

## New Chairs need to know that:

1. The Chair should start the meeting by being in control:
  - a. Start on time or as close to it as possible. It's rude to the people who got there on time to start late.
  - b. Ask if there are any changes to the agenda, and then say "ok, we'll proceed with the agenda as distributed."
  - c. Ask if there are any corrections to the minutes, **not** for a motion to "approve" them.
  - d. When the Treasurer has given a report, say: "Thank you. The report will be filed for audit."
2. When you know in advance a motion needs to be made, try to perfect the wording and then assign someone the motion. This will save a lot of time.
3. When the discussion is getting out of hand, the Chair should say: "ok folks, can we bring this back to the subject matter [or] back to the Agenda? Or, folks, can we limit side conversations?"
4. When debate on one motion has gone on and on and arguments are being repeated, the Chair should say: "Is there any new argument? Are we ready to proceed to a vote?"
5. Debate can seemingly go on forever -- make sure the Secretary isn't typing it or writing it all down. Doing that gives the impression to the speaker that he/she is saying something important.
6. The Chair should make sure everyone gets a chance to vote. Always ask for the Aye and No votes (except for when you use Unanimous Consent. See below.)
7. The Chair should end the meeting by being in control: "Is there any further business? If none, this meeting will adjourn. Ok, this meeting stands adjourned."

## Here are Robert's Rules for small boards:

- ◆ *Members may raise a hand instead of standing when seeking to obtain the floor, and may remain seated while making motions or speaking.*
- ◆ *Motions need not be seconded.*
- ◆ *There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a debatable question.*
- ◆ *Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.*
- ◆ *When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion having been introduced.*
- ◆ *The Chair need not rise while putting questions to a vote.*
- ◆ *The Chair may speak in informal discussions, make motions, debate, and vote on all questions. [However, the Chair may wish to remain neutral and not vote.]*

## What you need to say:

### To Approve the Minutes:

What is being asked? If you like the formatting? If the Secretary had a particularly good turn of phrase? **No. What you want to know is: are they correct?**

The Chair says: "Are there any corrections to the Minutes? Seeing none, the Minutes stand approved as distributed." OR

"Are there any corrections to the Minutes? *[Note corrections.]* Any further corrections? Seeing none, the Minutes stand approved as corrected."

Make sure the Secretary is recording the wording of the motion.

Using line numbers on the Minutes makes correcting them go very quickly.

### To Use Unanimous Consent:

Chair: "It seems we all are in agreement. If there is no objection, we will authorize the Vice Chair to plan the spring fundraising event."

Chair: "If there is no objection, let's change the budget at line 27 by substituting \$500 for \$350."

If someone objects, the Chair then takes the vote. "Those in favor say Aye. Those opposed say No."

### To Get Back to the Agenda:

Your meeting is going off the rails. In a small board anyone can say: "Can't we please get back to the Agenda?" Everyone then looks abashed and you get back to where you are supposed to be. In a big meeting, your only option is to stand up and say: "Madam Chair, I Call for the Orders of the Day". No second is needed and this cannot be debated. The Chair would immediately have to say: "The Orders of the Day have been called for." A two thirds vote is required to set aside the Orders of the Day.

### To Follow the Rules:

If you think rules are not being followed, you can interrupt (normally interrupting is very rude) and say: "Point of Order!" The Chair then says to you: "What is your point of order?" You point out the rule that is not being followed and the Chair then says: "well, you're right about that", or "your point is not well taken" and she tells you why that is. If you do not know a specific rule but feel something is unfair, raise the Point of Order and say what it is you believe is not fair. (Cutting off debate? Not taking a vote? Not allowing a member to speak? Not allowing new business? Not allowing another agenda item?)

If the Chair explains that your Point of Order is not well taken, and you disagree, you say: "I appeal from the decision of the Chair!". This requires a second, so you better have a friend at your meeting. This is a way to let the assembly, **not the Chair**, decide the issue, because the Chair will put the question to the assembly. ["Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained?"] A majority vote decides it.

Member A: Point of Order, Madam Chair!! We have not voted on the main motion yet! We voted to amend the motion but we did not vote on the motion!

Member A: Point of Order! Our bylaws require nominations to be taken from the floor!

## Resources

Robert's Rules of Order In brief

99.5% of everything you need for most meetings is in this book.

Official Rule book: Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition

The rules in this book apply to meetings, committees, nominations and elections, and discipline of members and officers. Preferred language for this Parliamentary Authority in your Bylaws is:

The rules contained in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall govern the corporation in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with the provisions of Minnesota law or these bylaws.

Here are some websites you might find helpful:

- [Parliamentarians.org](http://Parliamentarians.org) - this is the website of the National Association of Parliamentarians
- [PerfectRules.com](http://PerfectRules.com) - this has answers to many questions and free downloads.
- [300Questions.com](http://300Questions.com) - you can test your parliamentary knowledge on this site and get immediate feedback.
- [SimmonsToThePoint.com](http://SimmonsToThePoint.com)  
There is a short "How to" section that you might find helpful.  
Miriam's contact information is there – in case you have a parliamentary emergency.