or a “serial meeting.”
- Generally speaking, when members of the council communicate with each other outside of meetings, the Open Public Meetings Act has been violated.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Agenda

- Agenda is prepared by leadership, but is within control of council (subject to notice requirements, of course).
- Very important that you read the agenda packet in advance!
- If you have questions, send them to the staff in advance.

MCM p. 13, 24-25

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

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.”

MCM p. 24

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Consent agenda

- 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 at its proper place in the regular agenda.
- Some bodies have a line item for items removed, to be taken up immediately after the consent agenda.

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Consent agenda

- The consent agenda CANNOT BE DISCUSSED OR DEBATED.
- It is adopted with a single vote.
- The minutes must list all the items that were approved.

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Remember

- A vote to APPROVE, ADOPT or ACCEPT a report means that the body accepts the report and its recommendations in their entirety.

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Purpose of minutes

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

**to create a record of the actions
taken by the body.**

Minutes record what is DONE, not what is SAID.

MCM pp. 26-29

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Meeting minutes

- We recommend “action” or “summary” minutes, not detailed minutes.
- Should record what is done, not what is said.
- For certain topics such as conflict of interest, main points made should be included.

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II. Meeting discussion, Point of Order, and Appeal

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Principle of Equality

All members have equal rights,
privileges and obligations.

MCM p. 73

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Key Point

Discussion in council and
committee meetings is
NOT A CONVERSATION.
It is **DEBATE** and has its own rules.

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Fundamental guideline

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

MCM p. 76

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Why don't we follow this?

- Councils and committees 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.
- This is both fair and efficient.

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Equity and inclusion

- This rule is also the best way to ensure that each person has an equal voice.
- The system is formal but inclusive.
- It will make for robust discussion and advance your equity goals.

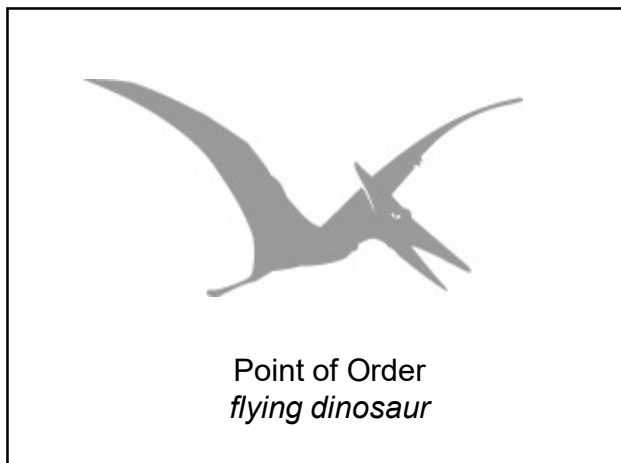
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- Note that this guideline pertains to discussion on the substantive issues.
- The chair will speak more than others on procedural matters, because they have the role of facilitating the discussion during the meeting.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Point of Order

flying dinosaur

- When ANOTHER MEMBER breaks one of the rules, a member may make a POINT OF ORDER.
- Chair rules on the point.

MCM pp. 59-61

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Point of Order

- A motion claiming that a procedural mistake has been made.
- According to Robert, can be made only by a member.
- We recommend that key staff be authorized also.
- Public may not raise a Point of Order.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Process Point of Order

1. Member: *Point of Order!*
2. Chair: *State your point.*
3. Member: *That comment breaks our rules of decorum.*
4. Chair: *The point is well taken. Members may not use this term.*

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Point of Order

- You can make this at any time, except during voting.
- Do not have to be recognized.
- May interrupt a speaker if necessary.
- Must be timely – made at the time of the offense.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Your rules are unusual

- A member makes a Point of Order
- If another member seconds it, the council decides.
- The ruling goes into the minutes, as a precedent for the future. Use the passive voice! "A Point of Order was made that the word malarkey is insulting..."

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When should members make a Point of Order?

- Make a Point of Order if a rule has been broken.
- DO NOT make a Point of Order to bring something to the chair's attention, or because you think someone has made a factual mistake, or because you disagree with what they said.
- Speak about that when it is your turn to discuss.

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If someone is confused...

- If a member has trouble explaining what the Point of Order is about, the chair can ask:

What rule has been broken?

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Chair doesn't have to say "Point of Order"

- The chair has the duty of maintaining order and decorum, so doesn't need to say "Point of Order."
- Just needs to take appropriate action.

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Chair subject to same rules

- If the chair breaks one of the rules, a member may raise a Point of Order.
- The chair rules on his or her own behavior, which seems odd, but is the way the system works.

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No further discussion

- Once the chair has ruled on a Point of Order, the only allowable form of discussion is to appeal the ruling.

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Appeal

The most important motion in all of Robert's Rules –
and the least known!

MCM p. 62-63

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Chair's rulings can be appealed

- The CHAIR enforces order and decorum.
- The GROUP is the final authority.
- Any member can appeal a ruling of the chair.
- EXCEPTION: If the ruling is a matter on which there cannot be two reasonable interpretations, the ruling cannot be appealed.

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Further points

- Point of Order and Appeal are processed immediately. No other business can take place until they are dealt with.
- Points of Order and Appeals do not count against a member's turn to speak in debate.

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Don't get into arguments!

- If you are a member, you may not argue with the chair.
- If you are the chair, don't argue with a difficult member.
- Simply state your ruling, and then say
Does the member wish to appeal this ruling?

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Point of Order and Appeal are
the heart of democracy



In our view, the motions Point of Order and Appeal are the heart of our democracy. They provide the mechanism to stop a dictatorial chair who is acting like a "boss." They are essential for every local

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III. How to do this?

- Seek recognition before speaking.
- No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.
- No interrupting (in general)
- No sidebar conversations.
- Set time limits.
- Courtesy and respect are required.

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Seeking recognition

- Members must seek recognition from the presider before speaking.

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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.
- For Zoom on the telephone, press *9 (star nine).

MCM pp. 13, 43, 45, 79, 97

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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.

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Rights and Responsibilities of the Member



Weldon L. Merritt, FRP, CFP, has graciously authorized Jurassic Parliament to publish this listing of the rights and responsibilities of ordinary members of an organization.

Please note that neither the list of member rights nor the list of member responsibilities is intended to be exhaustive. In addition, neither the rights nor the responsibilities are necessarily absolute in every instance. For example, the right to debate may be cut off or limited by motions for the Previous Question or to Limit Debate. And, while a member should not vote on a matter of direct personal interest, under Robert's

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Fundamental guideline

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

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**NO CROSS TALK
BETWEEN
COUNCILMEMBERS!**

MCM p. 75

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HOW to do this?

- Chair can keep track of who has spoken and who wishes to speak, using a chart.
- Chair can empower vice-chair to do this – good training for them.

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SPEAKING CHART								
Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	etc.	
Garcia								
Jackson								
Juma								
Lee								
Patel								
Smith								
Young								

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

A great method – the “round robin”

- The chair goes around the table, asking each person in turn for their opinion. People may pass and speak at the end.
- Important to have a pencil in hand, to jot down points or questions for when your turn arrives.
- Chair must wait their turn also!
- You can vary the order.
- This rule applies to questions and answers also, and to discussions with staff. Don't let any two people “hijack” the meeting.

MCM pp. 88-89

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Interrupting

- When a member has the floor, they have the right to speak until they have completed their comments.
- Members may not interrupt each other.
- Chair may interrupt members when necessary to bring them to order.
- Members may interrupt to make a Point of Order when essential.

MCM pp. 79, 95-98

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

No sidebars or texting

- No “sidebar conversations”
- No whispering! Disable the chat.
- No texting to each other or people outside during meetings.
- No posting on social media during meetings.

MCM p. 134

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Frustrating

- Structuring discussion in these ways can be frustrating.
- Councilmembers sometimes say, “I wish we could just hash it out and have a free-form discussion.”
- Usually, this won't serve your council well.
- However...

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

An occasional exception...

- Sometimes there is benefit in the conversational style or “informal discussion.”
- It can be useful at study sessions (Committee of the Whole), or in committee meetings.
- Members do not need to be recognized. Chair must still ensure that no one dominates.
- Do not make the conversational style your ordinary or “default” style of discussion.

