

Parliamentary Procedures

Local Government Information Tutorial



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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, COMMUNITY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LeGIT

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Questions Welcome

The Standard – Robert’s Rules of Order

Parliamentary Procedure Basics

Types of Motions

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If you've been confused during a meeting... you're in the right LeGit.

Questions Welcome

Parliamentary Procedure Can Feel Complicated - You're Not Alone

Every clerk, mayor, chair, and councilmember has asked:

“Can we even do that?”

“What motion do I use?”

“Why is Robert's Rules written like *that*?”

“What happens if someone challenges the chair?”

Today is not about memorizing rules.

•It's about understanding:

How meetings flow

How motions work

How to stay fair, legal, and organized

How to survive “that one meeting”



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The Standard – Robert’s Rules of Order

- First published in 1876 by Colonel Henry Martyn Robert.
- Developed rules after being asked to conduct a meeting at his church.
- After an unproductive and disappointing meeting, Robert recognized the need for a uniform understanding.
- *“Who is Robert and when is he going to show up?” - City Clerk*

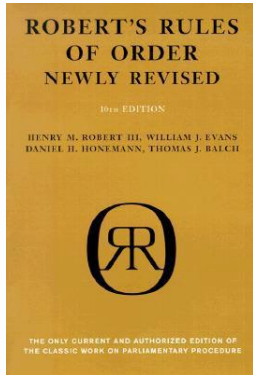


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What is Parliamentary Procedure?

Parliamentary procedure is a formal set of rules for conducting a meeting of an organized group.



Common Parliamentary Authorities

Robert's Rules of Order

- Most municipalities and boards

Mason's Manual

- Legislatures and some Boroughs

Standard Code (Sturgis)

- Nonprofits
- Associations
- Clubs



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Five Basic Principles of Parliamentary Law “Summarized”

- Fair and Equal Treatment
- One Motion at a Time
- Majority Decides
- Minority Gets Heard
- The Council Acts as One Body

How Many Times Can a Member Speak?

Under standard parliamentary procedure:

A member may usually speak:

Two times on the same motion



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Who Serves as the Parliamentarian ?

AS 29.20.380. Municipal clerk. (a) The municipal clerk shall

(10) act as the parliamentary advisor to the governing body;

Standard Parliamentary Practice

- The parliamentarian/clerk serves as an advisor to the presiding officer and the governing body
- The parliamentarian/clerk should sit near the chair/mayor for easy consultation
- Advice is typically provided quietly and discreetly. **How do you give advice?**
- The parliamentarian/clerk does not make rulings - the chair rules
- The parliamentarian/clerk should not participate in debate

Typical Meeting Layout

- Presiding Officer/mayor centered at the dais
- Parliamentarian/clerk seated next to or near the chair
- Clerk positioned to support meeting administration and records

Key Takeaway

The parliamentarian is an advisor - not a decision maker for the body.



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What is a Motion ?

A motion is a proposal that the body, or group, take a certain action.

Main Motion

Brings a question or an item of business in front of the body for consideration.
Only one at a time!

Amendment

(Secondary or Subsidiary motion)

Changes the wording of a main motion and must be voted on before the main motion can be voted on.

Motions are required to be “positive”



All About Motions

Action:

Vote:

Clerks Initials:

PROPOSED AMENDMENT FORM

Meeting Date: _____

Council Member: _____

Submitted to the Clerk Date: _____

Item: _____

Print Motion:

Councilmember Signature: _____



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All About Motions

How does a main motion occur?

- A member addresses the presiding officer, “Mr. Chairman”
 - The Chair recognizes the member
- The member proposes a motion (needs to be in favor)
 - “I move to **approve** the minutes of our last meeting”
 - The motion is seconded by another member. This member does not need to have the floor to second a motion. (Does not need to be in favor of the motion)
 - If another member does not second the motion, the motion dies for lack of a second.
- The chair or clerk restates the motion and discussion can begin.



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All about Motions, continued

Amendment Motion

- Used to “fine tune” a motion.
- The amendment must be related to the main motion’s intent. It cannot be phrased in a way that would “defeat” the main motion.
 - Two amendments may be on the floor at the same time.
 - When an amendment is on the floor, only the amendment may be debated.
 - As each is voted on, an additional primary or secondary amendment may be introduced.
 - Requires a second, debatable, and majority vote!



All about Motions, continued

How does an amendment motion occur?

