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## Simplified Rules of Order Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

1. The purpose of parliamentary procedure is to make it easier for people to work together effectively and to help groups accomplish their purposes. Rules of procedure should assist a meeting, not inhibit it.
2. A meeting can deal with only one matter at a time. The various kinds of motions have therefore been assigned an order of precedence (see Table 1).
3. All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations. One of the Chair's main responsibilities is to use the authority of the Chair to ensure that all people attending a meeting are treated equally—for example, not to permit a vocal few to dominate the debates.
4. A majority vote decides most issues; others are decided by a 2/3 vote. In any group, each member agrees to be governed by the vote of the majority. Parliamentary rules enable a meeting to determine the will of the majority of those attending a meeting.
5. The rights of the minority must be protected at all times. Although the ultimate decision rests with a majority, all members have such basic rights as the right to be heard and the right to oppose. The rights of all members—majority and minority—should be the concern of every member, for a person may be in a majority on one question, but in minority the on the next.
6. Every matter presented for decision should be discussed fully. The right of every member to speak on any issue is as important as each member's right to vote.
7. Every member has the right to understand the meaning of any question presented to a meeting, and to know what effect a decision will have. A member always has the right to request information on any motion he or she does not thoroughly understand. Moreover, all meetings must be characterized by fairness and by good faith. Parliamentary strategy is the art of using procedure legitimately to support or defeat a proposal.

### **DEBATE ON MOTIONS**

Business is accomplished in meetings by means of debating motions. The word “motion” refers to a formal proposal by two members (the mover and the person that seconded) that the meeting take certain action.

Technically, a meeting should not consider any matter unless it has been placed before the meeting in the form of a motion. In practice, however, it is sometimes advantageous

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to permit limited discussion of a general topic before a motion is introduced. A preliminary discussion can sometimes indicate the precise type of action that is most advisable, whereas presentation of a motion first can result in a poorly worded motion, or a proposal for action that, in the light of subsequent discussion, seems inadvisable.

This departure from strict parliamentary procedure must be used with caution, however. The Chair must be careful not to let the meeting get out of control.

Normally, a member may speak only once on the same question, except for the mover of the main motion, who has the privilege of “closing” the debate (that is, of speaking last). If a later speaker has misinterpreted an important part of a member's speech, it is in order for the member to speak again to clarify the point, but no new material should be introduced. If two or more people want to speak at the same time, the Chair should call first upon the one who has not yet spoken.

If the member who made the motion that is being discussed claims the floor and has already spoken on the question, he/she is entitled to be recognized before other members.

Associations may want to adopt rules limiting the time a member may speak in any one debate—for example, five minutes.

The mover of a motion may not speak against his or her own motion, although the mover may vote against it. The mover need not speak at all, but when speaking, it must be in favor of the motion. If, during the debate, the mover changes his or her mind, he or she can inform the meeting of the fact by asking the meeting's permission to withdraw the motion.

## **PROPER WORDING OF A MOTION**

Much time can be wasted at meetings when a motion or resolution is carelessly worded. It is for this reason that a motion proposed at a meeting, unless it is very short and simple, should always be in writing. The requirement of having to write the motion out forces more careful wording.

## **HOW MOTIONS ARE CLASSIFIED**

For convenience, motions can be classified into five groups:

1. Main motions
2. Subsidiary motions
3. Privileged motions - known as secondary motions
4. Incidental motions

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## 5. Motions that bring a question again before a meeting

The motions in the second, third and fourth classes (subsidiary, privileged and incidental motions) are often called secondary motions, to distinguish them from main motions.

Secondary motions are ones that are in order when a main motion is being debated; ones that assist a meeting to deal with the main motion.

Before examining each of the five types of motions, one should understand the concept of order of precedence of motions. This concept is based on the principle that a meeting can deal with only one question at a time. Once a motion is before a meeting, it must be adopted or rejected by a vote, or the meeting must dispose of the question in some other way, before any other business can be introduced. Under this principle, a main motion can be made only when no other motion is pending. However, a meeting can deal with a main motion in several ways other than just passing or defeating it.