MCM p. 78

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Set time limits

- Jurassic Parliament recommends that councils set estimated times for agenda items.
- We recommend time limits on individual councilmember speeches – 3 or 5 minutes.
- Time limits cannot be debated.
- They can be suspended or changed by a two-thirds vote without debate. MCM pp. 81, 97, 99

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How many times to speak?

- In a large group, each member may speak twice on each motion per day.
- There is no such limit in a small board.
- As long as each person is given an opportunity to speak in turn, discussion can go on as long as desired.

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Time limits create productive meetings



The mayor of Alexandria, Virginia began council meetings by responding to each person giving public comment, sometimes delaying the start of regular business three hours or more. Was this reasonable? No. We need time limits to establish structure and create productive meetings. Robert's Rules says that members have the right to an efficient meeting. It takes effort to do this, and for the chair to maintain the limits, but the effort will pay off big time.

SET AN OVERALL TIME LIMIT FOR THE MEETING

If you are a private nonprofit board, a good target for a regular board meeting is two hours. After

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Courtesy flows from the conviction that for society to function well, we need to protect one another. Specifically, we need to protect other people from our limitations and self-centeredness—and we need to be protected from theirs.

Courtesy flows from the awareness of how thin our skin is, how easily our best intentions go awry, and how raw our nerve endings tend to be.

David Zahl, *Low Anthropology*

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Fundamental guideline

Courtesy and respect towards everyone are required.

MCM pp. 15-16, 76

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These remarks are inappropriate

1. Personal remarks about other members (except for conflict of interest)
2. Discourteous remarks – insulting language, attacks
3. Inflammatory language
4. Criticizing past actions of the group (unless subject is under discussion, or member is about to propose to amend or rescind the action at the end of their speech)
5. Remarks that are not germane (relevant) to the discussion

MCM pp. 84-87

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Inappropriate Remarks on Local Government Councils



If you serve as an elected official on a local government council or board, you should know the types of remarks that are inappropriate during discussion at a meeting. Robert's Rules of Order and the common parliamentary law it is based on require that:

- Members of a council or board must be courteous to one another.

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Personal remarks

The measure, not the member, is the subject of debate...The moment the chair hears such words as "fraud," "liar," or "lie" used about a member in debate, he must act immediately and decisively to correct the matter and prevent its repetition.

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, Section 43:21

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CHEAT SHEET

WAIT! WAIT! WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

	If you are the chair, say...	If you are a member speaking about another member, say...	If you are a member speaking about the chair, say...
BIG MISTAKES			
speaking twice in a row	Members are reminded that no one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.	Point of order. The member has spoken twice while others are waiting to speak.	Point of order. The chair does not have the right to dominate the discussion, but must speak in turn.
not seeking recognition	Members will kindly seek recognition before speaking.	Point of order. Members must seek recognition before speaking.	(not applicable)
speaking directly to another member	Members will kindly address all remarks to the chair.	Point of order. Members are supposed to speak to the chair.	(not applicable)
interrupting another person	Members will kindly refrain from interrupting one another.	Point of order. Interrupting is not allowed.	Point of order. The chair does not have the right to interrupt a member.
INAPPROPRIATE REMARKS			
personal remarks	Members will refrain from making personal remarks.	Point of order. Personal remarks are not allowed.	Point of order. Personal remarks are not allowed.
insulting language, vulgarities, attacks	Insulting or vulgar language is not allowed at our meetings.	Point of order. The language used by the member is insulting/vulgar.	Point of order. The chair is using insulting/vulgar language.
inflammatory language	Inflammatory language is not allowed.	Point of order. That remark is inflammatory.	Point of order. That remark is inflammatory.
criticizing past actions	Members may not criticize a past action of the group during a meeting, with two exceptions.*	Point of order. Members may not criticize a past action of the group during a meeting, with two exceptions.*	Point of order. The chair may not criticize a past action of the group during a meeting, with two exceptions.*

Note that this is proprietary information. Do not duplicate.

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Who decides?

- If any question arises whether a remark is appropriate or not, or a comment is germane, the chair rules, subject to appeal.
- The chair may also turn immediately to the group to ask the members to decide.
- Ultimately it is the GROUP'S CALL.

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Important note

- These are rules for councilmembers when meeting.
- These rules DO NOT APPLY to the public when they are giving public comment.

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IV. Motions and Amendments

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Main Motion

A motion is "a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the assembly take certain action."

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 5:1

MCM pp. 43-45

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Main Motion

Tyrannosaurus rex

- A main motion is the usual and customary way to start the action of discussion and decision-making.
- For small boards (up to about 12 people), it is OK to have discussion before a motion is moved. Jurassic Parliament recommends moving the motion before discussing it whenever possible.

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Main Motion

Tyrannosaurus rex

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Main Motion

We recommend this sequence:

- Staff presents proposal in writing and answers any questions. Each councilmember may ask one or two questions, then the next member has a turn.
- Motion is moved and seconded.
- Members discuss motion and may amend it.
- Members vote on motion.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Characteristics of 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," "so moved," or "let's do it!"
- It should be phrased in the grammatical **positive**.
- It must comply with the **bylaws** and the **procedural** law of the land.
- You can have only **one main motion** at a time.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Fundamental guideline

One thing at a time.

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How do you introduce a Main Motion?

Three little words:

I move that...

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When can you make a new motion?

- 1) If the agenda contains a draft motion in an agenda bill, you can move it at the proper time.
- 2) You can make a motion spontaneously when a subject is being discussed, if it is germane.
- 3) Do not make motions during council remarks or public comment.

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- *The City Council desires to provide adequate time for administration and staff analysis, fact finding, and preparation.*
- *Except in extraordinary or unusual circumstances, all items that are not routine in nature shall, when presented, include a completed Council agenda bill.*

City of SeaTac Administrative Procedures

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Member must be clear

- The member has the responsibility of formulating the motion.
- Don't mix up your ideas about the subject with the motion itself. Save those for debate.

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I've been noticing that the number of wild cats is increasing in our city, and they're getting stomped on by bigger dinosaurs. It's important that the city do something to protect them, so I think allowing catios would be great, this will make the little kitties safer.

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State the exact motion clearly

I move that residents be authorized to build catios in their private yards.

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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 motion be written.

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Second

Second the motion!

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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’s a bad idea.

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If no second...

- If there is no second, the chair says:
There being no second, the motion will not be considered.
- Then moves immediately to next item of business.

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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.

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Eight steps to process a motion

1. **Member makes motion.**
2. Another member seconds 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.

MCM p. 44

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Eight Steps To Process A Motion

Member A: *I move that we hold a cruise on Dino Bay.*

Member B: *I second the motion!*

Chair: It has been moved and seconded that we hold a cruise on Dino Bay. We will now debate the motion. [debate]

Chair: Are you ready to vote?

The motion is that we hold a cruise on Dino Bay. All those in favor say “aye.” All those opposed say “no.” The “ayes” have it, the motion passes, and we will hold a cruise on Dino Bay. The Social Committee will make the plans for this event. Our next item of business is...

Eight steps to process a motion

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

In taking the vote, the presider must call for the _____ or the vote is not legitimate.

The presider has a duty to make things clear so that members understand what they are doing.

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Step #3 is very important!

- Presider **MUST** repeat the motion, or have the clerk repeat it.
- WHY?
 - So that everyone knows what we are actually discussing.
 - The text of the motion as stated by chair is the official text.
 - After step #3, the motion belongs to the group as a whole, not to the person who made it.

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Chair must be precise

- The chair has the duty of repeating the exact words of the motion made by the councilmember.
- If some change is made, councilmember should speak up and repeat exact words.
- Other councilmembers should not be speaking at this point.

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Step #5 is also very important!

- Chair or clerk must repeat the motion before the vote is taken.
- WHY? So that everyone knows what we are actually voting on.
- Have you ever been at a meeting when once the vote is taken, someone says, "What did we just approve?" and no one knows exactly what it was?

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Main Motion
Tyrannosaurus rex

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Main Motion

I move that residents be authorized to build CATIOS in their private yards.

