



SWCD Operational Handbook

Meetings

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Section Contents

Meetings.....	2
Purpose of a Meeting.....	2
Preparing an Agenda.....	2
Conducting the Meeting	3
Dealing with the Subject.....	3
Dealing with People.....	4
The District Board Meeting	6
Running Your Board Meeting	6
Elements of a Successful Meeting.....	6
Parliamentary Procedure	7
Order of Business	7
Principle Motions	7
Study of Parliamentary Procedure	9
Good Minutes.....	9
Officer Duties	9
Chair.....	9
Vice Chair.....	10
Secretary.....	10
Treasurer	11
Public Relations and Information (PR&I).....	11
Simplified Parliamentary Procedure	12
A General Table of Rules for Fourteen Frequently Used Motions.....	17

Meetings

Purpose of a Meeting

A meeting is merely a communication device. It is a means by which information is communicated to, from, or among a group of people. The purpose of communicating should be to produce some kind of change in knowledge, attitude, behavior, or skills.

A meeting defines the group or unit. Those present belong to it, those absent do not. Everyone is able to look around and perceive the whole group and sense the collective identity of which he or she forms a part.

A meeting is a place where the group revises, updates, and adds to what it knows as a group. Every group creates its own pool of knowledge, experience, and judgment consisting only of what the individuals have experienced or discussed as a group.

A meeting helps every individual understand both the collective aim of the group and the way in which his own and everyone else's work can contribute to the group's success.

A meeting creates in all present a commitment to the decisions it makes and the objectives it pursues. Once something has been decided, even if you originally argued against it, your membership in the group entails an obligation to accept the decision.

Despite the fact that a meeting can perform all of the foregoing main functions, there is no guarantee that it will do so in any given situation. It is all too possible that any single meeting may be a waste of time, an irritant, or a barrier to the achievement of the district objectives.

The purpose of this paper is to outline some methods of making meetings more effective.

Preparing an Agenda

The agenda is by far the most important piece of paper at a meeting. Properly drawn up, it has the power of speeding and clarifying. The main fault is to make it unnecessarily brief and vague. For example, the phrase "develop budget" tells nobody very much, whereas the longer explanation "to discuss the proposed increase in the 1990 budget in order to hire a district administrator" helps all members to form some views or even just to look up facts and figures in advance.

Thus, the chairperson should not be afraid of a long agenda, provided that the length is the result of analyzing and defining each item more closely, rather than of adding more items than the meeting can reasonably consider in the time allowed. He/She should try to include, very briefly, some indication of the reason for each topic to be discussed. If one item is of special interest to the group, it is often a good idea to single it out for special mention.

The chairperson should also bear in mind the useful device of heading each item "for information," "for discussion," or "for decision" so that those attending the meeting know the intended outcome of each item.

The order of items on the agenda is important. Some aspects are obvious: the items that need urgent decision have to come before those that can wait until next time. But some aspects are not so obvious. Consider:

1. The early part of a meeting tends to be more lively and creative than the end of it; so if an item needs mental energy, bright ideas, and clear heads, it may be better to put it high on the list. Equally, if there is an item of great interest and concern to everyone, it may be a good idea to hold it back for awhile and get some other useful work done first. Then the star item can be introduced to carry the meeting over the attention lag that sets in after the first 15 to 20 minutes of the meeting.
2. Some items unite the meeting in a common front while others divide the members from one another. The chairperson may want to start with unity before entering into division, or he/she may prefer the other way around. The point is to be aware of the choice and to make it consciously, because it is apt to

make a difference to the whole atmosphere of the meeting. It is almost always a good idea to find a unifying item with which to end the meeting.

3. A common fault is to dwell too long on trivial but urgent items to the exclusion of subjects of fundamental importance whose significance is long-term rather than immediate. This can be remedied by putting on the agenda the time at which discussion of the important long-term issue will begin—and by sticking to it.
4. It is a good idea to put the finishing time of a meeting on the agenda as well as the starting time.

Conducting the Meeting

Why is it that any single meeting may be a waste of time, an irritant, or a barrier to the achievement of a district's objectives? The answer lies in the fact that all sorts of human cross-currents can sweep the discussion off course and errors of psychology and technique on the chairperson's part can defeat its purposes. The chairperson's job can be divided into two corresponding tasks: (1) dealing with the subject, and (2) dealing with the people. This section will offer some guidelines on how to deal with these two tasks and how to correct things that may go wrong in a meeting.

Dealing with the Subject

This task requires the chairperson to follow the structure of the discussion and entails listening carefully and keeping the meeting pointed toward the objective.