These other ways are the purpose of the various secondary motions, the motions in categories two, three and four of the five categories of motions listed above.

The rules under which secondary motions take precedence over one another have evolved gradually through experience. If two motions, A and B, are related in such a way that motion B can be made while motion A is pending, motion B takes precedence over motion A and motion A yields to motion B.

A secondary motion thus takes precedence over a main motion; a main motion takes precedence over nothing, yielding to all secondary motions. When a secondary motion is placed before a meeting, it becomes the immediately pending question; the main motion remains pending while the secondary motion is dealt with.

Certain secondary motions also take precedence over others, so that it is possible for more than one secondary motion to be pending at any one time (together with the main motion). In such a case, the motion most recently accepted by the Chair is the immediately pending question—that is, it takes precedence over all the others.

The main motion, the subsidiary motions, and the privileged motions fall into a definite order of precedence, which gives a particular rank to each. The main motion—which does not take precedence over anything—ranks lowest. Each of the other motions has its proper position in the rank order, taking precedence over the motions that rank below and yielding to those that rank above it.

For ease of reference, the order of precedence is presented in Table 1.

When a motion is on the floor, a motion of higher precedence may be proposed, but no motion of lower precedence is in order.

At any given time there can be pending only one motion of any one rank.

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This means that other motions proposed during consideration of a motion can be accepted by the Chair only if they are of higher precedence. In voting, the meeting proceeds with the various motions in inverse order—the last one proposed, being of highest precedence, is the first one to be decided. It should be noted that “precedence” and “importance” are not synonyms. Indeed, the most important motion—the main motion—is the lowest in precedence.

**Table 1. ORDER OF PRECEDENCE OF MOTIONS**

	Rank	Motion	May Interrupt	Second Required	Debatable	Amendable	May Be Reconsidered	Majority Required	2/3 Majority Required
*	1	Fix Time to Adjourn		X		X	X	X	
*	2	Adjourn		X				X	
*	3	Recess		X		X		X	
*	4	Question of Privilege	X	X <sup>1</sup>	X	X	X	X	
*	5	Orders of the Day	X						X <sup>2</sup>
**	6	Table		X				X	
**	7	Previous Question aka- Call The Question		X			X <sup>3</sup>		X
**	8	Limit/Extend Limits of Debate		X		X	X		X
**	9	Postpone to a Certain Time		X	X <sup>4</sup>		X	X <sup>5</sup>	X <sup>5</sup>
**	10	Refer		X	X <sup>6</sup>	X	X <sup>7</sup>	X	
**	11	Amend		X	X	X <sup>8</sup>	X	X	X <sup>9</sup>
**	12	Postpone Indefinitely		X	X		X <sup>10</sup>	X	
	13	Main Motion		X	X	X	X	X	

\* Denotes Privileged Motions

\*\*Denotes Subsidiary Motions

<sup>1</sup> If a formal motion is made.

<sup>2</sup> Must be enforced on the demand of any member unless the orders of the day (agenda) are set aside by a two-thirds vote. If the Chair's ruling is challenged, a majority vote is required.

<sup>3</sup> Can be reconsidered but only before the previous question has been put.

<sup>4</sup> Only as to propriety or advisability of postponing and of postponing to a certain time.

<sup>5</sup> Requires two-thirds majority if postponed to a later time in the same meeting (amends the agenda). If postponed to a subsequent meeting, then only a simple majority is required.

<sup>6</sup> Only as to propriety or advisability of referral.

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<sup>7</sup> can be reconsidered if the group to which the matter has been referred has not started work on the matter.

<sup>8</sup> An amendment to an amendment is not itself amendable.

<sup>9</sup> A motion to amend the agenda requires a two-thirds majority.

<sup>10</sup> Can be reconsidered only if the motion is passed.

## THE MAIN MOTION

A main motion is a motion that brings business before a meeting. Because a meeting can consider only one subject at a time, a main motion can be made only when no other motion is pending. A main motion ranks lowest in the order of precedence.