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Point of Information

Friendly member: *Point of Information Chair!*

Chair: *State your question.*

Friendly member: *I'm confused. What exactly IS a "catio"?*

Chair: *A catio is a patio for cats. Here's an example.*

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Point of Information

- “Point of Information” is a QUESTION. It is also called “Request for Information.” It cannot be used to GIVE information.
- Note that a request like this does not count as discussion or debate.

MCM p. 64

91

91

- Members have the right to make this motion at any time except during voting, and the chair must recognize them.
- The request must be relevant to the discussion.

92

92

Language tip

If someone uses this motion incorrectly, chair can ask:

What information does the member need in order to decide how to vote?

93

93

General contractor

I feel that catios will allow our dear feline friends to experience the outdoors without getting hurt or endangering other wildlife. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this motion.

94

94

Photographer

I'm in favor! My cousin has built a catio, and her little pet Fuzzy is completely at home in it, as you can see from this picture.

95

95

Architect

I think this is a terrible idea! Catios are intrusive and will ruin the look of our city. Here's an example I saw when I visited Dinodome last week. We don't want this kind of ugly building in beautiful Dinopolis.

96

96

Moving to vote

- When it seems that discussion is finished, chair asks, "Is there any further discussion?" or "Are you ready to vote?" and then, if no one speaks up, takes the vote.

97

97

Voting

- Chair repeats the motion.
- Chair says, "All those in favor say 'aye,' all those opposed say 'no.'"
- Chair announces results of vote, whether motion passes or fails, and what will happen next as a result of the vote.
- Chair announces next item of business.

MCM pp. 31-35

98

98

Voting

The "ayes" have it, the motion passes, and residents will be authorized to build catios in their private yards,
OR

The "noes" have it, the motion fails, and we will not implement this proposal.

- Note that on a voice vote, the chair must call for the negative vote, even if it seems obvious that the motion is unanimous.

99

99

Tie vote fails

- If there are equal numbers in favor and against, the motion fails.
- The chair states the fact, and then moves on to the next item of business.
- Per your rules, the mayor may break a tie.

MCM p. 35

100

100

No debate during voting

- Nothing can interrupt the voting process.
- Members are not allowed to explain their vote during the vote.
- Your rules allow a statement of dissent to be included in the minutes.
- Even a Point of Order must wait until the result of the vote is announced.

101

101

Changing your vote

- A member may change their vote up until the time the chair announces the result.
- After that time, it takes unanimous consent of the body (everyone agreeing) for the member to change their vote.
- Once the chair has moved on to the next item of business, it is too late to change a vote.

102

102

Abstain

- Under Robert's Rules, to abstain is to do nothing.
- Abstentions are not counted.
- The chair does not call for abstentions.
- However, if you are a public body, likely you will count abstentions.

MCM p. 35

103

103

Conflict of interest

- If you have a conflict of interest, you should "recuse" yourself from the vote.
- Recusal is a special form of abstention.
- Talk with your attorney before the meeting! Don't spring it during the meeting itself.

104

104

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 don't want to proceed in this way, say "OBJECTION."
- Presider then abandons the fast track to use the regular method.

MCM pp. 36-37

105

105

Is there any objection to the amendment to add "annually" to the end of the motion?

[LONG PAUSE]

Hearing none, the amendment is adopted.

Is there any objection to taking a 10-minute recess?

[LONG PAUSE]

Hearing none, the council will be in recess until 8:15 pm.

106

Language tip

Without objection... if there is no objection...

107

107



Amendment
Dimetrodon

108

Amendment *Dimetrodon*

- You amend a motion to improve it.
- The Amendment applies to the main motion.
- The Amendment must be germane (relevant).
- Anyone may move to amend, even the person who made the motion.

MCM pp. 46-48

109

109

Amendment

Engineer: *I move that we amend the motion by adding the words, "Provided that the plan for each catio is approved by the Design Review Board."*

110

110

If adopted, will read:

Residents will be authorized to build catios in their private yards, **provided that the plan for each catio is approved by the Design Review Board.**

111

111

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 (not recommended).

112

112

Amend by adding words

- *Residents will be authorized to build catios in their private yards, **provided that the plan for each catio is approved by the Design Review Board.***

113

113

Amend by inserting words

- *Residents will be authorized to build catios **with a maximum height of 8 feet** in their private yards*

114

114

Amend by striking out words

- Residents will be authorized to build catios ~~in their private yards~~.

115

115

Amend by striking out and inserting words

- Residents will be authorized to build catios ~~in their private yards~~ *adjacent to their home if their neighbor agrees*.

116

116

Amend by substitution

- I move that we amend the motion by substituting this paragraph:
That we will survey neighboring cities in the League to find out what their experience has been with authorizing catios.

117

117

Process Amendment

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

118

118

The challenge is...

- We vote on amendments BEFORE we vote on the main motion, in order to make the main motion as good as possible—to PERFECT the motion.

119

119



Amendment blocks Main Motion

120

Fate of the Amendment

- People sometimes get confused, and don't realize that after voting on the amendment, the process continues.
- Once the fate of the amendment has been decided, debate continues on the main motion.

121

121

Secondary amendment

- When an amendment has been proposed, it is called a "primary amendment."
- It is also possible to amend the amendment, which is called a "secondary amendment."
- This is processed just like the main motion, EXCEPT that no further amendments are possible—no "tertiary" amendments.

122

122



Primary Amendment
Dimetrodon

123



Secondary Amendment
Small Dimetrodon

124

Amend the Amendment Architect

I move that we amend the amendment by striking the words "Design Review Board" and inserting the words "a licensed architect."

125

125

If adopted, amendment will read:

provided that the plan for each catio is approved by the Design Review Board a licensed architect.

126

126



Secondary amendment
Secondary amendment
blocks primary amendment

127

Sequence

- Discuss and vote on the secondary amendment.
- Discuss and vote on the primary amendment.
- Discuss and vote on the Main Motion.

128

128

How many amendments?

- “Primary amendments” are amendments to the main motion itself. You may have as many as you have time for.
- There are also “secondary amendments.”
- You may have as many of these as you have time for.
- At any given moment, there may be only ONE primary amendment and ONE secondary amendment pending.

129

129

“Friendly amendment”

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

130

130

Germaneness

- According to Robert, amendments must be germane – relevant to the main motion.
- This rule allows for some surprising possibilities.
- A “motion to commend” may be amended into a “motion to censure.”
- Some bodies adopt a Special Rule of Order that no amendment will be allowed which changes the intent of the original motion.

131

131

Minutes and amendments per Robert

- The clerk must keep track of amendments during the discussion, because people will ask you what's up.
- Detail on who moved what amendment, how it was voted on etc. does NOT go into the minutes.
- The minutes include only the final text of the motion and its disposition (passed, failed, referred to committee, withdrawn...)
- “After discussion and amendment, the following motion was adopted...”

132

132

Entering amendments in the minutes

- Councilmember Smith moved to require that all delinquent dinosaurs be required to register with the Department of Social Welfare, seconded by Councilmember Johnson.
- After discussion and amendment, the following motion was adopted:
 - That all delinquent dinosaurs be required to register with the Department of Social Welfare starting in July 2026, and that the staff receive special training in managing delinquents.

133

133

More amendments are possible...

- Once you've dealt with one amendment, you may have others...
- provided that they apply to a *different aspect* of the main motion.
- It takes special actions (reconsideration) to go back and change something we've already amended.

134

134

The process continues

- After all amendments have been processed, the body still must vote on the AMENDED MAIN MOTION.

135

135

"Friendly amendment"

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

MCM p. 49

136

136

"Friendly amendment"

- It's also fine to adopt the amendment by unanimous consent.

"Is there any objection to adopting this amendment?"

137

137



Call the Question
Triceratops

138

Call the Question

Triceratops

- This motion is a request to end debate and vote now.
- It requires a **second**.
- It cannot be **debated or amended**.
- This takes a two-thirds vote to pass.
- If it passes, debate stops and the chair takes the vote immediately on the pending motion.

MCM pp. 57-58

139

139

Table

- Often misused. Has a high rank, and is not debatable.
- Cannot be used to kill a motion.
- Chair may ask, "For what purpose?"
- Merely sets a motion "on the table."
- Must be "taken from the table."
- If not taken from the table by the end of the next regular meeting, it falls to the ground.
- If someone says, "Table *until*!" they really mean "Postpone."