At the start of the discussion of any item, the chairperson should make it clear what the intended outcome is for that item. Are the members hoping to make a clear decision or firm recommendation? Is it a preliminary discussion to give the members something to go away with and think about? Are they looking for a variety of different lines to be pursued outside the meeting? Do they have to approve the proposal or merely note it?

The chairperson may give them a choice: "If we can agree on a course of action, that's fine. If not, we'll have to set up a committee to review and make recommendations at the next monthly meeting."

The chairperson should make sure that all the members understand the issue and why they are discussing it. Often it will be obvious. If not, the chairperson should give a brief introduction with some indication of the reason the item is on the agenda; the story so far; the present position; what needs to be established or resolved; and some indication of lines of inquiry or courses of action that have been suggested or explored, as well as arguments on both sides of the issue.

If the discussion becomes lengthy, the chairperson should listen carefully in case people jump too far ahead or go back over old ground or start repeating points that have been made earlier. He/She has to head discussion off sterile or irrelevant areas very quickly.

It is the chairperson's responsibility to prevent misunderstanding and confusion. If he/she does not understand a reference or follow an argument, he/she should seek clarification from the speaker. He/She may also have to clarify by asking people for facts or experience that perhaps influence their view but are not known to others in the meeting. And he/she should be looking for points where an interim summary would be helpful. This device frequently takes only a few seconds and acts like a lifebelt to some of the members who are getting out of touch with the discussion.

Sometimes a meeting will have to discuss a draft document. If there are faults in it, the members should agree on what the faults are and the chairperson should delegate someone to produce a new draft later. The group should never try to redraft around the table.

Perhaps the most common fault of a chairperson is the failure to terminate the discussion early enough. Sometimes the chairperson does not realize that the members have reached an agreement; and consequently, the discussion goes on, getting nowhere at all. A discussion should be closed if it has become clear that (a) more facts are required before further progress can be made; (b) discussion has revealed that the meeting needs the

views of people not present; (c) members need more time to think about the subject and perhaps discuss it with others; (d) events are changing and likely to alter or clarify the basis of a decision very soon; (e) there will not be enough time to go over the subject properly at the meeting, or (f) it is becoming clear that two or three members can take care of the matter outside the meeting without taking up the time of the rest. The fact that the decision is difficult, likely to be disputed, or going to be unwelcome to somebody, however, is not a reason for postponement.

At the end of the discussion of each agenda item, the chairperson should give a brief and clear summary of what has been agreed on. This can act as the dictation of the actual minutes. It serves not merely to put the item on record, but also to help people realize that something worthwhile has been achieved. It also helps to answer the question, "Where did all that get us?" If the summary involves action by a member of the meeting, he/she should be asked to confirm his/her acceptance of the undertaking.

Dealing with People

Promptness

There is only one way to ensure that a meeting starts on time and that is to start it on time. Latecomers who find that the meeting started without them soon learn the lesson. The alternative is that the prompt and punctual members will soon realize that a meeting never starts until at least ten minutes after the advertised time, and they too will start coming late. Punctuality at future meetings can be wonderfully reinforced by the practice of listing late arrivals and early departures in the minutes. This will tell everyone on the circulation list that he or she was late, and people do not want that sort of information about themselves published too frequently.

Control the Talker

In most meetings, someone takes a long time to say very little. As chairperson, your sense of urgency should help indicate to that person the need for brevity. If it is urgent to stop an individual in full flight, there is a useful device of picking on a phrase, as they utter it, as an excuse for cutting in and offering the discussion to someone else. For example: "Terraces won't work on that field—that's very interesting. John, do you agree that terraces won't work?"

Draw Out the Silent

In any properly run meeting, most of the people will be silent most of the time. Silence can indicate general agreement, no important contribution to make, or the need to wait and hear more before saying anything, and none of these need worry you.

The amount of participation by each individual in most meetings varies considerably. Wide discrepancies may mean that some individuals would like to participate more but do not feel they can for a variety of reasons: timidity, previous experience of rejection, inability to break through the loud dominance of a few, desire to stay out of a conflict, or the feeling that someone has already said what they might have said.

A person who speaks infrequently may sometimes lean forward with his mouth half open as if to speak, only to have someone else rush in with a comment. The silent member then closes their mouth and sinks back in their chair. The group loses a contribution that might have been helpful, and the member may experience personal inadequacy, buried resentment toward the group, or hostility toward the dominant members. This situation, which occurs in almost all meetings where more verbal persons dominate, reflects a problem of group maintenance. Effective group cohesion and growth require that members become sensitive to the pattern of participation in their group and aid each other. Although an individual may feel deeply involved in the discussion while remaining silent, it is important to know whether his or her silence stems from fear or choice. Acceptance and identity are enhanced by participation.