When a main motion has been stated by one member, seconded by another member, and repeated for the meeting by the Chair, the meeting cannot consider any other business until that motion has been disposed of, or until some other motion of higher precedence has been proposed, seconded and accepted by the Chair.

The mover should hand the main motion it in writing to the secretary. A main motion must not interrupt another speaker, requires a second is debatable, is lowest in rank or precedence, can be amended, cannot be applied to any other motion, may be reconsidered, and requires a majority vote.

When a member and seconded have made a motion, it becomes the property of the meeting. The mover and seconder cannot withdraw the motion unless the meeting agrees. (Usually the Chair will ask if the meeting objects to the motion's being withdrawn. If no one objects, the Chair will announce: "The motion is withdrawn." See section on agenda.)

## SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

Subsidiary motions assist a meeting in treating or disposing of a main motion (and sometimes-other motions). The subsidiary motions are listed below in ascending order of rank. Each of the motions takes precedence over the main motion and any or all of the motions listed before it.

The seven subsidiary motions are:

1. Postpone indefinitely
2. Amend
3. Refer
4. Postpone to a certain time
5. Limit or extend limits of debate
6. Previous question

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## 7. Table

### **POSTPONE INDEFINITELY**

Despite its name, this motion is not one to postpone, but one to suppress or kill a pending main motion. If an embarrassing main motion is brought before a meeting, a member can propose to dispose of the question (without bringing it to a direct vote) by moving to postpone indefinitely. Such a motion can be made at any time except when a speaker has the floor. If passed, the motion kills the matter under consideration. It requires a seconder, may be debated (including debate on the main motion), cannot be amended, can be reconsidered only if the motion is passed, and requires a majority vote. (See also “Postpone to a Certain Time”.)

### **AMEND**

An amendment is a motion to change, to add words to, or to omit words from, an original motion. The change is usually to clarify or improve the wording of the original motion and must, of course, be germane to that motion.

An amendment cannot interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is debatable if the motion to be amended is debatable, may itself be amended by an amendment to the amendment, can be reconsidered, and requires a majority vote, even if the motion to be amended requires a two-thirds vote to be adopted.

The Chair should allow full discussion of the amendment (being careful to restrict debate to the amendment, not the original motion) and should then have a vote taken on the amendment only, making sure the members know they are voting on the amendment, but not on the original motion.

If the amendment is defeated, another amendment may be proposed, or discussion will proceed on the original motion. If the amendment carries, the meeting does not necessarily vote immediately on the “motion as amended.” Because the discussion of the principle of the original motion was not permitted during debate on the amendment, there may be members who want to speak now on the issue raised in the original motion.

Other amendments may also be proposed, provided that they do not alter or nullify the amendments already passed. Finally, the meeting will vote on the “motion as amended” or, if all amendments are defeated, on the original motion.

An amendment to an amendment is a motion to change, to add words to, or omit words from, the first amendment. The rules for an amendment (above) apply here, except that the amendment to an amendment is not itself amendable and that it takes precedence over the first amendment. Debate proceeds and a vote is taken on the amendment to the amendment, then on the first amendment, and finally on the original motion (“as

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amended,” if the amendment has been carried). Only one amendment to an amendment is permissible.

Sometimes a main motion is worded poorly, and several amendments may be presented to improve the wording. In such cases it is sometimes better to have a substitute motion rather than to try to solve the wording problem with amendments. An individual (or a group of two or three) can be asked to prepare a substitute wording for the original motion. If there is unanimous agreement, the meeting can agree to the withdrawal of the original motion (together with any amendments passed or pending) and the substitution of the new motion for debate.

## **REFER**

When it is obvious that a meeting does not have enough information to make a wise decision, or when it seems advisable to have a small group work out details that would take too much time in a large meeting, a member may move: “That the question be referred to the \_\_\_\_\_ committee” (or “to a committee”—not named).