MCM pp. 56-58

140

140

Table

- This motion should NOT be used to put something off until a future meeting.
- If you don't want to deal with something right now, you can refer it to a committee, or postpone it.
- Robert's Rules says that you can postpone something only until the next meeting.
- We think it's all right to postpone it further off than that.

141

141

Withdrawing a motion

- The maker of a motion is not allowed to speak against their own motion.
- It is OK to vote against it.

142

142

Withdrawing a motion

- If you are the mover and you've changed your mind, ask permission to withdraw the motion.
- Usually handled by unanimous consent.
- If there is objection, then take a vote.
- The maker does not "own" the motion. Not allowed to say "I'm taking my marbles and going home."
- Ordinarily, withdrawn motions are not included in the minutes.

MCM pp. 27, 37, 69

143

143

V. Who's in charge?

144

144

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised,
12th edition

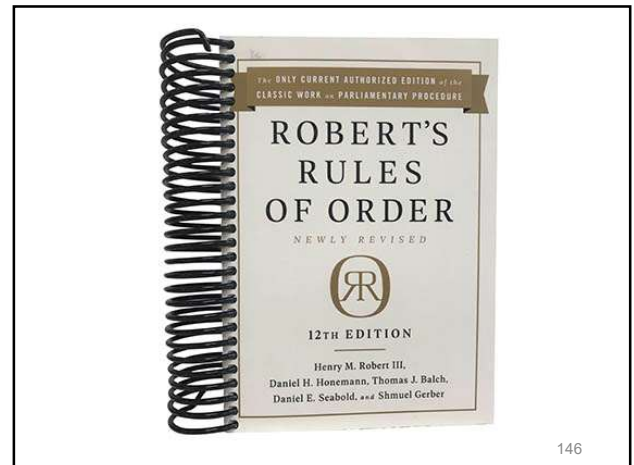
Abbreviated RONR
"Rules of Order Newly Revised"

We recommend spiral-bound editions from
National Association of Parliamentarians

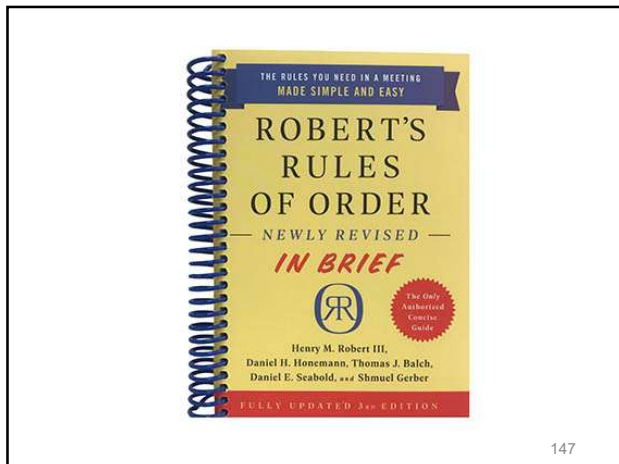
Also available in Kindle from Amazon

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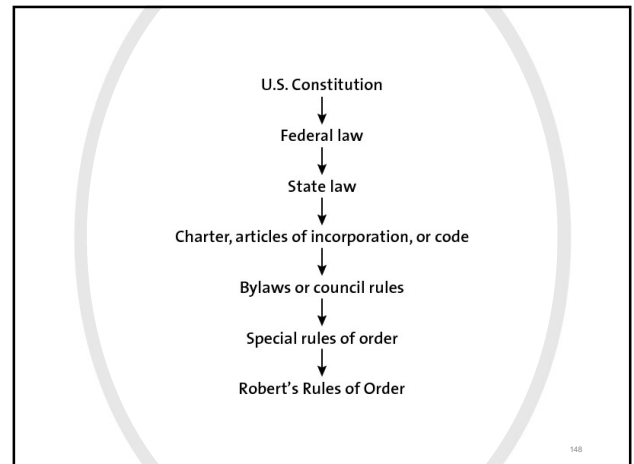
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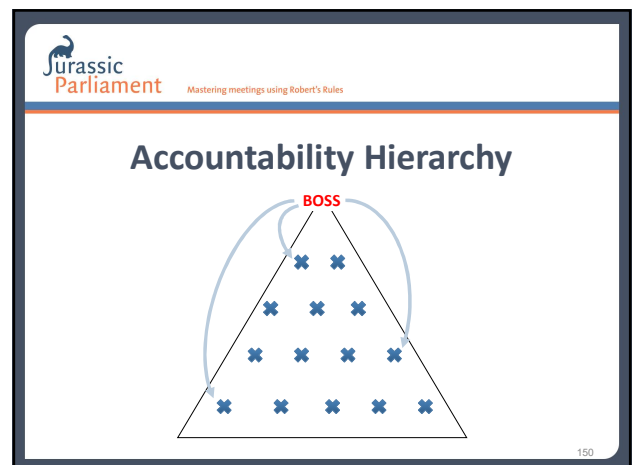
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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

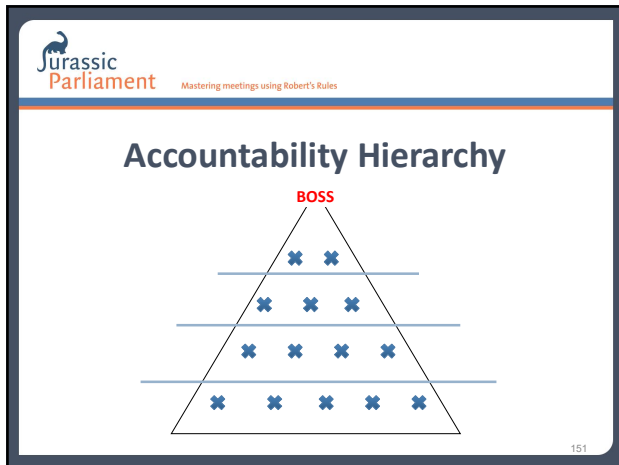
- Your rules have higher authority than *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- They must follow state law.

149

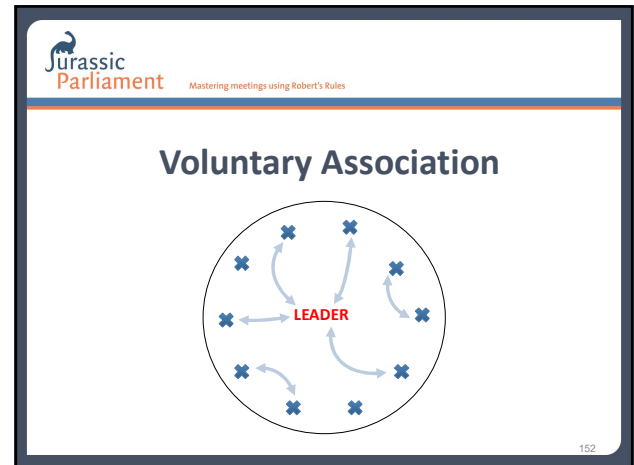
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151



152

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Key Point

Each member has an equal right to speak and to try to persuade others to accept their view.

153

153

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Key Point

During meetings, the chair controls the process so the group can make the decisions.

154

154

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Fundamental guideline

During meetings, the chair is the servant of the group, and the group is the final authority.

155

155

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

You have both types of structure

- The council forms a voluntary association.
- The city manager and staff form an accountability hierarchy.

156

156

What is each person's individual authority?

All members of a governing board share in a joint and collective authority which exists and can be exercised only when the group is in session.

The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure
MCM p. 5

157

157

What is your individual power?

The principal job of a city or town council is to set policy. A policy is a course of action for a community. Policymaking often takes the form of passing ordinances or resolutions.

Mayor and Councilmember Handbook, MRSC and AWC

158

158



LEGISLATION is the prerogative of the council. City manager supports council, but does not decide.

159

159



ADMINISTRATION is the prerogative of the manager. Council may not interfere.

