**Meeting Guidelines**

1. Meetings will be conducted by the chairperson (chair), or in their absence, the vice-chairperson (vice-chair). It is important that the chair of the meeting maintain order, allow full discussion of all items on the agenda and get through all agenda items in the allotted meeting time. The chair usually sets the meeting agenda and controls and monitors the discussion at the meeting to make sure that everyone who wants to participate gets a chance to voice his/her opinions.

2. An agenda will be prepared prior to the meeting, and followed to conduct the business of the meeting. A suggested outline for an agenda is as follows:

• Call to Order

• Roll Call

• Reading/Approval of Minutes

• Calendar items

• Reports/Updates (officers, committees, etc.)

• Previous/Unfinished items

• New items

• Adjourn

3. Meetings will be conducted by following basic guidance from Robert’s Rules of Order

BASIC GUIDANCE FROM ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER

THE CHAIRPERSON (CHAIR)

All meetings are facilitated by a chairperson (chair) who is responsible for making sure that the meeting is conducted smoothly and fairly. The chairperson is impartial during all debate and should have the respect of all meeting participants. The chairperson does not have final decision making authority. The meeting participants have this authority and largely have the responsibility to decide how the meeting will be conducted.

MAIN MOTION

The basis of discussion at a meeting is a motion. A motion is announced or put forward by an eligible meeting participant for the purpose of focusing the discussion. Each motion must have a “mover” (the person who makes the motion) and a “seconder” (who shows that there is some support for the motion for the meeting participants). When a motion is “put on the floor” for discussion by the participants, that discussion must focus on the substance of the current motion. All other discussion is out of order and not to be allowed according to the rules. Another motion cannot be introduced while there is a motion on the floor. A meeting participant making a motion (the mover) must state the motion before speaking. The motions may be written or verbal and directed to or shared with the chairperson. It is important to assure that everyone is clear about the discussion.

ORDER

It is important that meeting participants are acknowledged in order. Once a motion has been introduced, it is the chairperson’s responsibility to maintain a list of speakers to manage the discussion in an orderly manner. The participant who seconds the motion is always given an opportunity to speak after the mover. In order to make sure that all participants who wish to speak are heard, the chairperson will allow speakers who have not yet spoken to speak ahead of those who have already spoken.

AMENDMENTS

A person who “legally” has the floor can amend the main motion currently being debated. An amendment is another motion that is used to change, by adding, subtracting, or completely changing the main motion under discussion. When the amendment has been moved and seconded, all subsequent discussion must be on the substance of the current amendment. An amendment can be amended once. An amendment can be passed by a simple majority of meeting participants. If an amendment is passed, defeated or withdrawn, the discussion goes back to the main motion on the floor with comments based on whether the amendment passed or not. Long amendments are usually presented in writing to the chairperson so that they can be read back to the meeting participants.

POINT OF ORDER

If a meeting participant believes that the meeting is progressing outside of the rules of order, the person can raise a “point of order. ” When raising a “point of order,” the person states what rule or order has been violated or not enforced by the chairperson. A point of order can be used to interrupt a speaker. The chairperson has the responsibility of determining if the point is valid or not. A point of order cannot be used to abridge the speaker list or comment on a motion out of turn.

POINT OF PRIVILEGE

A point of privilege can be used to interrupt a speaker. Any meeting participant who feels that his or her rights have been infringed upon or violated may bring this point by simply stating their problem. Privilege involves the comfort or accessibility of the meeting participant and can include such things as “can’t hear” or “too noisy” or “unclear copies” and so on, or more personal actions such as misquotes, misinterpretations or insults. The chair has the responsibility of determining if the point is valid.

CHALLENGE THE CHAIR

If a meeting participant feels that his/her point of order or point of privilege was ruled on unfairly by the chairperson, a challenge can be made to the chairperson. The chairperson then can ask for a motion to uphold the chair’s decision and a vote is taken. The vote by all meeting participants will decide whether the chairperson’s action on the point was valid or not.

POINT OF INFORMATION

A point of information is a question raised by a meeting participant while another has the floor. The question can be raised but the person who has the floor may refuse the question. The chairperson asks the speaker if he or she wants to entertain the question when asked. The speaker can refuse. A point of information is only a question and cannot be used to speak out of turn or harass a speaker or disrupt the flow of the meeting.

TABLE

If a meeting participant feels that the decision and vote on a motion needs to be delayed temporarily when something else of immediate urgency has arisen for whatever reason, that person can move to “table” the motion. A meeting participant must be recognized by

the chairperson in order to table a motion and cannot request this action at the end of a speech. Generally, a specific time limit is mentioned when tabling the motion so as not to leave the motion dangling. A motion to table requires a simple majority vote. The discussion allowed after a vote to table is only about the length of the tabling, unless a person makes a motion to “Take from the Table.” The motion to lay on the table is often incorrectly used and wrongfully admitted as in order with the intention of either “killing” an embarrassing question without a direct vote or suppressing a question without debate.