A motion to refer cannot interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is debatable only as to the propriety or advisability of referral, can be amended, can be reconsidered if the group to which the question has been referred has not begun work on the matter, and requires a majority vote.

If a motion to refer is passed, the committee to which the matter is referred should report on the question at a subsequent meeting. Sometimes the motion to refer will state the time at which a report will be required.

## **POSTPONE TO A CERTAIN TIME**

If a meeting prefers to consider a main motion later in the same meeting or at a subsequent one, it can move to postpone a motion to a certain time, which is specified in the motion to postpone. Such a motion can be moved regardless of how much debate there has been on the motion it proposes to postpone. A motion may be postponed definitely to a specific time or until after some other item of business has been dealt with.

When the time to which a motion has been postponed has arrived, the Chair should state the postponed motion to the meeting for its consideration immediately. If another item of business is being discussed at that time, the Chair should present the postponed motion immediately after the other business has been concluded. If the meeting, in postponing the original motion has instructed that it be given priority at the time to which it has been postponed (that is, issued a “special order”), the postponed motion interrupts any item of

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business on the floor at that time. For this reason, any “special order” requires a two-thirds majority vote.

A motion to postpone to a definite time may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is debatable only as to the propriety or advisability of postponing and of postponing to the particular time, can be amended, can be reconsidered, and requires a majority vote if the postponement is to a subsequent meeting. However, if the postponement is to a later time in the same meeting, the effect is to amend the agenda of that meeting, and the motion therefore requires a two-thirds majority vote.

## **LIMIT OR EXTEND LIMITS OF DEBATE**

A motion to limit debate changes the normal rules of debate. It could, for example, limit the time of the whole debate (such as, “I move that debate on this motion be limited to 15 minutes”), or it might limit the time taken by each speaker (“I move that debate on this motion be limited to two minutes per speaker”).

A motion to extend debate permits greater participation and time than usual.

A motion to limit or extend the time of debate (on one matter or for the entire meeting) may not interrupt a speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, can be amended, can be reconsidered, and requires a two-thirds majority vote.

## **PREVIOUS QUESTION (TO VOTE IMMEDIATELY) - AKA CALL THE QUESTION**

This is a tactic to close debate on a question. It is usually made at a time when the debate has been long and repetitious. A member rises and says: “I move that the question be called.”

A motion to put (call) the previous question (that is, to vote immediately on the motion being debated) cannot interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, and is not amendable, and requires a two-thirds majority vote. This requirement is important in protecting the democratic process. Without it, a momentary majority of only one vote could deny to the other members all opportunity to discuss any measure the “majority” wanted to adopt or to defeat. Such a motion can be reconsidered, but if the vote was affirmative, it can be reconsidered only before any vote has been taken under it—that is, only before the previous question has been put.

A motion to put the previous question has precedence over all other motions listed in this section except the motion to table (see next subsection). If the motion to put the question passes, the Chair immediately proceeds to call a vote on the question that was being

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debated. This means that the mover of the motion loses his/her right to close debate. If the motion is defeated, debate on the motion before the meeting continues as if there had been no interruption.

The motion to put the previous question is the only proper method of securing an immediate vote.

## **TABLE (LAY ON THE TABLE)**

Sometimes a meeting wants to lay a main motion aside temporarily without setting a time for resuming its consideration but with the provision that the motion can be taken up again whenever the majority so decides. This is accomplished by a motion to table or to lie on the table.

The motion has the effect of delaying action on a main motion. If a subsequent meeting does not lift the question from the table, the effect of the motion to table is to prevent action from being taken on the main motion.

Indeed, rather than either pass or defeat a motion, a meeting will sometimes choose to “bury” it by tabling. Robert’s rules say, “No motion or motions can be laid on the table apart from motions which adhere to them, or to which they adhere; and if any one of them is laid on the table, all such motions go to the table together.” For example a main motion may have been made and an amendment proposed to it. The proposed amendment “adheres” to the main motion. If the meeting wants to table either of the motions, it must table both of them. In this example, if the meeting did not like the proposed amendment, but wanted to deal with the main motion, the correct procedure would be not to table, but to defeat the amendment. Debate could then resume on the main motion.