160

160

Councilmembers may not do the work of the city

- Elected officials care deeply about their city.
- Sometimes they have special knowledge and expertise.
- They may make suggestions to the city manager, but they may not do the work of the city themselves.
- Why? They must not cross the line between legislation and administration.
- This is a legal requirement!

MCM p. 5

161

161

Your duty as a councilmember

- Debate and determine overall strategy, policy, and legislation for your city.
- Leave the details of operations to the city manager and staff.

162

162

Successful staff interaction in local government meetings



Staff interaction in local government meetings can be effective or disastrous. Here are a few suggestions on how to structure successful staff interaction.

▶ NOT ENOUGH STAFF INTERACTION

Sometimes we have observed staff who are too cautious at their council or committee meetings. They see themselves in a subordinate position and feel that their comments are welcome only when requested.

163

Vigorous discussion

- Discussion on council motions can and should be vigorous!
- Express your views freely and don't hold back.
- Once the vote has been taken, however, things change.

164

164

It's OK to disagree

- The fact that people have different opinions is a strength. It's a good thing!
- BUT we tend to identify with our own position.
- When we are defeated, we sometimes take it personally.
- This is a mistake.

165

165

At the end of the day, the body must unite behind its decision.

- It is a basic democratic principle that the decision of the majority, voting at a properly called meeting, is the decision of the body as a whole.
- The minority must make it their decision as well.

166

166

*Democracy is the worst system of
government in all the world,
with the exception of those others
that have been tried from time to time.*

Winston Churchill

167

167

Bottom line

- In a democracy, HOW we decide things is more important than WHAT we decide.
- Courtesy and respect, no surprises, no unilateral action, no end-runs...these are essential for the system to work.

168

168

Members have a duty

- When serving on a public body, members have a duty to uphold the decision of that body, even if they disagree with it.

169

169

Disagreement

- Members may express their disagreement in public, but may not attempt to UNDERMINE the decision.
- They are free to try to persuade their colleagues, during the meeting, to change the decision (within limits).

170

170

WHY?

The essential principle of majority rule.

171

171

- You as a councilmember give up some of your First Amendment rights.
- You are not a free agent.
- You have to consider the good of the whole council when acting.
- Don't create liability for the Council.

172

172

Lost the vote? Don't sabotage the council's action



We've had inquiries recently about elected officials who lost a vote, and then actively worked against the outcome. This amounts to trying to sabotage the council. It is wrong, wrong, wrong.

THE MAJORITY RULES

General Henry Martyn Robert, the original author of *Robert's Rules of Order*, expresses it this way:

What is the alternative?

The ballot box is sacred because the alternative is blood.

Elias Canetti, author and Nobel Prize winner

174

174

VI. Public comment

MCM pp. 99-101

175

175

Another disclaimer

Robert's Rules of Order contains very little guidance on public comment. In general, this information comes from Jurassic Parliament's experience over 20 years of working with local governments.

176

176

Public hearing vs public comment

- A PUBLIC HEARING is an administrative procedure governed by state law and your council rules.
- It is a meeting of the public.
- You must include testimony, or a summary, in the minutes.
- The PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD is an agenda item governed by your own rules.

177

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Quasi-judicial hearings

- Note that when the council holds a public hearing that is a quasi-judicial hearing—when you are acting as a bank of judges—you must not have *ex parte* communications.
- You may not discuss the matter with your neighbor or interested parties.
- Legislative hearings are quite different—fine to discuss.

178

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WHY public comment?

- A council meeting is NOT A MEETING OF THE PUBLIC.
- It is a MEETING OF THE COUNCIL that is held in public.
- The purpose of the "public comment" period is to allow the councilmembers to become informed about the views of the public.
- It should be carefully structured.
- It must not become a discussion or inquiry into the matters that are raised.

179

179

Be consistent

- Best to announce rules at beginning of each session, and provide written handout.
- For the sake of fairness, rules for public comment MUST be enforced consistently.
- Public must address remarks to chair, not to individual councilmembers or the audience.
- Do not ask for addresses. Many cities ask if the speaker is a resident of the city.

180

180

Follow time limits

- Schedule the time for public comment.
- Ask staff to time speakers so chair is not distracted.
- Some bodies have a visible timer so speakers know when their limit is approaching.
- Speakers may not donate their time to someone else.

181

181

Do not dialogue

- If chair starts dialoguing with the public, the situation can quickly become confusing.
- If you respond to some speakers but not to others, it can be interpreted as showing bias.
- Do not address questions to the staff during public comment. Of course you may make a request for the future.

182

182

Audience relations

- Only the chair may speak to the audience as a whole.
- Individual councilmembers may not speak to the public or recognize people in the audience.
- Discourage demonstrations—clapping, booing, whistling, stamping of feet, etc. These can chill free speech, both for councilmembers and public.

183

183

Time, place and manner

- The courts have found that local governments may limit the time, place and manner of public comment.
- All such restrictions must be viewpoint-neutral.
- We recommend setting a time period for public comment (for example, 30 minutes).
- We recommend setting a 3-minute limit for individual speakers, or 5 minutes for a group representative.

184

184

If a speaker runs over...

- If a speaker runs over the limit, interrupt and request that they conclude their remarks, or simply inform them, "Your time is up."

185

185

Comment vs. disruption

- Attendees do not have the right to DISRUPT the meeting.
- However, the courts have found that mere words do not usually constitute disruption.
- Rules limiting public comment are allowed (for example, time limits and relevance to agenda), but must respect First Amendment protections.
- You can have rules prohibiting campaigning.

186

186

Possible liability?

Public comment intended to harass, defame, or abuse employees of the city, including the city attorney, is prohibited, and the chair of the meeting may deem such commentary disruptive to the orderly conduct of the meeting itself and remove the individual speaker, after a warning, if such commentary continues.

187

187

If things become unruly...

- The mayor can call a recess, or move the meeting to another location, if Florida allows this.
- Be VERY CAREFUL about having anyone removed from a meeting.
- If a riot breaks out, the mayor may adjourn the meeting.

188

188

How to act on dais?

- Chair and members convey interest and concern by their body language.
- They should listen to each person speaking as if there were no one else in the room (this is hard!).
- Keep a warm and pleasant expression, or a neutral face if speaker is not complimentary.
- Do not whisper to each other, pass notes, or check cell phones on the dais.

189

189

How to respond?

- Best approach is to thank each speaker, unless extremely negative, and move on.
- Chair may provide brief factual information, if appropriate, which must not degenerate into lecturing or criticism.
- When highly offensive comments are made, chair may make a brief statement reaffirming the council's commitment to positive principles.

190

190

Do not criticize staff

- Councilmembers must not criticize the staff in public.
- Instead, speak to the city manager in private.
- This is an unequal power relationship.
- As previously discussed, councilmembers must not cross the line into administration.

191

191

Conclude with thanks

- At the end of the public comment period, the chair should thank the public for attending.
- Explain again that while this is not a time for dialogue, all comments and questions are taken seriously by the body.
- Sincerity and warmth on the part of the chair will make a big difference to the experience the public has at your meeting.

192

192

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Other channels

- It is essential for you to be in touch with your public, to be responsive, and to appear responsive.
- Given the limitations of the public comment period, we recommend maintaining other channels for dialogue with the public.
- Community forums, personal discussions, “coffee with a councilmember,” a form on your website, surveys, etc.

193

193

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Best practices for public comment

1. Set time limits for public comment and for individual speeches.
2. Have the public address the chair, and have the chair respond.
3. Don't engage in dialogue with the public, but have arrangements to answer their questions afterwards.
4. Speakers may not donate their time.
5. On the dais, make the effort to be, and to appear to be, listening intently to all speakers.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

50 Guidelines for Public Comment



INTRODUCTION
In recent years the climate for public comment at local government meetings—city councils, school boards, utility districts, etc.—has become much more challenging. People everywhere are feeling the stress brought on by the pandemic's suffering and loss, economic difficulties, greater hostility in the political sphere, and global concerns. This stress sometimes erupts in tense public meetings.

195

195

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

VII. The right kind of control

196

196

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Three things you must have:

1. Knowledge of how this system works
2. A majority on your council in favor of civility and this system.
3. The personal moxie, energy, and drive to put it all into practice.