Encouraging the silent member to speak can be overdone. The individual member may have no desire to participate at the time or feel embarrassed when forced to say something. Perhaps he/she feels uninvolved in the current issue or truly has nothing to contribute. Careful observation of body cues—posture and facial expressions—as well as evidence of a long period of nonparticipation should precede any attempt to encourage another member to speak. Encouragement should be done with vocal evidence of caring for both the individual and the group, otherwise, pressures for conformity can build up to a point where no member feels free to be natural in his contribution. However, sensitive encouragement for all members to express their opinions is vital to good group morale; without it some members remain isolated and rejected, and potential contributions are lost.

Getting Ideas Out

A chairperson should encourage the clash of ideas but, at the same time, discourage the clash of personalities. A good meeting is not a series of dialogues between individual members and the chairperson. Instead it should be a cross flow of discussion and debate with the chairperson occasionally guiding, mediating, probing, stimulating, and summarizing, but mostly letting the others thrash ideas out. However, the meeting must be a contention of ideas, not people.

If two people are starting to get heated, widen the discussion by asking a question of a neutral member of the meeting, preferably a question that requires a purely factual answer.

The chairperson should also try to stimulate suggestions. Although very few suggestions will ever lead to anything, almost all of them need to be given every chance. The trouble is that suggestions are much easier to ridicule than facts or opinions. If people feel that making a suggestion will provoke the negative reaction of being laughed at or ridiculed, they will soon stop. If there is any status-jostling going on at the meeting, it is all too easy to use the occasion of someone's making a suggestion as the opportunity to take that person down a peg. It accomplishes nothing and results in ineffective meetings. The answer is for the chairperson to take special notice and show special warmth when anyone makes a suggestion and to discourage as sharply as you can the squashing-reflex. This can often be achieved by requiring the squasher to produce a better suggestion on the spot. Few suggestions can stand up to ridicule in their original state. The chairperson should pick out the best part of a suggestion and get the other members to help build it into something that might work.

Closing the Meeting

The chairperson should try to close the meeting on a note of achievement. If the final item is left unresolved, then you can refer to an earlier item that was well resolved as you close the meeting and thank the group. If the meeting is not a regular one, fix the time and place of the next one before dispersing.

Evaluation

Board members should always strive to make their meetings more effective. The final ten minutes of a meeting can sometimes be reserved for a quick review, or evaluation, of how the meeting progressed. Individuals may volunteer to serve as observers during the session and then report their observations. This review can alert the group to its major problems ("We spent forty minutes discussing the budget, although only ten minutes had been allotted to it.") and to its major achievement ("For the fourth straight month, we ended on time.").

If face-to-face verbal evaluation and feedback is too difficult, members can fill out simple forms rating the meeting and indicating what might have been done by either the leader or members to make the meeting more effective. These forms need not be signed, but can be read aloud, either at the end of the meeting for discussion or at the beginning of the next meeting. After defensiveness has been reduced, a group can move to a verbal evaluation. After this stage, immediate reactions and feedback during the meeting become more possible.

In any meeting, dealing with the issues will be more prominent than dealing with individuals. However, without attention to moods, feelings, and interpersonal relationships, a group chokes its lifeline of energy and motivation

to efficiently deal with the issues. As board members become more skilled at diagnosing group problems, teamwork will be strengthened and working together will produce the satisfaction of a job well done.

The District Board Meeting

Running Your Board Meeting

NOTE: Remember the **Open Meeting Law** applies to meetings of the district board. Meetings of districts are governed by the Minnesota Open Meeting Law, M.S. § [13D](#), and are open meetings to the public (Also see [Minnesota Open Meeting Law Information Brief](#).) Refer to M.S. 13D for specific information.

Elements of a Successful Meeting

The key to a productive meeting lies in developing and following format. This will allow you to conduct business quickly, efficiently, and constructively. This format should contain:

Pre-Meeting socialization: builds team spirit. Most boards are composed of people with diverse backgrounds who may never see each other outside the board room. They need time to warm up and get used to working as a team.

Board meeting orientation: call the meeting to order on time, take attendance, and recognize visitors.

Reports: approve the agenda, minutes, and treasurer's report. These should be sent to each member in advance to provide adequate time to respond and to streamline your meeting. Hear committee and administrators' reports. This will involve designated board members and staff, including technicians, the manager, and district conservationists.

Business decision making: Unfinished business such as tabled motions, actions interrupted by adjournment, and intentionally carried over items should be addressed. Consider new business. Deal with items needing a motion and a vote. Some issues, such as administrator's evaluation and long-range planning, don't belong except as reports or for specific recommendation for board action.

Ending formalities: Make informational announcements on which no action is required. Adjourn the meeting. A motion, second, and majority vote are required.