- A member addresses the presiding officer, “Mr. Chairman”
 - The Chair recognizes the member
- The member proposes an amendment
 - “I move to amend the regular minutes of April 1, 2026, **on page two, line five**, to clarify that Council Member Smith was speaking.”
 - The motion is seconded by another member. This member does not need to have the floor to second a motion.
 - If another member does not second the motion, the motion dies for lack of a second.
 - The chair or clerk restates the motion and discussion can begin on the amendment. After voting on the amendment, the body returns to the main motion.



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1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17

SAMPLE SUMMARY MINUTES

Anytown City Council
Regular Meeting August 5, 2008
MINUTES

Presiding officer Mayor Moses Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. in the Anytown City Office conference room.

Members present: Moses Murphy (Mayor), Victor Vezey (Vice-Mayor), Arnie Arnold, Gary Goldman, Lena Lane and Kathy Kirby.

Members absent: Martha Moore

Staff present included: Samantha Smith, city manager; Daisy Duckson, clerk/ treasurer; and Joe Fawcett, water plant operator.



A list of Subsidiary (Secondary) Motions

Limit/extend debate:

- May be used if the group has adopted a rule limiting the amount of time that will be spent on a topic, or if the group desires to impose a time limitation.

Postpone:

- Directs the matter to be taken up again at some **specific date and time**.

Refer:

- Directs that some other body or person to study the matter and report back.

Postpone indefinitely:

- This motion effectively kills a motion, because, if adopted, a two-thirds vote is subsequently required to take the matter up again.



A list of Subsidiary (Secondary) Motions

Tabling:

- One of the most misused motions.
- Postpone discussion until the group decides.
- By adopting, a majority has the power to halt consideration without debate.

Previous question or close debate:

- Brings the body to immediate vote.
- Closed debate and stops further amendment.

And Many Others!



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All about Incidental Motions

What is an incidental motion?

- An incidental motion arises incidentally and is decided immediately.
- Only one incidental motion can be considered at a time.

If you want to enforce the rules:

- “Point of Order” is the motion to enforce the rules
 - This motion does not need a second and should be enforced by the chair immediately.

If you want to suspend the rules: Can only be done if this is NOT codified. (why?)

- “I move to suspend the rules which limit public speakers to 5 minutes and extend their speaking time to 7 minutes. “
 - This motion requires a second and a 2/3 vote of the body.



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More Incidental Motions, continued

Appeal from the decision of the chair:

- The group can overrule the chair on any decision.
 - While the motion must be seconded, it cannot be amended.
 - When this motion is moved and seconded, the chair immediately states the question, "Shall the decision of the chair stand as the judgment of the organization?"
 - If there is a tie vote, the chair's decision is upheld. The motion is not debatable when it applies to a matter of improper use of authority or when it is made while there is a pending motion to close debate.
 - However, the motion can be debated at other times. Each person may speak once, and the moderator may also state the basis for the decision.

Parliamentary inquiry:

- Not a motion, but a question as to whether an action would be in order.
 - Example, parliamentary inquiry if another amendment can be made.



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More Incidental Motions, continued

Request to withdraw a motion:

- Contrary to popular misconception, a motion cannot be withdrawn by its mover without consent of the body. This request requires majority approval.

Point of information:

- A person may rise to offer information that is considered necessary for the group. This provision is not used to offer debate.

Object to consideration of a question:

- When a motion is so outrageous, intended to distract the group from resolving legitimate business the motion can be objected to and ruled out of order without debate. However, if the chair does not rule the motion out of order, a two-thirds vote of the group can block further consideration.



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All about Motions, Renewal Motions “Bring Back”

Once the group has taken action, renewal motions require the group to further discuss or dispose of a motion. Renewal motions include:

Take from the table:

- Unless the original motion to table directed that the motion be brought back at a specific date and time, a majority of the group must pass a motion to take from the table at the next regular meeting. Or the item dies. **Once the motion has carried the original motion becomes pending again.**

Motion to Reconsider:

- When the group needs to discuss further a motion that has already been defeated at **the same meeting**. A majority of the members present must approve taking additional time to debate the motion again. **The motion can be made only by a person who voted on the prevailing side earlier on the question.**



All about Motions, Renewal motions continued

Rescind:

- When the group wishes to annul some action, a motion to rescind is in order at any time. If prior notice has been given to the group that this action will be considered, the motion to rescind can pass with a simple majority vote; however, if no prior notice has been given, the vote requires a two-thirds majority.