197

197

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Chair must control who speaks when

- The chair serves as a BENEVOLENT DICTATOR, enforcing the rules the group has chosen.
- Individual members must SEEK RECOGNITION before speaking.

MCM p. 13

198

198

Chair controls who speaks when

- If someone speaks up without being recognized, STOP THEM.
- If someone speaks out of turn, INTERRUPT THEM.
- If someone makes insulting remarks, CUT THEM OFF.

199

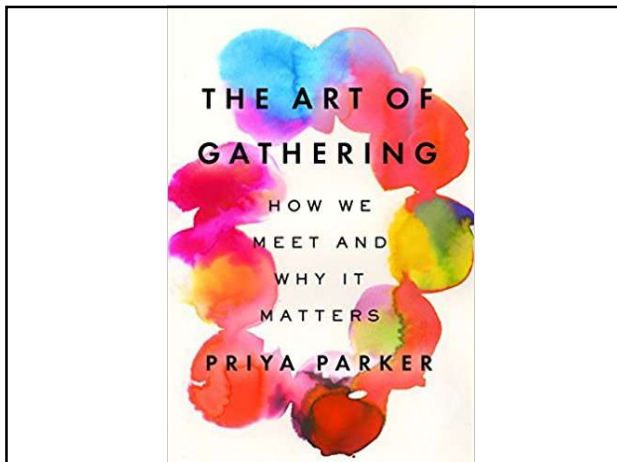
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Duty to obey the chair

- Members have a duty to obey the chair's directions.
- If they disagree, they can't argue back.
- What can they do?
- They can make a Point of Order or Appeal.

200

200



201

Guide your members by stating the obvious

- You as chair know more about the process than anybody else.
- You must repeat yourself, and state the obvious, to help bring everyone along.

202

202

Keep things moving! Be brisk! Speak crisply!

- *Well, I guess the agenda is adopted...*
- *I'll kind of get a thumbs up from the board next week...*

203

203

Don't be intimidated by anger

- Evolutionary psychologists tell us that anger evolved "in the service of bargaining, to resolve conflicts of interest in favor of the angry individual."

Leonard Mlodinow, *Emotion: How Feelings Shape Our Thinking*

204

204



Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Language tip

- No sarcasm, no eye-rolling, no shoulder shrugging.
- Respect is essential, even when provoked.
- Your colleagues and the public will detect contempt instantly, and it will worsen the atmosphere.

205

205



Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Emotion is more important than procedure

206

206



Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Language tip

- Phrase things in the positive.
- *We're committed to being transparent* vs.
- *We're not trying to hide anything here.*

207

207



Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

A balancing act

- Radiate confidence.
- Speak clearly and definitely.
- At the same time, keep emotionally connected to the people present, insofar as possible.
- Your style should be firm, but not harsh.

208

208



Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

CHEAT SHEET

LANGUAGE TIPS FOR MEETING MANAGEMENT

SITUATION	CHAIR CAN SAY
Call to order	<i>This meeting of the [name of organization] is called to order.</i>
Unanimous consent	<i>without objection... if there is no objection...</i>
To begin discussion	<i>It has been moved and seconded that... Is there any discussion?</i>
If there is no second	<i>Since there is no second, the motion will not be considered.</i>
To end discussion	<i>Is there any further discussion? or Are you ready to vote?</i>
Process Point of Order	1. Member says, "Point of Order." 2. Chair says, "State your point." 3. Member explains issue. 4. Chair says, "The point is well taken," or "The point is not well taken."
When someone says "Point of Order" but can't explain what they mean	<i>What rule has been broken?</i>
Process Point of Information	1. Member says, "Point of Information." 2. Chair replies, "State your question."

209

209



Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

- Chair: *The chair believes that remarks about UFOs landing at our airfield are not germane, and will ask the Council to decide whether the Councilmember may continue speaking on this topic. All those who believe that the Councilmember may continue speaking, say "aye."*
- Councilmembers in favor: *Aye!*

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210

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

- Chair: *All those who believe that the Councilmember may not continue, say "No."*
- Councilmember opposed: *"No."*
- Chair: *The ayes have it and the Councilmember may continue speaking, OR the noes have it and the Councilmember will cease from speaking.*

211

211

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Three ways to adjourn

1. During the meeting, members may move to adjourn—cannot be debated, takes a majority vote to pass.
2. At the end of the meeting, the chair may say, "There being no further business, this meeting is adjourned."
3. The chair may adjourn the meeting if a riot breaks out.

MCM pp. 13, 22

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212

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

VIII. Conclusion

213

213

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

WHY do we need rules?

Win/lose is the only game most of us understand. We have a constant unspoken need for domination and actually find no enjoyment in win/win situations.

Richard Rohr, Franciscan author

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214

Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Keep in touch!

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MASTERING COUNCIL MEETINGS
 A GUIDEBOOK FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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Jurassic Parliament

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

After taking this training you will be able to:

1. Describe how the authority of the group is more important than any single individual, even the chair.
2. Follow best practices for discussion.
3. Respond to disorder and difficult people.
4. Make Motions and Amendments.
5. Run effective public comment sessions.
6. Make better decisions for your community.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Follow four fundamental guidelines for successful meetings



Ogihara, Washington City Council. ©Jurassic Parliament 2025.

Robert's Rules of Order includes **four fundamental guidelines** that will create successful meetings. They are easy to say but take some effort to apply, since prevailing culture is often very different. Run your meetings according to these guidelines so your meetings—and your organizations—will flourish.

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Quick Guide for City Councils



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Follow this quick guide to take the pain out of your meetings, hold productive discussions, and serve your community better.

BASICS
A quorum must be present for business to be done. Usually a quorum means a majority (more than half) of the voting members in office.

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Kindness is within our power. Liking is not.

Samuel Johnson, British author

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Serving on a local government board is like being in a marriage arranged by the citizens.

Tami Tanoue, Colorado Intergovernmental Risk Sharing Agency

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PICKLE FESTIVAL IN DINOPOLIS

6 attendees: chair, chamber of commerce (COC) president, chef, knitter, sheriff, TV anchor *[Note that the numbers are a substitute for being recognized.]*

1.	chair	Does any member care to make a motion?
2.	chef	I move that we hold a pickle festival this summer!
3.	COC president	Second!
4.	chair	Very well, the Main Motion has been moved and seconded that we hold a pickle festival this summer. The person who makes the motion has the right to speak first. Do you care to speak to your motion?
5.	chef	The North Carolina Pickle Festival has been a success for the last 22 years. They have an antique car show, a bicycle "Tour de Pickle," an event where you learn how to pack pickles in a jar, and tons of great pickle foods. This will bring many dinosaurs into town and increase our visibility.
6.	chair	Further discussion?
7.	sheriff	Ruin our reputation is more like it! This seems like a way to make the City of Dinopolis the target of everybody's jokes! I'm against this idea.
8.	COC president	Quirky events have been doing pretty well in our region. I'd like to give this a try. However, I move to amend the motion by striking the words "this summer" and inserting the words "next summer."
9.	knitter	Second!
10.	chair	It has been moved and seconded that we amend the motion by striking the words "this summer" and adding

		the words “next summer.” Do you care to speak to your motion?
11.	COC president	It seems like a good idea to me, but we need more time to plan if we’re going to make it a success.
12.	knitter	That is certainly a consideration. I’m in favor of the amendment.
13.	chair	Is there any further discussion? <i>[pause]</i> Hearing none, we’ll take the vote. It has been proposed to amend the motion by striking the words “this summer” and inserting the words “next summer.” If this amendment passes, the motion will read: “that we hold a pickle festival next summer.” All those in favor of amending the motion by striking the words “this summer” and inserting the words “next summer,” say “aye.”
14.	everyone	Aye!
15.	chair	All those opposed, say “no.” <i>[pause]</i> The “ayes” have it and the motion passes. The motion is amended to read “that we hold a pickle festival next summer.” Further discussion on the Main Motion as amended?
16.	TV anchor	I would like to amend the motion by adding the words, “And use the slogan, ‘The Dinopolis Pickle Festival is kind of a big dill.’”
17.	chef	Second!
18.	chair	The Chair didn’t hear the amendment; would the member please repeat it?
19.	TV anchor	Yes, I said, “And use the slogan, ‘The Dinopolis Pickle Festival is kind of a big dill.’”