Post-meeting feedback and socialization: Evaluate your meeting. A few times a year review your procedure and be open to change. Socialize. Relationships may be strained due to difference of opinions on issues addressed. Put on the coffee and rebuild.

Added tips: To add to a successful meeting consider:

- The early part of a meeting tends to be more lively and creative than the end of it; so if an item needs mental energy, bright ideas, and clear heads, it may be better to put it high on the list. If an item is of great interest and concern, it may be a good idea to hold it back and get some other items taken care of first. Then the star item can be introduced to carry the meeting over the attention lag that sets in after the first fifteen to twenty minutes.
- Some items unite the meeting while others divide the members. Whether the chair starts or finishes with an agenda item which splits the board, the point is to be aware of the choice. It may make a difference in the whole atmosphere of the meeting. As a rule, it is a good idea to find an item of agreement with which to end the meeting.

- A common fault is to dwell too long on trivial items or run off on tangents. This can be remedied by putting on the agenda the time at which discussion of the important long-term issues will begin and by sticking to it.
- Include a finishing time as well as a beginning time on the agenda.

Parliamentary Procedure

Although parliamentary procedure may seem confusing at first, it is important that board members learn and use it. When they do, you will find that your meetings are briefer and more productive.

Order of Business

1. The meeting is called to order by the chair
 - take roll call (if used).
2. The minutes of the preceding meeting are read by the secretary and
 - may be approved as read, or
 - may be approved with additions or corrections.
3. Monthly statement of treasurer is "received as read and filed for audit" (chair so states). No motion of approval is necessary.
4. Reports of standing committees are called for by the chair.
5. Reports of special committees are called for by the chair.
6. Unfinished business is next in order at the call of the chair.
7. New business is called for by the chair.
8. If the meeting is an annual or special meeting, the program—such as awards, a speech, etc.—follows. The program is considered part of the meeting. The chair presides throughout.

Principle Motions

General Statement

When a motion has been made, seconded, and stated by the chair, the assembly is not at liberty to consider any other business until this motion has been disposed of. If the motion is long and involved, the chair asks the mover to hand it in writing to the secretary. The mover cannot withdraw the motion after it has been stated by the chair. In general, all important motions should be seconded, which may be done without rising or addressing the chair.

Typical steps

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Address chair | 5. Stated to group by chair |
| 2. Recognized | 6. Discussion |
| 3. State motion | 7. Vote |
| 4. Second motion | 8. Announcement of results |

Terminology

To amend: This motion is to **change and/or omit words** in the original main motion and is debatable; it must be approved by a majority vote. To amend an amendment is a motion to change, add, or omit words in the amendment; it is debatable and must be decided by a majority vote. **Method:** The first vote is on changing words of the amendment; the second vote (if first vote adopts change) is on first amendment as changed; the third vote is on adopting main motion as changed.

To commit: When a motion becomes involved through amendments or when it is wise to investigate a question more carefully, it may be moved to commit the motion to a committee for further consideration. This is debatable and amendable.

To lay on the table: The object of this motion is to postpone the subject under discussion in such a way that it could be taken up at some time in the near future when a motion "to take from the table" would be in order. These motions are not debatable or amendable; they must be approved by a majority vote.

To postpone: A motion to postpone the question before the assembly to some future time is in order, except when a speaker has the floor; this is debatable and requires a majority vote.

To adjourn: This motion is always in order except:

- When a speaker has the floor.
- When a vote is being taken.
- After it has just been voted down.
- When the assembly is in the midst of some business which cannot be abruptly stopped.

When the motion is made to adjourn to a definite place and time, it is debatable.

To reconsider: The motion to reconsider can be made on a motion that was carried or lost in order. The motion to reconsider a motion that was carried or lost in order, if made on the same day or the next calendar day, must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. The motion is debatable and must be decided by a majority vote. It requires two votes: first on whether it should be reconsidered; second on original motion after reconsideration. No questions can be twice reconsidered.

The previous question: This motion is to close debate on the pending question. This motion may be made when debate becomes long and drawn out. It is not debatable. The form is "Mr. (Madam) Chair, I move the previous question." The chair then asks "Shall debate be closed and the question now be put?" If this is adopted by a two-thirds vote, the question before the assembly is immediately voted upon.

Point of order: This motion is always in order but can be used only to present an objection to a ruling of the chair or some method of parliamentary procedure. (For example, if the chair makes a procedural mistake and allows someone not voting on the prevailing side to move to reconsider a motion.) The form is "Mr. (Madam) Chair, I rise to a point of order." The chair: "Please state your point of order." After the member has stated the objection, the chair answers:

- your point of order is sustained; or
- your point of order is denied.

