

THE MAIN MOTION

The main motion is the motion by which you introduce business to the County Board. A majority of the action taken by the County Board takes the form of a resolution or ordinance, additionally members may be asked to consider reports, elections to committees. The chair should not allow debate if there is no main motion pending.

When a member wishes to bring business to the attention of the assembly, after gaining the chair's recognition, the member's opening words should be: "I move adoption of resolution 03-99" In addition, the motion should be framed in the positive. Only one main motion can be on the floor at one time.

The best protection against confusion is for the chair to restate the motion before he or she allows debate. Not only does restatement of the motion by the chair clarify the motion (or reveal its defects), it also transfers ownership of the motion from the proposer to the board/committee.

TO OBJECT TO CONSIDERATION

The purpose of the motion to object to consideration is to prevent the consideration - debate - of an original main motion by the board/committee. The motion must be made before debate has begun on the original main motion.

The motion does not require a second. It takes a two-thirds vote in the negative for the objection to consideration to pass. If the motion to block consideration is successful, the main motion is dismissed for that meeting and cannot be renewed during the same meeting except by unanimous consent or by reconsideration of the vote on the objection.

TO AMEND OR SUBSTITUTE AND AMEND THE AMENDMENT

The motion to amend is a subsidiary motion dealing with a main motion and takes one of two ranks:

- Primary Amendment – a primary amendment modifies the immediately pending motion
- Secondary Amendment – a secondary amendment amends the primary amendment
- **No “Third Degree Amendment” amendment to an amendment to an amendment or an exists**

Primary or secondary amendments may insert or add, delete or strike out, or substitute language within the main motion. Any amendment must be germane, or relevant, to the motion. Amendments may be hostile, when germane, but not negative or attempt to change the affirmative of the motion or amendment to the negative.

For example, the main motion: "I move the association recognize Jane Smith as the outstanding teacher of the faculty of Sam Ervin High School for the current school year."

If the intent of the motion is to get the association to express its feelings about Ms. Smith, then:

- an amendment to strike "outstanding teacher" and insert "worst teacher" would be in order because the motion still expresses feelings about Ms. Smith. It is hostile to the specific position the original motion expresses, but it is germane to the general purpose of that original motion;
- an amendment to strike "Jane Smith" and insert "Joe Higgins" would not be in order because it would not express the association's feelings about Ms. Smith.

If the intent of the motion is to select the recipient for the association's outstanding teacher award, then:

- an amendment to strike "outstanding teacher" and insert "worst teach" would not be in order because the change would not be germane to the intent of the motion;

- an amendment to strike "Jane Smith" and insert "Joe Higgins" would be in order because the change would be hostile, but not negative.

The above example shows how an amendment may be hostile to the specific intent of the motion, but germane to the general intent of that motion.

FRIENDLY AMENDMENTS

A friendly amendment is nothing more than a member's suggestion that the maker of the motion request permission to modify his or her motion. Friendly amendments once accepted by the maker of the motion become part of the motion without a vote of the board. Any member, however, can object to friendly amendments.

REFER TO COMMITTEE

Motions are referred to committees for further study, possible amendment and a later report or because the board or committee is unprepared to deal with the issue at the time it is proposed.

TO LAY ON THE TABLE

The purpose of the motion to lay on the table is to set aside routine business to turn to something more urgent. Because it is not debatable, requires a majority vote, and has a high precedence, members are sometimes tempted to use the motion to kill the main motion. This is an improper use of the motion to table and is an example of how parliamentary procedure earns the adverse term, railroading. If a member wishes to suppress action on a main motion, he should move to postpone it indefinitely, which is debatable.

Another misuse of the motion to lay on the table is to confuse the motion with the motion to postpone to a certain time. Often, when a member wishes to postpone a main motion until later in the same meeting or until a later meeting (only the following meeting according to Robert's), the member uses the motion to lay on the table rather than the proper motion: the motion to postpone to a certain time.

All pending motions accompany the main motion when the main motion is tabled. The motion can remain on the table until the end of the following meeting. If a main motion is not taken from the table until the end of the following meeting, the main motion dies and would have to be made as a new main motion at the next meeting.

TO TAKE FROM THE TABLE

After a main motion has been tabled, a member must wait for one intervening main motion before the member can move to take from the table. Robert's says the motion to take from the table can be renewed each time any business has been transacted. The main motion remains on the table until the end of the following meeting. If the motion is not taken from the table, it dies and may be made as a new main motion at a subsequent meeting. If the motion to take from the table is made at the same meeting that the main motion was tabled, all pending motions return with the main motion. At a later meeting motions to limit or extend debate would no longer be pending.

The chair cannot take business from the table, but can remind the board/committee what motions have been postponed temporarily.

TO MODIFY OR WITHDRAW A MOTION

Only the maker of the original motion can modify or withdraw it. Any member can suggest that the proposer ask permission to withdraw it. A motion can be withdrawn any time before voting on the original motion has begun. Until a motion has been presented to the County Board by the chair, the maker of the

motion can modify or withdraw it without anyone's consent. After the motion has been presented to the assembly, the proposer can modify or withdraw it only with the permission of the assembly

If a member wishes to modify or withdraw his or her motion after the motion has become the property of the County Board, the member should state: "Mr. Chair/Madame Chair, I request permission to withdraw my motion." The chair should state: "Ms. Jones requests permission to withdraw her motion. If there is no objection, the motion will be withdrawn (pause)." If a member objects, then the chair states: "There has been an objection. All those in favor of allowing Ms. Jones to withdraw her motion, signify by..." If a majority of the members vote to continue to consider the motion, the request to withdraw is denied.