CALLING THE PREVIOUS QUESTION

If a meeting participant thinks that additional debate will be unproductive, he or she may “call the previous question” which can end the debate. If no other participants object, the meeting proceeds to the motion. If there is an objection, the participants vote on whether to end the debate. A two-thirds majority vote is required and no debate is allowed. If the “calling the previous question” is passed, a vote on the main motion is taken with no additional debate.

RESCIND

A meeting participant can make a motion to rescind only if the motion it refers to was passed at another meeting or on another day. This motion requires a two-thirds majority to pass.

RECONSIDER

A meeting participant can make a motion to reconsider if the motion under reconsideration was passed at that same meeting. The motion can only be made by a participant who voted with the prevailing majority on the earlier vote on the motion. A two-thirds majority is required.

SUSPENSION OF THE RULES

Any motion for suspension of the rules of order (usually used so that meeting participants can do something in violation of the rules) must have a two-thirds vote to succeed. There is no debate allowed. This motion cannot be amended and cannot be reconsidered at the same meeting.

ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn takes precedence over all other motions, except a motion to fix the time to adjourn. This motion cannot be debated or amended, nor can a vote to adjourn be reconsidered. A motion to adjourn cannot be made when a speaker has the floor, or when a vote is being conducted.

REFER OR COMMIT

A motion to refer or commit is used to send a question before the meeting to a committee to have further investigation of questions raised. The motion requires a second and debate can occur, but only on the topic of committing the motion, not on the content of the motion.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Occasionally, meeting participants, especially in committee, may wish to consider a motion or group of motions before they are addressed individually for debate. Committees can vote but their votes are not binding on all meeting participants unless the vote is ratified when the meeting resumes its regular session. Motions are required to move from the committee of the whole and back to the committee of the whole.

SUMMARY OF TYPES OF MOTIONS

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| PRIVELAGED MOTIONS | INTERRUPT SPEAKER | SECOND REQUIRED | DEBATABLE | AMENDABLE | VOTE REQUIRED | PURPOSE |
| fix time to adjourn | no | yes | no | yes | majority | sets definite continuation time |
| to adjourn | no | yes | no | no | majority | to end meeting |
| to take a recess | no | yes | no | yes | majority | to briefly interrupt meeting |
| question of privilege | yes | no | no | no | chair rules | to obtain urgent action immediately |
| call for orders of day | yes | no | no | no | none | to secure adherence to business |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS | INTERRUPT SPEAKER | SECOND REQUIRED | DEBATABLE | AMENDABLE | VOTE REQUIRED | PURPOSE |
| lay on the table | no | yes | no | no | majority | to temporarily set aside an item of business |
| previous question | no | yes | no | no | 2/3 | to close debate immediately |
| limit or extend debate | no | yes | no | yes | 2/3 | to provide more or less time for debate |
| postpone indefinitely | no | yes | yes | no | majority | to keep motion from coming to a vote |
| postpone definitely | no | yes | yes | yes | majority | to delay action |
| refer to committee | no | yes | yes | yes | majority | to place business in hands of a committee |
| amend | no | yes | yes | yes | majority | to modify a motion |

SUMMARY OF TYPES OF MOTIONS

(Continued)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| MAIN MOTION | INTERRUPT SPEAKER | SECOND REQUIRED | DEBATABLE | AMENDABLE | VOTE REQUIRED | PURPOSE |
| general | no | yes | yes | yes | majority | to introduce new business |
| specific take from the table | no | yes | no | no | majority | to continue consideration of question |
| reconsider | yes | yes | yes | no | majority | to allow another vote on the questions |
| rescind | no | yes | yes | yes | 2/3 | to repeal previous action |
| adport report or resolution | no | yes | yes | yes | majority | to declare facts, opinions or purposes as an assembly |
| adjourn (qualified) | no | yes | yes | yes | majority | to end meeting |
| create order of day (special) | no | yes | yes | yes | 2/3 | to set future time to discuss a special matter |
| amend (constitution, etc.) | no | yes | yes | yes | 2/3 | to modify or alter |

SUMMARY OF TYPES OF MOTIONS

(Continued)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INCIDENTIAL MOTIONS | INTERRUPT SPEAKER | SECOND REQUIRED | DEBATABLE | AMENDABLE | VOTE REQUIRED | PURPOSE |
| suspend rules | no | yes | no | no | 2/3 | to permit action not possible under rules |
| withdraw motion | yes | yes | no | no | majority | to withdraw motion before voted on |
| read papers | yes | yes | no | no | majority | to prevent wasting time on unimportant business |
| object to consideration | yes | no | no | no | 2/3 | to prevent wasting time on unimportant business |
| point of order | yes | no | no | no | chair rules or majority | to enforce rules of organization |
| parliamentary inquiry | yes | no | no | no | none | to determine correct parliamentary procedure |
| appeal from decision | yes | yes | limited | no | majority | to ensure majority of meeting participants support ruling of chair |
| division of house | yes | no | no | no | 1 member | to secure a counted vote |
| division of question | no | yes | no | yes | majority | to secure more careful consideration of parts |