20.	chair	The last word is spelled “D – E – A – L,” is that correct?
21.	TV anchor	No, it’s a pun – the word is spelled “D – I – L – L.”
22.	chair	Thank you, Councilmember. So it has been moved and seconded that we amend the motion by adding the words, “And use the slogan, ‘The Dinopolis Pickle Festival is kind of a big dill.’” Discussion?
23.	TV anchor	The clever pun in this slogan will make people laugh and pay more attention to the festival.
24.	knitter	Well, lots of people hate puns! This will just turn them off.
25.	COC president	It seems to me that it would make sense to wait until we decided whether we’re having a festival at all, and then leave the marketing experts to decide about the details of slogans and such.
26.	chair	I agree with the Chamber of Commerce president on this, so we should just move on. The Main Motion as amended is that we hold a pickle festival next summer.
27.	TV anchor	Oh, so now you’re telling us what to do, is that it?
28.	chair	If you’re going to make snarky comments, we should definitely move on.
29.	TV anchor	Point of Order, Chair! We had a motion on the floor and the chair doesn’t have the right to skip it. Plus the word “snarky” is insulting!
30.	chair	<i>[mumbling]</i> Uh, mmm, the point is well taken. The chair apologizes. Is there any objection if we wait on marketing until the implementation phase? <i>[pause]</i> Hearing none, we will move on.

31.	knitter	Chair, I think we should have a bigger festival than just pickles. I move to amend the motion by inserting the words “and yarn” after the word “pickle.”
32.	chair	Is there a second? <i>[pause]</i>
33.	chair	There being no second, the motion to amend will not be taken up.
34.	knitter	But that’s not fair! I have just as much right to suggest a yarn festival as the chef has to propose a pickle festival.
35.	chair	Under Robert’s Rules of Order, a motion has to be “seconded” before the group can spend time on it. Since no one seconded this motion, it means that only one person wants to discuss this idea. Broadening the festival to include yarn is not something that we can discuss at this time.
36.	TV anchor	Point of Information, chair.
37.	chair	State your question.
38.	TV anchor	Just what kind of pickley foods would we offer at this festival?
39.	chair	Chef, can you answer that question?
40.	chef	In North Carolina they have pickle chips and pickle popcorn and pickle pizza and deep-fried pickles, and also pickle ice cream and pickle sno-cones and pickle pretzels.
41.	TV anchor	Do we have any evidence that these foods are attractive to dinosaurs? I think that they taste too

		sour and acidic for our dinosaur population to enjoy.
42.	chef	Well, once you deep-fry pickles, or put them in pizzas, they lose their acidic quality.
43.	TV anchor	That seems pretty dubious to me. Speaking personally, I hate pickles! Also sauerkraut and kimchi and sushi and pickled fish and herrings... YUCK!
44.	COC president	Point of Order, Chair!
45.	chair	State your point.
46.	COC president	According to Robert's Rules of Order, no one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once. These Councilmembers are talking directly to each other. Also, it seems to me that remarks about one's personal preferences are not germane or relevant here. We should be discussing the merits of the motion.
47.	chair	The point is well taken! Each person has a chance to speak once before anyone may speak twice, and we should be talking only about whether a pickle festival is a good idea, not our personal taste. Is there further discussion on the Main Motion?
48.	sheriff	I just wonder about why the chef is proposing this motion. It seems to me that it's a conflict of interest for the chef to propose something that involves cooking, since that's how they make their living.
49.	chair	Under Robert's Rules of Order, "conflict of Interest" refers to a specific personal interest, usually financial. Members are free to propose actions that benefit an entire group of which they are a member. There are

		many chefs in our city.
50.	COC president	I think that the sheriff is just saying that because the chef broke off their engagement last year.
51.	TV anchor	Point of Order!
52.	chair	State your point!
53.	TV anchor	Under Robert's Rules, personal remarks like that are NOT allowed!
54.	Chair	<i>[glaring at the COC president and speaking firmly]</i> The point is well taken. As Robert's Rules says, "Speak to issues, not to personalities."
55.	knitter	<i>[say this loudly and with emphasis]</i> I move to amend the motion by deleting the word "pickle" and inserting the word "knitting."
56.	chair	An amendment was proposed earlier to add "yarn" to the festival. It was not seconded and therefore was not taken up. The chair will rule that a "knitting" festival is essentially the same thing as a "yarn" festival. Since the group already declined to address such a proposal earlier in the meeting, this amendment is not in order and will not be taken up.
57.	sheriff	<i>[make a circling motion with your finger on the side of your head as you say this]</i> I wish people wouldn't get all riled up about their ideas. It seems kind of obsessive to me.
58.	chair	The member is reminded that insulting remarks or body language are not allowed under Robert's Rules of Order. Members will kindly show respect and courtesy to their fellow councilmembers, AT ALL TIMES!

59.	COC president	I call the question!
60.	knitter	Second!
61.	chair	The question has been called. As you know, if this motion passes, it means that we will stop debate immediately and vote on the question before us, namely, to hold a pickle festival next summer. All those in favor, raise your right hand.
62.	chair, chef, COC president, knitter	<i>[Raise your right hand.]</i>
63.	chair	Thank you, hands down. All those opposed, raise your right hand.
64.	sheriff	<i>[Raise your right hand.]</i>
65.	chair	Thank you, hands down. There are four in favor and one against, which is more than two-thirds, so we will vote immediately on the main motion.
66.	knitter	Chair, I have a question about parliamentary procedure.
67.	chair	State your question.
68.	knitter	Why did you take that vote by asking us to raise our hands, instead of just saying “aye” or “no?” It seems like it wastes time to vote that way.
69.	chair	Robert’s Rules of Order says that a two-thirds vote must be taken when member rights are limited or extended. And it’s hard to tell two-thirds by voice, so the vote must be taken another way.
70.	knitter	Thank you for that explanation, Chair.

71.	chef	Chair, I move to recess for 10 minutes.
72.	chair	The motion to recess is allowed while a vote on the main motion is pending. Is there any objection if we recess for 10 minutes? <i>[pause]</i>
73.	COC president	OBJECTION!
74.	chair	Very well, we don't have unanimous consent to recess for 10 minutes, so we'll take a vote.
75.	COC president	Just a minute, I need to explain why we shouldn't take a recess right now.
76.	chair	Sorry, the motion to recess cannot be debated. All those in favor of recessing for 10 minutes, say "aye."
77.	chef, knitter, sheriff, TV anchor	Aye!
78.	chair	All those opposed, say "no."
79.	COC president	No!
80.	chair	There is a majority in favor so the motion passes.
81.	COC president	<i>[say this in a disagreeable tone]</i> Chair, I feel like all these rules are tying us up in knots. They're making our meetings waaaay too complicated. You're just a DICTATOR WITH A GAVEL, Chair.
82.	chair	The chair will rule that the words "dictator with a gavel" are an insult and may not be used. We are now in recess for ten minutes.

AFTER THE RECESS

83.	chair	So when we left off, we were just about to take a vote
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		on the main motion.
84.	chef	Chair, during the recess, I researched some new info about pickles. I'd like to share it with you all.
85.	chair	Unfortunately once the call for the question has been approved, no further debate is in order. All those in favor of holding a pickle festival next summer, say "aye."
86.	chef, TV anchor, COC president	Aye!
87.	chair	Those opposed, say "no" <i>[pause]</i> . The ayes have it and we will hold a pickle festival next summer.
88.	sheriff	Wait a minute, only three people voted! Three is not a majority of six.
89.	chair	Under Robert's Rules, ordinary motions are decided by a majority of votes cast and abstentions are not counted. Three people voted and three people abstained. Since three votes were cast, and three is a majority of three, the motion is approved.
90.	knitter	Finally! What a lot of maneuvering we went through—all for this silly proposal of a "pickle festival."
91.	chair	The member is reminded that once a vote has been taken and the result announced, no further discussion is allowed. There being no further business, this meeting is adjourned.

WEED CONTROL AT CITY HALL

6 attendees: chair, banker, botanist, dancer, facilities committee chair, football coach

[Note that the numbers are a substitute for being recognized.]