A motion to table may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, is not amendable, may not be reconsidered, and requires a majority vote.

## **PRIVILEGED MOTIONS**

Unlike either subsidiary or incidental motions, privileged motions do not relate to the pending business, but have to do with special matters of immediate and overriding importance that, without debate, should be allowed to interrupt the consideration of anything else.

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The privileged motions are listed below in ascending order of rank. Each of the succeeding motions takes precedence over the main motion, any subsidiary motions, and any or all of the privileged motions listed before it.

The five privileged motions are:

1. Orders of the day
2. Question (point) of privilege
3. Recess
4. Adjourn
5. Fix time to which to adjourn.

The five privileged motions fit into an order of precedence. All of them take precedence over motions of any other class (except when the immediately pending question may be a motion to amend or a motion to put (call) the previous question).

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

The order of the day means the agenda or the order of business. If the order of business is not being followed, or if consideration of a question has been set for the present time and is therefore now in order, but the matter is not being taken up, a member may call for the orders of the day, and can thereby require the order of business to be followed, unless the meeting decides by a two-thirds vote to set the orders of the day aside.

Such a motion can interrupt another speaker, does not require a seconder, is not debatable, is not amendable, and cannot be reconsidered. If the Chair admits that the order of business has been violated and returns to the correct order, no vote is required. If the Chair maintains that the order of business has not been violated, his/her ruling stands unless a member challenges the ruling. A motion to sustain the Chair is decided by a simple majority vote.

Sometimes the Chair will admit that the agenda has been violated, but will rule that the debate will continue on the matter before the meeting. In such a case, a vote must be taken and the Chair needs a two-thirds majority to sustain the ruling. (The effect of such a vote is to set aside the orders of the day, i.e., amend the agenda, a move that requires a two-thirds majority vote.)

Calls for orders of the day are not in order in committee of the whole. The orders of the day—that is, the agenda items to be discussed, are either special orders or general orders. A special order specifies a time for the item, usually by postponement. Any rules interfering with its consideration at the specified time are suspended. (The four exceptions are rules relating to: (1) adjournment or recess, (2) questions of privilege, (3)

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special orders made before this special order was made, and (4) a question that has been assigned priority over all other business at a meeting by being made the special order for the meeting.) A special order for a particular time therefore interrupts any business that is pending when that time arrives.

Because a special order has the effect of suspending any interfering rules, making an item a special order requires a two-thirds vote, except where such action is included in the adoption of the agenda. A general order is any question that has been made an order of the day (placed on the agenda) without being made a special order.

When a time is assigned to a particular subject on an agenda, either at the time the agenda is adopted, or by an agenda amendment later, the subject is made a special order. When the assigned time for taking up the topic arrives, the Chair should announce that fact, then put to a vote any pending questions without allowing further debate, unless someone immediately moves to lay the question on the table, postpone it or refer it to a committee. Any of those three motions is likewise put to a vote without debate.

Also permissible is a motion to extend the time for considering the pending question. Although an extension of time is sometimes undesirable, and may be unfair to the next topic on the agenda, it is sometimes necessary. The motion requires a two-thirds majority to pass (in effect, it amends the agenda), and is put without debate. As soon as any pending motions have been decided, the meeting proceeds to the topic of the special order.

## **QUESTION OR POINT OF PRIVILEGE**

If a situation is affecting the comfort, convenience, integrity, rights or privileges of a meeting or of an individual member (for example, noise, inadequate ventilation, introduction of a confidential subject in the presence of guests, etc.), a member can raise a point of privilege, which permits him/her to interrupt pending business to make an urgent statement, request or motion. (If a motion is made, it must be seconded.) The motion might also concern the reputation of a member, a group of members, the assembly, or the association as a whole. If the matter is not simple enough to be taken care of informally, the Chair rules as to whether it is admitted as a question of privilege and whether it requires consideration before the pending business is resumed.