TO DIVIDE A MOTION

Robert's says the motion to divide a motion applies to main motions and their amendments. A motion can only be divided if each division can stand by itself. If a subsidiary motion is made to a motion which has been divided, the subsidiary motion applies only to the specific division which is being discussed.

TO LIMIT OR TO EXTEND LIMITS OF DEBATE

On pending motions, the motion to limit or extend debate can be made: Robert's states that limits or extensions to debate "can be applied to any immediately pending debatable motion, to an entire series of pending debatable motions, or to a consecutive part of such a series beginning with the immediately pending question." Motions to limit or extend debate are not debatable.

A motion to limit debate applies to the motion, as well as, any subsequent motions. Conversely, motions to extend debate have no effect on pending or subsequent. Limits or extensions to debate do not carry forward if the main motion is deferred to a future meeting.

Without a motion, is there a limit to debate or the member's right to speak? According to Robert's there is. "Each member has the right to speak twice on the same question on the same day and for no longer than ten minutes at a time. "

TO CALL FOR THE PREVIOUS QUESTION

A motion to "call the question" asks the County Board to vote immediately on the pending or a series of pending motions. A motion to "call the question" is not debatable, and must be made in the same manner that other motions must be made.

The chair should always include the name of the motion which is being voted on: "All those in favor of ceasing debate and voting immediately signify by saying 'aye'; all opposed to ceasing debate and voting immediately signify by saying 'no'."

Remember that it is the responsibility of the chair to expedite the business and to protect the rights of each member. The chair can bring closure when it appears that debate is exhausted by saying: "If there is no further discussion, we will now vote...(pause for a few seconds to honor the right of a member to continue debate)" or "If there is no objection... (pause)."

TO RECONSIDER

Only a member who voted on the prevailing side can move to reconsider. The motion to reconsider must be made during the same meeting and temporarily suspends any action resulting from the vote it is proposing to reconsider. The motion to reconsider can be made immediately after the vote on the original motion. The motion to reconsider is in order at any time during the same meeting. It is not an appropriate motion at subsequent meetings. See motion to rescind.

No question can be reconsidered twice unless it was materially amended during its consideration. The chair decides if a motion has been "materially amended."

TO RESCIND

Robert's stipulates no limitation on how soon one can make the motion to rescind. Technically, a motion to rescind may be proposed immediately, by a member on the prevailing side. Generally, a motion to rescind is in order, at subsequent meetings.

The motion to rescind is not in order in the same meeting after a motion to reconsider has been defeated. Because by refusing to reconsider the vote, the board or committee has shown that it will not, at that meeting, change the action taken.

According to Robert's a majority vote is required on a motion to rescind if notice has been given. If there was no previous notice of the intent to consider a motion to rescind, then the vote required is two-thirds.

TO APPEAL A DECISION OF THE CHAIR

Generally, any decision of the chair is subject to appeal, before any new business has intervened. As a matter of process, the member who has appealed states his or her reasons and the chair states the chair's reasons. Each member is then entitled to speak once.

TO RAISE TO A POINT OF ORDER

The purpose is to correct a parliamentary order when a member believes that the rules are being violated. In ordinary meetings, it is undesirable to raise points of order on minor irregularities of a purely technical character if it is clear that no one's rights are being infringed upon and no real harm is being done to the proper transaction of business.

A point of order must be made immediately. The member should say, "Point of Order!" and repeat it until recognized by the chair. Once a point of order is raised, the chair should rule either "Your point is well taken," or "Your point is not well taken."

TO REQUEST A PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

A parliamentary inquiry is a question on a matter of parliamentary law or the rules of the organization bearing on the business at hand. A point of information is a request for information relevant to the business at hand but not related to parliamentary procedure. The chair's reply to parliamentary inquiry is not subject to appeal. It is an opinion, not a ruling. A member has the right to act contrary to this opinion, however, and if ruled out of order, to appeal such a ruling.

One way this motion could be used is if a member feels that a speaker is out of order, the member might find it beneficial to raise a parliamentary inquiry: "Is the speaker's debate germane to the amendment?" This may be preferable to: "The speaker's debate is not germane to the amendment." Indirect suggestion is often preferable to confrontation.

TO RECESS

The motion to recess is privileged only when business is pending. A motion to recess that is made when no question is pending is a main motion. If it is a privileged motion, it is not debatable. However, as a main motion it is debatable.

Business is taken up where it was interrupted when the motion to recess was made. There is no definite limitation on the length of a recess except that it cannot be extended beyond the time set for the next regular or special meeting.

TO ADJOURN AND TO ADJOURN TO A SPECIFIC TIME

At the termination of a recess, business takes up where it was interrupted; at the meeting following adjournment, business begins with the complete order of business.

There are generally two forms of the motion to adjourn. "I move that we adjourn," is a privileged motion and is not debatable. A qualified motion to adjourn, that is, to fix the time to which to adjourn which sets the time, and sometimes the place, for another meeting to continue business of the session. The qualified motion to fix time is subject to limited debate.