
Robert's Rules and Running Effective Meetings

A PRESENTATION FOR:
THE DEKALB COUNTY NONPROFIT PARTNERSHIP

What are the Rules Governing Nonprofits?

- The U.S. & State of Illinois Constitutions.
- IRS and Illinois Department of Revenue Regulations.
- “Standing Rules” already exist: Where & When meet. Etc.
- If you chose—a “Parliamentary Authority” such as *Robert’s Rules*. [The choice should be written into the Bylaws].
- An Organization’s Governance Document ALWAYS takes precedence over a parliamentary authority.
- If your organization does not have a set of Bylaws, *Robert’s*, Chapter 18, Sections 56 & 57, explains how to write Bylaws.

What is Parliamentary Procedure?

- A predetermined set of “rules” that will be used to govern the way business is conducted.
- A system of procedures that allows an organization to effectively conduct its official business.
- *Robert’s Rules* is only one of several parliamentary authorities.
- As noted above, the “Official” parliamentary authority used in an organization should be written into organization’s governance document.
- A designated parliamentarian is also very helpful if a dispute arises.

Who was Henry M. Robert?

Henry Martyn Robert

Memorial Photos Flowers Share Edit

Birth: May 2, 1837
Robertville
Jasper County
South Carolina, USA

Death: May 11, 1923
Hornell
Steuben County
New York, USA

United States Army Brigadier General. Born in Robertville, South Carolina, he graduated from West point in 1857 and was commissioned an officer in the US Army Corps of Engineers. During the Civil War, he worked on the defenses of Washington, Philadelphia, and the New England coast. From 1867 to 1895, he was senior engineer in charge of river, harbor and coast improvements along the Pacific and Gulf coasts on the Great Lakes and on Long Island Sound. He is best known as the author of a book on parliamentary law, "Roberts Rules of Order for Deliberative Assemblies" (1876). In April 1901, he was appointed Brigadier General, Chief of Engineers and retired on May 2, 1901. (bio by: [John "J-Cat" Griffith](#))

Family links:
Spouse:
Isabel Livingston *Hoagland* Robert (1862 - 1957)*
Children:
Corinne *Robert* Redgrave (1866 - 1958)*



Added by: [Ron Moody](#)



Added by: [Ron Williams](#)

HENRY MARTYN ROBERT
BRIGADIER GENERAL
CHIEF OF ENGINEERS
UNITED STATES ARMY
1837 — 1923
HIS WIFE
ISABEL HOAGLAND ROBERT
1862 — 1957

Why Use Parliamentary Procedure?

- Focus on one item at a time—not more than one issue will be discussed.
- Extend courtesy/civility to everyone—all members have an opportunity to participate.
- Observe the rule of the majority—no group decision is granted without majority vote.
- Ensure the rights of the minority—all members have equal access to decision making.

First Things First: Why is an Agenda Important? [Part I]

- An Agenda is a formal listing of the business to be conducted at a meeting.
- The Agenda must be approved by the membership at the start of the meeting in order to follow it—*Robert's* still refers to the “Orders of the Day.”
- Whenever possible, an Agenda should be presented to the membership well in advance of the meeting for review.
- REMEMBER: a well-planned agenda is critical to a well run, organized meeting.

Why is an Agenda Important? [Part II] Sample Agenda

- It is up to each individual organization to adopt an order of business to be used at every meeting—often included in the Bylaws or governance document.
- If no official Agenda, *Robert's* recommends:
 1. Reading and approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting.
 2. Reports of standing committees and officers.
 3. Reports of any special committees.
 4. Special orders—guest speakers, etc.
 5. Unfinished business. [NOT, “Old Business”]
 6. New business.
 7. Adjournment.

What is the Role of Members in an Organization?

- It is the responsibility of the membership to establish and maintain effective meeting structure.
- Every member has the right and responsibility to participate in meetings and the process of parliamentary procedure.
- Members should educate themselves regarding the Governance Document or Bylaws of the organization.
- **REMEMBER:** Strong group discussion and interaction leads to strong decisions made by the group—reaching consensus matters!

How Do You Get Down to Business?

- Parliamentary procedure and the rules that govern the conducting of business is based on motions.
- The key to parliamentary procedure is learning and using these motions correctly during meetings.
- Do not be intimidated by the list of motions—a total of 86 in *Robert's*, but only about 20 are most commonly used.
- REMEMBER: Using parliamentary procedure correctly takes practice and effort.

How Are Motions Classified?

- Privileged Motions—do not relate to a pending question, however, they are of such great importance that they take precedence over all other questions (or motions).
- Incidental Motions—arise from another question that **is** pending and must be decided **before** the question from which they arise—that is, they are made as a result of another motion.
- Subsidiary Motions—applied to other motions for the purpose of appropriately disposing of them.