A point of privilege may also be used to seek permission of the meeting to present a motion of an urgent nature.

## **RECESS**

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A member can propose a short intermission in a meeting, even while business is pending, by moving to recess for a specified length of time. A motion to take a recess may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, can be amended (for example, to change the length of the recess), cannot be reconsidered, and requires a majority vote.

## **ADJOURN**

A member can propose to close the meeting entirely by moving to adjourn. This motion can be made and the meeting can adjourn even while business is pending, providing that the time for the next meeting is established by a rule of the association or has been set by the meeting. In such a case, unfinished business is carried over to the next meeting.

A motion to adjourn may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, is not amendable, cannot be reconsidered, and requires a majority vote.

If the motion to adjourn has been made, but important matters remain for discussion, the Chair may request that the motion to adjourn be withdrawn. A motion can be withdrawn only with the consent of the meeting members. The motions to recess and to adjourn have quite different purposes. The motion to recess suspends the meeting until a later time; the motion to adjourn terminates the meeting. The motion to adjourn should, however, be followed by a declaration from the Chair that the meeting is adjourned.

## **FIX TIME TO WHICH TO ADJOURN**

This is the highest-ranking of all motions. Under certain conditions while business is pending, a meeting—before adjourning or postponing the business—may wish to fix a date, an hour, and sometimes the place, for another meeting or for another meeting before the next regular meeting. A motion to fix the time to which to adjourn can be made even while a matter is pending, unless another meeting is already scheduled for the same or the next day.

The usual form is: “I move that the meeting adjourn to Thursday, October 23, at 19:30 at \_\_\_\_.” The motion may not interrupt a speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, is amendable (for example, to change the time and/or place of the next meeting), can be reconsidered, and requires a majority vote.

## **INCIDENTAL MOTIONS**

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These motions are incidental to the motions or matters out of which they arise. Because they arise incidentally out of the immediately pending business, they must be decided immediately, before business can proceed. Most incidental motions are not debatable.

Because incidental motions must be decided immediately, they do not have an order or precedence. An incidental motion is in order only when it is legitimately incidental to another pending motion or when it is legitimately incidental in some other way to business at hand. It then takes precedence over any other motions that are pending—that is, it must be decided immediately.

The eight most common incidental motions are:

1. Point of order
2. Suspension of the rules
3. Objection to consideration
4. Consideration seriatim
5. Division of the meeting
6. Motions related to methods of voting
7. Motions related to nominations
8. Requests and inquiries

## **POINT OF ORDER**

This motion permits a member to draw the Chair's attention to what he/she believes to be an error in procedure or a lack of decorum in debate. The member will rise and say: "I rise to a point of order," or simply "Point of order." The Chair should recognize the member, who will then state the point of order. The effect is to require the Chair to make an immediate ruling on the question involved. The Chair will usually give his/her reasons for making the ruling. If the ruling is thought to be wrong, the Chair can be challenged.

A point of order can interrupt another speaker, does not require a second, is not debatable, is not amendable, and cannot be reconsidered.

## **SUSPENSION OF THE RULES**

Sometimes a meeting wants to take an action, but is prevented from doing so by one or more of its rules of procedure. In such cases the meeting may vote (two-thirds majority required) to suspend the rules that are preventing the meeting from taking the action it wants to take.

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Such a motion cannot interrupt a speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, is not amendable, cannot be reconsidered and requires a two-thirds majority.

Please note that only rules of procedure can be suspended. A meeting may not suspend by-laws. After the meeting has taken the action it wants to take, the rules that were suspended come into force again automatically.

## **OBJECTION TO THE CONSIDERATION OF A QUESTION**

If a member believes that it would be harmful for a meeting even to discuss a main motion, he/she can raise an objection to the consideration of the question; provided debate on the main motion has not begun or any subsidiary motion has not been stated. The motion can be made when another member has been assigned the floor, but only if debate has not begun or the Chair has not accepted a subsidiary motion. A member rises, even if another has been assigned the floor, and without waiting to be recognized, says, “I object to the consideration of the question (or resolution or motion, etc.)” The motion does not need a seconder, is not debatable, and is not amendable. The Chair responds, “The consideration of the question is objected to. Shall the question be considered?”