Any member who is not satisfied may appeal from the decision of the chair. The chair then addresses the assembly, "Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?"; this is debatable, and the presiding officer may discuss it without leaving the chair. This is voted on like any other motion: majority vote sustains the decision of chair, however, a majority of "no" votes is required to reverse the decision of the chair.

Main motion: To bring business before the board.

Vote immediately: To stop discussion and to get a vote.

Parliamentary inquiry: To let a member ask a question.

Division: A request for the chairperson to use a more accurate method of voting, generally a show of hands. "Mr. (Madam) Chair, I call for a division on that last vote."

Refer to committee: To allow for study and investigation by a smaller group. "I move to refer the main motion to a committee of those appointed by the chair."

Quorum: The minimum number of members who must be present in order to transact legal business.

Precedence: Refers to the rank of motions. When a motion has been made, any motion of higher order may be proposed but no motion of lower order may be proposed. (There are a few exceptions.) Motions are discussed and voted upon in inverse order to their proposal. (The last motion made will be acted on first.)

Study of Parliamentary Procedure

1. Simplified Parliamentary Procedure
NACD
Box 355
League City, Texas 77573
2. Aver, J. Jeffrey, Essentials of Parliamentary Procedure
2nd Edition, Appleton-Century-Crafts, Inc., New York
3. Sikkink, Donald, Understanding Parliamentary Procedure
Peaceful Acres Press
17614-33rd Avenue
Clearwater, MN
4. FFA or 4-H manuals

Good Minutes

Minutes are the official record of board action. They need to be accurate, concise, and complete. Please refer to the Minutes section found in this handbook for further information.

Officer Duties

Regular monthly meetings are a must if the district is to be successful. Supervisors, as representatives of the people, are obligated to conduct the business of the district in an orderly and business-like manner. Successful board meetings depend upon the direction given by the chair and upon the willingness of board members to carry out their assignments as appointed.

Chair

The chair is the steering mechanism of your district. It is up to the chair to do that little extra to motivate board members and other public-minded individuals to do what they can to assist in serving the present and future citizens of the district. After receiving a few years of board experience, a supervisor should welcome the opportunity to be chair of the board. It provides an opportunity to become more closely involved and gain a broader perspective of the total program and its purpose.

Specific responsibilities of the chair are to:

- Preside at all meetings.
- Call special meetings when necessary.
- Meet with district office staff members, the district conservationist, and heads of other agencies involved at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting to address agenda items. This can be done by a short office visit and perhaps a few telephone calls. A formal meeting may not be necessary.
- Refer regularly to the long-range goals of the district and the district annual plan of work and operations when preparing the agenda, trying to ensure that all planned activities are addressed.

- Make sure a copy of the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, and a financial statement (at a minimum) are sent to each board member three to four days prior to the meeting.
- See that agendas and pertinent material are sent to all individuals who should attend the meeting and take part in the discussion.
- Keep in contact with other supervisors on the progress of various programs delegated. Insist on regular attendance of supervisors.
- Call meeting to order promptly and at the specified time. Follow proper rules of order for a business meeting. A well-planned meeting should take no longer than 1 1/2 - 2 hours.
- Recognize visitors and other individuals present at the board meeting.
- Assume the role of facilitator. This will encourage all supervisors to participate in discussion of existing issues.
- Complete an item of business in the order listed before taking up the next item. Stick to the agenda.
- Utilize special committees to involve individuals other than board members and require committee reports at board meetings.
- Avoid the "rubber stamp approach." Encourage board members to question staff or individual presenters regarding clarification of a specific point, thus, allowing them to draw conclusions to adequately make their own decisions.
- Adjourn meeting promptly after all business has been completed.

Vice Chair

The vice-chair position becomes most important in the absence of the chair. The vice-chair should note the activities of the chair and how they are carried out, in case it is ever necessary for the vice-chair to chair a meeting.

Specific duties of the vice-chair are to:

- Assume the duties of the chair in the absence of the chair.
- Assist in organizing and implementing the district program.
- Oversee the work of committees and coordinate their reports as delegated by the chair.
- Be familiar enough with the total program of the district to be able to work closely with the chair and fill in when necessary.

Secretary

The primary responsibility of the district board secretary is to arrange for the recording of official proceedings of the board and to see that the entire board approves the minutes as the legal record of the district. As elected officials using public funds, these minutes should then be signed, becoming the permanent record of what is done and why. Copies for general information purposes should be forwarded to the area and central office of the BWSR. They can also be sent to other interested organizations: the local chapter of the employees association, other state agencies, etc.

Specific duties of the secretary are to:

- Make a complete record of all proceedings.