What Are Privileged Motions? [Part I]

1. Adjourn—allows the meeting to be officially over.

*Should gain recognition from the Chair.

*Second required, not debatable, not amendable, majority vote.

2. Question of Privilege—focuses on the rights and privileges of the organization or an individual.

*No formal recognition needed: “I can’t hear, please speak up...”

*No second, not debatable or amendable; no vote.

What Are Privileged Motions? [Part II]

3. Fix a Time to Adjourn—allows for a continuance of the current meeting when it is obvious the meeting will not in the allowable time frame.

“M/M President, since we will be unable to finish today’s business in the time available, I move that when we adjourn until 3:00 p.m. tomorrow.”

*Second required; not debatable or amendable; must be voted on immediately.

4. Recess—a short break or intermission in the proceedings which does not close the meeting.

* Second required; not debatable, amendable.

Privileged Motions: [Part III]

5. Call for “Orders of the Day”—used when the group deviates from the agenda and you would like to follow the agenda.

*No recognition needed, not debatable or amendable.

“M/M President, I call for the orders of the day.”

President asks the secretary to read the agenda. The president then asks members if there are objections to following the agenda—if there are objections, a vote must be taken and need $2/3$ vote to not follow the agenda.

Incidental Motions [Part I]

6. **Point of Order**—made when a member makes a parliamentary error.

*No recognition needed.

“M/M President, I rise to a point of order.”

President asks member to state his/her point.

Member states parliamentary error; chair either agrees or disagrees.

*No second, not debatable or amendable, no vote.

7. **Appeal**—used when member believes that Chair makes a decision not in agreement with the group.

*Requires a second, is debatable but not amendable, majority vote.

Incidental Motions [Part II]

8. **Suspend the Rules**—used to deviate from the agenda or allow for special circumstances.

*Recognition required.

*Requires a second, is not debatable or amendable, 2/3 vote required.

9. **Division of the House**—used then a member disagrees with the vote result stated by the chair.

*No recognition needed.

*No second required, not debatable, or amendable, no vote.

Incidental Motions [Part III]

10. **Withdraw**—used when a member wishes to withdraw his/her motion.

*No second, not debatable or amendable, no vote.

11. **Division of the Question**—used when a member believes the motion is really two motions in one.

*Recognition required.

* Second required, not debatable, but amendable as to how the questions is divided, majority vote.

Incidental Motions [Part IV]

12. **Objection to Consideration of the Question**—allows group to avoid a motion entirely if they believe it would not be in the best interest of the group to consider it.

*No recognition, must be made before the President restates the motion.

*No second required, not debatable or amendable.

*A 2/3 vote is required to pass this motion and if done so, the motion is dropped.

Subsidiary Motions [Part I]

13. **Lay on the Table**—used to postpone a decision on a motion until a future meeting.

- *Requires recognition.

- *Requires a second, not debatable or amendable, majority vote.

- *If approved, a Motion to Take from the Table is required at the later meeting; requires a second, not debatable or amendable, majority vote.

14. **Postpone Definitely**—used to remove an issue from the floor to be brought up the next stated meeting.

- *Recognition required.

- *Second required, is debatable and amendable as to time, Majority vote.

Subsidiary Motions [Part II]

15. **Previous Question**—used when a member want to end debate to vote immediately.

- *Requires recognition

- *Requires a second, not debatable or amendable, 2/3 vote required

16. **Refer to a Committee**—used to allow a committee to do more research or discuss or deliberate an issue.

- *Recognition required

- *Requires a second, is debatable and amendable, majority vote required

Subsidiary Motions [Part III]

17. **Amendment**—used to change a motion, but never the *intent* of the motion.

* Three ways to amend a motion:

a. Addition—Adding a word or phrase.

b. Striking out/”Subtraction”—Removing part of the motion.

c. Substitution—removing part of the motion and inserting a new word or phrase.

*Motions can be amended only twice; require recognition, a second, are debatable and amendable, majority vote.

Subsidiary Motions [Part IV]

18. **Main Motion**—used to bring items of business to the group; can not be used if any other motion is on the floor.

*Recognition required.

* Second required, debatable and amendable, majority vote.

* The Main Motion is the lowest ranking of all motions.

Summary: Basic “Rules” For An Effective Meeting:

1. Set and Distribute the Agenda—In Advance!
2. Start on Time. End on Time.
3. Keep the Focus on the Agenda.
4. Deliberate With Civility According to the “Rules.”
5. End the meeting with an Action Plan.