A two-thirds vote against consideration sustains the member’s objection. (The two-thirds vote is required because the decision in effect amends the agenda.) The motion can be reconsidered, but only if the objection has been sustained.

## **CONSIDERATION BY PARAGRAPH OR SERIATIM**

If a main motion contains several paragraphs or sections that, although not separate questions, could be most efficiently handled by opening the paragraphs or sections to amendment one at a time (before the whole is finally voted on), a member can propose a motion to consider by paragraph or seriatim. Such a motion may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, is amendable, cannot be reconsidered, and requires a majority vote.

## **DIVISION OF THE MEETING (STANDING VOTE)**

If a member doubts the accuracy of the Chair’s announcement of the results of a vote by show of hands, he/she can demand a division of the meeting—that is, a standing vote. Such a demand can interrupt the speaker, does not require a seconder, is not debatable, is

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not amendable, and cannot be reconsidered. No vote is taken; the demand of a single member compels the standing vote.

## **MOTIONS RELATED TO METHODS OF VOTING**

A member can move that a vote be taken by roll call, by ballot or that the standing votes be counted if a division of the meeting appears to be inconclusive and the Chair neglects to order a count. Such motions may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, are not debatable, are amendable, can be reconsidered, and require majority votes. (Note: COSGP by-laws specify a secret ballot for such votes as the election of officers.)

## **MOTIONS RELATED TO NOMINATIONS**

If the by-laws or rules of the association do not prescribe how nominations are to be made and if a meeting has taken no action to do so prior to an election, any member can move while the election is pending to specify one of various methods by which candidates shall be nominated or, if the need arises, to close nominations or to re-open them. Such motions may not interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, are not debatable, are amendable, can be reconsidered, and require majority votes.

## **REQUESTS AND INQUIRIES**

- a. Parliamentary Inquiry—a request for the Chair’s opinion (not a ruling) on a matter of parliamentary procedure as it relates to the business at hand.
- b. Point of Information—a question about facts affecting the business at hand, directed to the Chair or, through the Chair, to a member.
- c. Request for Permission to Withdraw or Modify a Motion. Although Robert’s Rules of Order specify that until the Chair has accepted a motion, it is the property of the mover, who can withdraw it or modify it as he/she chooses. A common practice is that once the agenda has been adopted, the items on it become the property of the meeting. A person may not, therefore, withdraw a motion unilaterally; he or she may do so only with the consent of the meeting, which has adopted an agenda indicating that the motion is to be debated.

Similarly, a person cannot, without the consent of the meeting, change the wording of any motion that has been given ahead of time to those attending the meeting—for example,

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distributed in printed form in advance, printed on the agenda, a motion of which notice has been given at a previous meeting, etc.

The usual way in which consent of a meeting to withdraw a motion is obtained is for the mover to ask the consent of the meeting to withdraw (or change the wording). If no one objects, the Chair announces that there being no objections, that the motion is withdrawn or that the modified wording is the motion to be debated.

If anyone objects, the Chair can put a motion permitting the member to withdraw (or modify) or any two members may move and second that permission is granted. A majority vote decides the question of modifying a motion—similar to amending the motion. A two-thirds majority is needed for permission to withdraw a motion, as this has the effect of amending the agenda.

- d. Request to Read Papers.
- e. Request to be Excused from a Duty.
- f. Request for Any Other Privilege.

The first two types of inquiry are responded to by the Chair, or by a member at the direction of the Chair; the other requests can be granted only by the meeting.

## **MOTIONS THAT BRING A QUESTION AGAIN BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY**

There are four motions that can bring business back to a meeting. The four are:

1. Take from the Table
2. Rescind
3. Reconsider, and
4. Discharge a Committee

The orders in which the four motions are listed are no relation to the order of precedence of motions.