- Indicate date and place of meeting, refer to whether it is a regularly scheduled meeting or a special meeting, official presiding, names of all those present including visitors, organizations represented, and names of supervisors absent.
- Record each motion in full.
- Complete action on each item of business so that a record can be made of what was addressed and completed.
- Initiate correspondence on behalf of the board as the need arises.
- Inform the chair of any business that should come before the board.
- Sign the official copy of the board minutes after approval by the board at the next meeting and see that the chair does likewise.

Treasurer

The district treasurer is responsible for the financial matters of the district, including the financial records. The treasurer co-signs district fund checks and special fund vouchers after approval of the board. The treasurer and secretary should be bonded. In many cases, the two district staff are also bonded to handle payroll and miscellaneous items. This is a convenience for the staff and allows for day-to-day activities to be conducted smoothly.

Specific duties of the treasurer are to:

- Maintain complete and accurate records of receipts and expenditures. Include district staff's program records and trial balance.
- Be prepared to answer questions from other board members regarding monthly and/or quarterly financial statement as well as year-end figures.
- Pay bills approved by the board and issue receipts for incoming funds or designate staff to do so.
- Make sure program records and general journal provides for adequate number of accounting categories to handle all general and special-use programs.
- Assure that all bills authorized for payment by the district board are recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- Work with the district staff to develop a fiscal year budget.
- Arrange for surety bonds covering appropriate SWCD supervisors and staff.

Public Relations and Information (PR&I)

The PR&I officer serves as the liaison between the district and the public. This person works with the media and other community organizations, such as schools, to educate the public about natural resources and the activities of the district.

Simplified Parliamentary Procedure

Based on [Robert's Rules of Order](#)
as published by
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
Box 855, League City, Texas 77573

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I. ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. The meeting is "called to order" by the chairman.
2. The minutes of the preceding meeting are read by the secretary and:
 - a. May be approved as read.
 - b. May be approved with additions or corrections.
3. Monthly statement of Treasurer is "Received as read and filed for audit." (Chair so states.) No motion of approval is necessary.
4. Reports of standing committees are called for by the chairman.
5. Reports of special committees are called for by the chairman.
6. Unfinished business is next in order at the call of the chair or of the meeting.
7. New business.
8. The program (if an annual or other special meeting). The program is part of the meeting; the chairman "presides" throughout.
9. Adjournment.

II. DUTIES OF A CHAIRMAN

1. To preside at all meetings.
2. Keep calm at all times.
3. Talk no more than necessary while presiding.
4. Have agenda for meeting before him and proceed in a businesslike manner.
5. Have a working knowledge of parliamentary law and a thorough understanding of the constitution and by-laws or other legal charter of the organization.
6. Keep a list of committees on the table while presiding.
7. Refrain from entering the debate of questions before the assembly. If it is essential that this be done, the vice-chairman should be placed in the chair. A chairman is not permitted to resume the chair until after the vote has been taken on the question under discussion.
8. Extend every courtesy to the opponents of a motion, even though the motion is one that the presiding officer favors.
9. Always appear at the rostrum a few minutes before the time the meeting is to be called to order. When the time arrives, note whether a quorum is present; if so, call the meeting to order, and declare "a quorum is present."

III. OTHER OFFICIALS

Vice-Chairman

The vice-chairman of an organization is the one who acts in the place of the chairman, whenever needed. In case of resignation or death of the chairman, the vice-chairman automatically becomes the chairman unless the by-laws provide other methods.

In official meetings, the vice-chairman should preside in the *absence* of the chairman or whenever the chairman temporarily vacates the chair.

If the chairman should be absent for a long period, the vice-chairman may exercise all duties of the chairman except to change or modify rules made by the chairman.

The vice-chairman cannot fill vacancies where the by-laws state that such vacancies shall be filled by the chairman.

In case of resignation or death of the chairman, and the vice-chairman does not care to assume the office of chairman, the *vice-chairman must resign*.

The office of vice-chairman becomes vacant when the vice-chairman assumes the office of chairman. If there are several vice-chairmen, they automatically move up to the higher office leaving the lower office vacant. This office should be filled as instructed by the by-laws or authorized legal authority.

In the absence of the chairman, the vice-chairman is *not* "ex-officio" a member of any committee.

Secretary

The secretary should issue all calls or notices of meetings and should write such letters as the board of directors or executive committee may designate.

The secretary should keep a neat and careful record of all business done in the meetings, with the exact wording of every motion and whether it was lost or carried. Brief extracts from speeches, if important, may be recorded but *no comment of any kind, favorable or unfavorable, should be made*. The minutes should show the names of persons appointed to committees, and it is the duty of the secretary to notify all persons nominated or elected on any committee.

