

# **Information Paper**

## **on**

# **Roberts Rules of Order**

**Purpose:** Provide an outline of the basics of Roberts Rules of Order

**Background:** The official source is Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 11th Edition by Henry M. Robert III, Daniel H. Honemann, and Thomas J. Balch. Sources used for this paper include Robert's Rules of Order made Easy by Rita Cook, and The Homeowners Association Manual, by Peter M. Dunbar, Esq. and Marc W. Dunbar, Esq.

**Discussion:**

- Main Motions bring original business or propositions before the board. Eight characteristics define main motions
  - 1) Cannot be made when there is another question pending.
  - 2) Cannot be applied to another motion.
  - 3) Someone else on the floor? Then a main motion is out of order.
  - 4) Must be seconded.
  - 5) Is debatable.
  - 6) Can be amended.
  - 7) Requires a majority vote.
  - 8) Can be reconsidered as a motion.

**Six steps on how a main motion works:**

**Step One:**

- A board member makes the motion by saying "I move that" ... A board member who gains the floor when there are no pending motions usually makes the motion immediately or makes a word or two of introduction.
- The board member who makes the main motion is granted the right to speak first during the debate of the question, but this speech should not be made until after the motion is seconded and stated by the chair.

**Step Two:**

- Another board member seconds the main motion by saying "I second the motion" without obtaining the floor. Seconding a motion is not considered a show of support for the motion, it simply voices the desire that the question contained therein be brought before the board.

**Step Three:**

- The chair states the question by saying "It is moved and seconded that..." and then repeating the motion. A motion should be read or stated by someone other than the board member making the motion.
- Until the chair states the question, the person making the motion has the right to modify it. Others can suggest that the person making the motion make specific modifications. These types of changes should be limited to items that would not cause debate. Also, until the chair restates the motion, the person making the motion has the right to withdraw the motion.

- Once the chair states a motion, it becomes the property of the board, and the board member who originally brought it to the board retains only the right to speak first during the debate. Also, that person may no longer modify the main motion (except by amendment).

#### **Step Four:**

- The board members debate the motion with the maker of the motion being invited by the chair first to obtain the floor and speak to the motion.
  - Debating a question follows three basics:
    - All board members have the right to speak twice, and no more, on each question each day.
    - When debating, a board member may not rise to speak a second time while anyone who wishes to speak for the first time has the floor. Speeches should be confined to the time permitted in the by-laws or ten minutes, which is typical.
    - Debate remains open until all board members who wish to speak have exhausted their right to do so. Debate may be closed early by the order of the board on a two-thirds vote.

#### **Step Five:**

- The chair puts the question to vote, once it seems that debate has ended, by first asking if the board “is ready for the question.” If there are no other attempts to debate the motion, the chair then restates the question before the board and calls for a vote.

#### **Step Six:**

- The chair announces the result of the vote immediately once the result of the vote has been determined. Voice vote or show of hands is acceptable.

#### **Taking Up Business in the Correct Order**

- **Subsidiary, Incidental and Privileged motions** may be made during the consideration of the main motion.
  - **Subsidiary** motions are those which are applied to other motions for the purposes of modifying, amending, postponing or otherwise disposing of the other motions. Subsidiary motions are of higher priority, and they will supersede the main motion and must be disposed of before voting on the main motion. Examples include subsidiary motions to limit debate, amend the main motion or move the “previous question” on the main motion. An amendment offered to a document, report or other written instrument is technically an incidental motion and should be treated accordingly.
  - **Incidental** motions do not seek to modify or amend another motion but address how or when another motion or question will be dealt with by the meeting. Under most circumstances, an incidental motion must be disposed of first before consideration of main motion can continue. Examples include motions to suspend the rules, motions to close or reopen nomination, motions to divide a question before the meeting or motions to waive the rules. Incidental motions are not debatable and cannot be amended by the meeting.
  - **Privilege** motions do not relate directly to pending questions before the association. Matters of privilege are considered of the highest importance to the meeting and take precedent over all other questions before a meeting, and they must be disposed of before further business can be conducted. Matters of privilege are not debatable once they have been made and seconded. Examples of privileged motions and matters

include motions for adjournment, motions to recess, demands that the meeting conform to the proper order of business and questions or privilege claimed by himself or on behalf of the meeting.

- **Unclassified** motions include dilatory and frivolous motions. The presiding officer may choose to not recognize the motion. A motion to ratify is an unclassified motion that can be approved only if the act could be properly done if authorized in advance by the meeting membership. Reconsideration is the most commonly used unclassified motion and it can be made relating to any motion previously adopted in the meeting. A motion to reconsider is debatable if the motion it seeks to reconsider is also debatable. The motion to reconsider must be made by a board member who is on the prevailing side of the previous vote. When a reconsidered motion has been disposed of, it cannot be reconsidered a second time without the unanimous approval of the membership.
- **Priority of Motions:** A motion having higher dignity than the one currently before the meeting can be made and must be disposed of before continuing with the regular meeting business. A motion of lesser dignity than the one being considered by the meeting cannot be made and is out of order until the higher-ranking motion is disposed of by the membership. The following commonly used motions are listed in their priority ranking with the motion of highest dignity listed first:
  - 1) Adjourn at a fixed time.
  - 2) Adjourn.
  - 3) Recess.
  - 4) Reconsideration.
  - 5) Questions of privilege.
  - 6) Call for orders of the day.
  - 7) Lay on the table.
  - 8) Previous question.
  - 9) Limit debate.
  - 10) Postpone to a certain time.
  - 11) Amend the motion.
  - 12) Postpone indefinitely.
  - 13) Main motion.

### **Matters Out of Order**

- A matter can be out of order when it is presented at the wrong time or when it is presented in the wrong way.
- A main motion is out of order when another main motion is already pending or when the main motions is on a subject which should arise under a different order of business on the agenda.
- To call a point of order, or to demand that the proper order of business be followed, is a privileged matter, or motion, for any board member.
- It is the presiding officers' duty to enforce the rules and order of business of the meeting without debate or unnecessary delay.
- It is the right of every board member who notices a departure from the rules or from the order of business to insist upon proper enforcement.
- A motion to waive the rules is an incidental motion and it must be decided by the meeting without debate. It requires a two-thirds of the voting interest present at the meeting for adoption, and the motion itself cannot be amended.

**Decorum:**

- Decorum for a successful meeting is built on mutual respect between the membership and the presiding officer in the meeting. All issues and requests to speak should be presented through the chairman of the meeting. Board members wishing to obtain the floor for any purpose should do so properly and seek the recognition of the presiding officer.
  - Once a board member assumes the floor:
    - The rules of debate should be obeyed and all comments should be confined to the question before the meeting.
    - All remarks should be directed to the Chairman.
    - Comments and statements relating to personal motives and to personalities should not be made and may be ruled out of order by the presiding office.
- Proper decorum at a meeting is no more than the exercise of common courtesy and maintenance of respect for the rights of others. To ensure that decorum is maintained, the presiding officer of the meeting should guide board members through the proper order of business.
  - The presiding officer must require that the rules be followed at all times.
  - At the same time, the chairman must be both flexible and patient with board members who are unfamiliar with the formal rules of parliamentary procedure.
  - **The chairman should not permit conduct which is disruptive, tedious, or dilatory.**