Important Municipal Reminder

For municipalities:

- Ordinances
 - Contracts
 - Public hearing items
 - Actions already implemented
- ...may require additional legal procedures, public notice, or entirely new action instead of simply rescinding a motion.



All about Motions, Questions of Privilege

Finally, there are a few questions of privilege that are in order at any time and must be disposed of prior to resuming discussion on the matter at hand:

Fix the time: (Special Meeting or a Work Session) Q. Why Not a Regular Meeting?

- This is in order at any time, including when a motion to adjourn is pending. Second required, not debatable, amendable.

Adjourn:

- To bring the meeting to a halt. Second required, not debatable, not amendable. Alternatively, instead of a motion, the chair can ask if there is any further business. If there is no response, the chair can say, "since there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned."



All about Motions, Questions of Privilege continued

Recess:

- A temporary break in the meeting; should state a time at which the meeting will resume. Second required, not debatable, not amendable.

Point of privilege:

- A matter that concerns the welfare of the group. Can be raised even when another person is speaking. No second, not debatable, no vote required.

Call for the orders of the day:

- A demand that the group return to the agenda. Can be taken when another person is speaking, no second required, not debatable, no vote required.



Setting an Ordinance to a Public hearing Using Roberts Rules

May 1- Move to **introduce** and set Ordinance 26-01 to a public hearing on June 1, 2026.

June 1 - Mayor opens the public hearing, closes the public hearing.

June 1 – Motion to **adopt**

June 1 – Motion to **amend**

June 1 – Motion to **postpone** to July 1.

July 1 - The ordinance should be placed under unfished with a clerks note
“the pending motion is to adopt”

July 1 - Motion to **amend**

July 1 - Motion to **postpone indefinitely**



Ordinance History

Sponsored By: Council Member Doc

Introduction: May 1, 2026

Public Hearing: June 1, 2026

Amended: June 1, 2026, July 1, 2026

Postponed: June 1, 2026

Postponed indefinitely, July 1, 2026

Vote: Yes: Grumpy, Happy, Sleepy, Bashful, Sneezzy No: Dopey

Absent: None

Section 4. Effective Date. This ordinance shall take effect upon adoption.

POSTPONED INDEFINITELY by the Wasilla City Council on April 22, 2024.



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MAIN MOTIONS

Parliamentary Motions Guide

Based on *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (11th Edition)*

The motions below are listed in order of precedence. Any motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

YOU WANT TO:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2 ND ?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
§21 Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§20 Take break	I move to recess for	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§19 Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
§18 Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
§17 Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§16 Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
§15 Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to ...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
§14 Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§13 Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§12 Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
§11 Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
§10 Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"] ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

SECONDARY MOTIONS



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INCIDENTAL MOTIONS

Parliamentary Motions Guide

Based on *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (11th Edition)*

Incidental Motions - No order of precedence. Arise incidentally and decided immediately.

YOU WANT TO:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2 ND ?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
§23 Enforce rules	Point of order	Yes	No	No	No	None
§24 Submit matter to assembly	I appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	Majority
§25 Suspend rules	I move to suspend the rules which ...	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
§26 Avoid main motion altogether	I object to the consideration of the question	Yes	No	No	No	2/3
§27 Divide motion	I move to divide the question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
§29 Demand rising vote	I call for a division	Yes	No	No	No	None
§33 Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	Yes (if urgent)	No	No	No	None
§33 Request information	Request for information	Yes (if urgent)	No	No	No	None

Motions That Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly - no order of precedence. Introduce only when nothing else pending.

§34 Take matter from table	I move to take from the table ...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
§35 Cancel or change previous action	I move to rescind/ amend something previously adopted...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 or maj. w/ notice
§37 Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider the vote ...	No	Yes	Varies	No	Majority



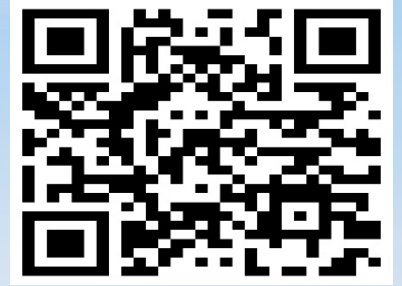
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Thank you
and
Resources Available



[Jurassic Parliament](#)



[Books - Official Robert's Rules of Order Website](#)



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