The secretary should be on hand a few minutes before a meeting is called to order. He should have the minute book of the organization with him so that reference can be made to minutes of past meetings.

The secretary should always have a copy of the by-laws; standing rules; book of parliamentary procedure endorsed by the organization; list of members or clubs; and a list of unfinished business, copy of which should be given the presiding officer.

Minutes

The minutes of an organization should contain a record of what *is done and not what is said*. Minutes should contain:

1. Date, place, and time of meeting.
2. Whether it is a regular or special meeting.
3. Name of person presiding.
4. Name of secretary. (In small boards, the names of those present should be recorded.)
5. All *main* motions, whether adopted or rejected.
6. The names of the persons making the motions; the name of the seconder need not be recorded.
7. Points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost.
8. A motion which was withdrawn should not be recorded.

Treasurer

The treasurer of any organization is the custodian of its funds and receives and disburses them upon authority from the organization, the board, executive committee, or the finance or budget committees. A treasurer should be bonded.

The organization should approve the budget or authorize the executive committee or the board of directors to do so. A committee chairman or an officer or member should get permission from the chairman or board to make an expenditure.

No treasurer should accept bills for payment, such as for postage, traveling expenses, etc., from a committee chairman unless receipts are enclosed.

The treasurer should make a monthly statement and a report once a year or upon the request of board or parent body during the year. The annual report should be audited. An auditor's report should be presented following the treasurer's report. The presiding officer states to the assembly that to adopt the report of the auditor (if carried) has the effect of accepting the treasurer's report.

Committees

Committees have no authority except that which is granted by the constitution or by vote of the organization. Unless otherwise provided, the person first named or the one receiving the largest number of votes is its chairman. *A committee has no right to incur any debt or involve the organization in any way unless given full authority to do so.*

Under no circumstances should one or more members of a committee go ahead with the business without action by a quorum; usually a majority of the committee, being present. Failure to observe these rules renders such action "the action of individuals" and subject to "censure."

IV. PRINCIPAL MOTIONS

General Statement: When a motion has been made, seconded, and stated by the chair, the assembly is not at liberty to consider any other business until this motion has been disposed of. If the motion is long and involved, the chairman asks the mover to hand it in writing to the secretary. The mover cannot withdraw his motion after it has been stated by the chair. In general, all important motions should be seconded, which may be done without rising or addressing the chair.

1. To Amend: This motion is "to change, add, or omit *words*" in the *original main motion*, and is debatable; majority vote.

To Amend the Amendment: This is a motion to change, add, or omit *words* in the *first amendment*; debatable, majority vote.

Method: The first vote is on changing *words* of second amendment, the *second* vote (if first vote adopts change) on first amendment *as* changed; the *third* vote is on adopting main motion as changed.

2. To Commit: When a motion becomes involved through amendments or when it is wise to investigate a question more carefully, it may be moved to commit the motion to a committee for further consideration. Debatable and amendable, but a committee must make report on such question.
3. To Lay on the Table: The object of this motion is to postpone the subject under discussion in such a way that it can be taken up at some time in the near future when a motion "to take from the table" would be in order. These motions are not debatable or amendable; majority vote.
4. To Postpone: A motion to postpone the question before the assembly to some future time is in order, except when a speaker has the floor. Debatable, majority vote.
5. To Adjourn: This motion is always in order except:

- a. When a speaker has the floor.
- b. When a vote is being taken.
- c. After it has just been voted down.
- d. When the assembly is in the midst of some business which cannot be abruptly stopped.

When meeting the above conditions, the motion is not debatable.

When the motion is made to adjourn to a definite place and time, it is debatable.

6. To Reconsider: The motion to reconsider a motion that was carried or lost in order if made on the *same* day or the next calendar day, but must be made by one who voted with the prevailing side. No question can be twice reconsidered. Debatable, majority vote.

Requires Two Votes: First on whether it should be reconsidered, second on original motion after reconsideration.

7. The Previous Question: This motion is to close debate on the pending question. This motion may be made when debate becomes long drawn out. It is not debatable. The form is "Mr. (Madam) Chairman, I move the previous question." The chairman then asks, "Shall debate be closed and the question *now* be put?" If this be adopted by a two-thirds vote, the question before the assembly is immediately voted upon.
8. Point of Order: This motion is always in order, but can be used only to present an objection to a ruling of the chair or some method of parliamentary procedure. The form is "Mr. (Madam) Chairman, I rise to a point of order." The Chairman: "Please state your point of order." After the member has stated his objection, the chair answers:
 - a. "Your point of order is sustained" or
 - b. "Your point of order is denied."