1.	chair	As councilmembers know, when we built our new city hall 10 years ago, it was landscaped according to GREEN principles. We use only the latest energy-efficient tools and methods. However, despite our best efforts, the blackberries and the English ivy have gotten out of hand. The staff recommends that we hire a herd of goats from “Rent-a-Goat” in order to trim the grounds. Does any member care to make that motion?
2.	botanist	I move that that the staff be directed to hire a herd of goats from “Rent-a-Goat” in order to trim the grounds.
3.	facilities committee chair	Second!
	chair	It has been moved and seconded that the staff be directed to hire a herd of goats from “Rent-a-Goat” in order to trim the grounds. Do you care to speak to your motion?
4.	botanist	This is a very sensible, environmentally friendly way to take care of the overgrowth. I know that in Washington State, they use goats all the time to trim their county parks.
5.	football coach	I think that this is a silly way to tackle this problem. I’m in favor of “slash and burn” myself. I move that we apply industrial-strength plant killer to destroy the blackberries and the ivy, root and branch!
6.	chair	Members are reminded that under Robert’s Rules of Order, only one main motion can be considered at a time. We are discussing the proposal to hire a herd of goats, so no other main motion can be made.
7.	botanist	I can’t believe that you said that! How can anybody be “in favor of slash and burn”? Have you NO consideration for the well-being of our planet? You’re just an out-and-out FOSSIL.
8.	football coach	Well, in my opinion your crazy environmental ideas are just as bad! We’re going to be sorry we ever got into the smelly goat business.

9.	dancer	Point of Order, Chair!
10.	chair	State your point!
11.	dancer	Under Robert's Rules of Order, no one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once. These members are monopolizing the conversation, and also are using insulting language to each other.
12.	chair	The point is well taken! We need to hear from everyone in turn. All discussion must be respectful. Who else would like to speak?
13.	banker	I predicted that all the "GREEN" nonsense was going to give us problems down the line, and look where we are now! I move that we add the words "at a maximum cost of \$12,000 per year."
14.	football coach	Second!
15.	chair	It has been moved and seconded that we amend the motion by adding the words "at a maximum cost of \$12,000 per year."
16.	dancer	Chair, I'm confused. Does this mean that we've already decided in favor of the goats?
17.	chair	No, the way the system of motions works, a member makes a proposal – a Main Motion. Then other members can move to amend (change) the Main Motion – in order to improve it. We will discuss and vote on the amendment, and then we'll take up the main motion again. If the amendment passes, we'll consider the motion "as amended." If it fails, we'll return to the original main motion.
18.	dancer	Amending the motion in order to improve it, eh? Do they follow that rule in the U.S. Congress?
19.	chair	Ahem...All discussion must be limited to the topic at hand. Banker, do you care to speak to your amendment?

20.	banker	<i>[speaking angrily]</i> As far as I'm concerned the tree-huggers are making it impossible to get anything done. Goats will be expensive to maintain – I've heard stories of them costing tens of thousands of dollars. We could lose our shirts with this. We need to set some fiscal limits.
21.	chair	Any further discussion?
22.	football coach	It's just common prudence to protect yourself with a clause like this. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor.
23.	botanist	Our grounds are pretty big, but I think that \$1000 a month ought to be enough to keep them in good shape. I'm in favor.
24.	facilities committee chair	In my view that's not enough money. I doubt that we can get the service we need for that amount. I speak against the amendment.
25.	chair	Is there any further discussion on the amendment? <i>[pause]</i> Hearing none, we'll take the vote on the motion to amend. If the amendment passes, the motion will read: "that the staff be directed to hire a herd of goats from 'Rent-a-Goat' in order to trim the grounds, at a maximum cost of \$12,000 per year." All those in favor, say "aye."
26.	banker, botanist, chair, dancer, football coach	Aye!
27.	chair	All those opposed, say "no."
28.	facilities committee chair	No!
29.	chair	The "ayes" have it, the motion passes, and the main motion is amended. We will now resume discussion on the main motion as amended.
30.	facilities committee chair	<i>[speaking with enthusiasm]</i> I'm a nature-lover and I think that this is a brilliant solution! I'm all for it!
31.	botanist	It doesn't seem like such a big deal to me. I like landscaping that has a rough and unfinished look. It's less artificial.
32.	football coach	A natural look is one thing, but I could hardly get out of my car today because of the blackberry bushes!

33.	dancer	I'm not so sure about this. I think we're being kind of hasty here. If you studied the zodiac, you'd know that the sun is in the house of Taurus these days. Here's what my horoscope said this morning: "You need to reach a decision organically — there's no way for you to rush it!"
34.	facilities committee chair	Point of Order, Chair.
35.	chair	State your point.
36.	facilities committee chair	The last speaker's remarks do not appear to be germane to the issue we're discussing.
37.	chair	The point is well taken. Members are reminded that under Robert's Rules of Order, discussion must be relevant to the topic at hand.
38.	botanist	Well, I think that we can't really address this unless we look at the Governor's Report on Climate Change. I was reading it the other day, and I was really impressed with the official recommendations.
39.	football coach	Point of Order, Chair.
40.	chair	State your point.
41.	football coach	I believe that the Governor's Report on Climate Change is not germane to our discussion right now.
42.	chair	The chair will ask the council to decide this question. All those who believe that the Governor's Report on Climate Change is germane to our discussion right now, say "aye."
43.	botanist	Aye!
44.	chair	All those who believe it is not germane, say "no."
45.	banker, dancer, facilities committee chair, football coach	No!
46.	chair	The "noes" have it, the Report is not germane, and we will not discuss it at this time.

47.	football coach	I don't think we need to hire a herd from "Rent-a-Goat" to find the GOATS. A glance around the chambers should be enough.
48.	dancer	Point of Order!
49.	chair	State your point.
50.	dancer	That is an insulting remark.
51.	chair	The point is well taken! Members will refrain from personal and insulting comments, and keep their discussion on topic.
52.	banker	It seems to ME that goats are kind of smelly and messy. I'm worried that this is going to downgrade our professional image.
53.	chair	It seems to the CHAIR that you're worrying too much about appearances. Can't you get down from your high horse and consider what's best for the planet?
54.	banker	Whoa, Point of Order, chair!
55.	chair	State your point.
56.	banker	<i>[speaking angrily]</i> The chair is out of line here! Under Robert's Rules, the chair has to follow the same rules as the rest of us, and may not make personal remarks.
57.	chair	<i>[speaking sadly]</i> Oh, the point is well taken. The chair apologizes for getting carried away.
58.	botanist	I think this is a great idea. I'm a Capricorn, and the "Sign of the Goat" is an excellent omen for our city!
59.	football coach	In my opinion anybody who supports this nutty idea is a BOZO!
60.	botanist	Point of Order, Chair!
61.	chair	State your point.
62.	botanist	The word "BOZO" is an insult.
63.	chair	The chair will rule that the word "BOZO" is an insult and may not be used.

64.	football coach	APPEAL!
65.	dancer	Second!
66.	chair	Very well, the ruling of the chair has been appealed and seconded, so the group will decide. As you know, appeals pertaining to language and decorum CANNOT BE DEBATED. It is just a straight up-or-down vote. All those who believe that the ruling of the chair that "BOZO" is an insult should be SUSTAINED, please say "aye."
67.	chair, banker, botanist, facilities committee chair	Aye!
68.	chair	All those who disagree, please say "no."
69.	dancer, football coach	No!
70.	chair	Very well, the "ayes" have it and the ruling of the chair is sustained. Members may not use the word "BOZO." Clerk, please be sure to record this in the minutes.
71.	chair	Is there any further discussion on the motion as amended? <i>[pause]</i> Very well, we'll take the vote. All those in favor of the motion "that the staff be directed to hire a herd of goats from 'Rent-a-Goat' in order to trim the grounds, at a maximum cost of \$12,000 per year," say "aye."
72.	banker, botanist, chair, dancer, facilities committee chair	Aye!
73.	chair	All those opposed, say "no."
74.	football coach	No!
75.	chair	The "ayes," have it, the motion passes, and staff will move ahead.