If any member is not satisfied, he may appeal from the decision of the chair. The chairman then addresses the assembly, "Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?" This is debatable and the presiding officer may discuss it without leaving the chair. Voted on like any other motion. Majority or tie vote sustains the decision of chair. Requires a majority of "no" votes to reverse decision of the chair.

V. NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS, AND TERM OF OFFICE

General Henry M. Robert, author of *Robert's Rules of Order*, says: "In the elections of the officers of a society, it is more usual to have the nominations made by a committee—when the committee makes its report, which consists of a ticket (a ticket is one name for each office to be filled by ballot), the chair asks, 'Are there any other nominations?'—at which time they may be made from the floor. The committee's nominations are treated just as if made by members from the floor, *no vote being taken on accepting them.*"

If nominations are made from the floor, these names are added to those submitted by the nominating committee. Neither nominations by the committee nor nominations from the floor require a second or adoption by vote, but are acted upon in the election ballot. Nominations are never seconded except as a complimentary endorsement of candidates not known to the assembly.

When nominations are completed, the assembly proceeds to the election, voting by the method prescribed in the constitution and by-laws. The usual method in permanent societies is by ballot, the balloting continued until the offices are filled.

A motion may be made to close nominations but this motion is not in order until the assembly has been given reasonable time to add further nominations to those already made. It is an undebatable main motion, incidental to the nominations. It requires a *two-thirds* vote. The motion to reopen nominations is undebatable and requires a *majority* vote.

The chair should remind the members that the nominating committee has endeavored to present as sure a ticket as possible, but it is now their privilege to name a candidate for any or all of the offices to be

filled, and that they still have the opportunity of casting a ballot, for any eligible members, whether nominated or not.

A member may withdraw his name if placed in nomination, announcing that if elected he would not be able to serve; but he cannot "withdraw in favor of another member."

KINDS OF VOTING – Majority vote means one over half of the members voting and plurality vote is the largest of two or more numbers. A plurality vote never adopts a motion or elects a member to office except by virtue of a special rule previously adopted in the constitution or by-laws. In an election, a candidate has a plurality when he has a larger vote than any other candidate.

THE CHAIR VOTES –When the vote is by ballot, the chairman writes his ballot and casts it with the rest.

On a tie vote the motion is lost. If a majority of *one*, the chair (if a member of the assembly) may vote with the minority and make it a tie and declare the motion "lost" *unless the vote is by ballot*.

In the event of a tie vote by ballot, balloting must continue until a candidate receives a majority (unless by-laws provide for plurality).

To move "that an election be made unanimous," is a mistaken courtesy, as it forces those who did not vote for the candidate to submit unwillingly to the transferring of their vote, thus making it appear to be unanimous, when it is not. One negative response causes such a motion to be "lost."

An election takes effect immediately following the completion of the annual business unless the by-laws specify some other date.

This does not mean that officers are to assume office *at this meeting*, for the duties of the outgoing officers are not completed for the year until after the adjournment of the annual session and all business relating to the annual meeting has been perfected.

A General Table of Rules for Fourteen Frequently Used Motions

(listed from lowest precedence-bottom of page)

Motions (in precedence order)	Motion Maker Needs Recognition?	Motion Needs a Second	Motion is Debatable	Motion is Amendable	Vote Required to Pass	Applies to What Other Motions	Special Notes and Comments
10. Adjourn	Yes	Yes	No	No	Majority	None	Highest precedence
9. Recess	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	None	
8. Appeal ₁	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Decision of chair	Members can challenge a decision by the chair
8. Point of Order ₁	No	No	No	No	Chair decides	Any error	To point out an error
8. Parliamentary Inquiry ₁	No	No	No	No	Chair decides	None	To ask a question
8. Suspend Rules ₁	Yes	Yes	No	No	2/3	None	Cannot apply to minority rights
8. Division ₁	No	No	No	No	Chair decides	All votes	A second vote on votes which are close
7. Lay on Table	Yes	Yes	No	No	Majority	Main, amend, appeal	Also called postpone temporarily
6. Close Debate ₁	Yes	Yes	No	No	2/3	All debatable motions	Also called previous question & vote immediately
5. Limit Debate ₁	Yes	Yes	No	Yes ₃	2/3	All debatable motions	To limit debate to a set period
4. Postpone Definitely	Yes	Yes	Yes ₂	Yes ₃	Majority	Main motions	To set aside to next meeting
3. Refer to Committee	Yes	Yes	Yes ₂	Yes ₃	Majority	Main motions	To allow a small group to study
2. Amend ₁	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	All amendable motions	You may amend an amendment
1. Main	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	None	Lowest precedence

1 - Indicates possible exception to precedence order.

2 - Limited in the sense that debate is only on the merits of that specific motion.

3 - Restricted to the variable part of the motion.