### **TAKE FROM THE TABLE**

Before a meeting can consider a matter that has been tabled, a member must move: “That the question concerning \_\_\_\_\_ be taken from the table.” Such a motion may not

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interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is not debatable, is not amendable, cannot be reconsidered, and requires a majority vote.

If a motion to take from the tables passes, the meeting resumes debate on the original question (or on any amendments to it). If a considerable period of time has elapsed since the matter was tabled, it is often helpful for the first speaker to review the previous debate before proceeding to make any new points.

## **RESCIND**

A meeting, like an individual, has a right to change its mind. There are two ways a meeting can do so—rescind or reconsider. A motion to rescind means a proposal to cancel or annul an earlier decision.

A motion to reconsider, if passed, enables a meeting to debate again the earlier motion and eventually vote again on it. However, a motion to rescind, if passed, cancels the earlier motion and makes it possible for a new motion to be placed before the meeting.

Another form of the same motion—a motion to amend something previously adopted—can be proposed to modify only a part of the wording or text previously adopted, or to substitute a different version.

Such motions cannot interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, are debatable, and are amendable. Because such motions would change action already taken by the meeting, they require:

- A two-thirds vote, or
- A majority vote when notice of intent to make the motion has been given at the previous meeting or in the call of the present meeting, or
- A vote of the majority of the entire membership—whichever is the most practical to obtain.
- Negative votes on such motions can be reconsidered, but not affirmative ones.

## **RECONSIDER**

A motion to reconsider enables the majority in a meeting within a limited time and without notice, to bring back for further consideration a motion that has already been put to a vote. The purpose of reconsideration is to permit a meeting to correct a hasty, ill-advised, or erroneous action, or to take into account added information or a changed situation that has developed since the taking of the vote.

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If the motion to reconsider is passed, the effect is to cancel the original vote on the motion to be reconsidered and reopen the matter for debate as if the original vote had never occurred.

A motion to reconsider has the following unique characteristics:

- a) It can be made only by a member who voted with the prevailing side—that is, voted in favor if the motion involved was adopted, or voted contrary if the motion was defeated. This requirement is a protection against a defeated minority's using a motion to reconsider as a dilatory tactic. If a member who cannot move for reconsideration believes there are valid reasons for one, he/she should try to persuade someone who voted with the prevailing side to make such a motion.
- b) The motion is subject to time limits. In a session of one day, a motion to reconsider can be made only on the same day the vote to be reconsidered was taken. In a convention or session of more than one day, reconsideration can be moved only on the same or the next succeeding day after the original vote was taken. These time limitations do not apply to standing or special committees.
- c) The motion can be made and seconded at times when it is not in order for it to come before the assembly for debate or vote. In such a case it can be taken up later, at a time when it would otherwise be too late to make the motion.

Making a motion to reconsider (as distinguished from debating such a motion) takes precedence over any other motion whatever and yields to nothing. Making such a motion is in order at any time, even after the assembly has voted to adjourn—if the member rose and addressed the Chair before the Chair declared the meeting adjourned. In terms of debate of the motion, a motion to reconsider has only the same rank as that of the motion to be reconsidered.

A motion to reconsider can be made when another person has been assigned the floor, but not after he/she has begun to speak. The motion must be seconded, is debatable provided that the motion to be reconsidered is debatable (in which case debate can go into the original question), is not amendable, and cannot be reconsidered.

In regular meetings the motion to reconsider may be made (only by someone who voted with the prevailing side) at any time—in fact, it takes precedence over any other motion—but its rank as far as debate is concerned is the same as the motion it seeks to reconsider. In other words, the motion to reconsider may be made at any time, but debate on it may have to be postponed until later. Moreover, as indicated earlier, in regular meetings a motion to reconsider is subject to time limits. In a one-day meeting it can be made only on the same day. In a two- or more day meeting, the motion must be made on the same day as the motion it wants to reconsider, or on the next day.

## **DISCHARGE A COMMITTEE (FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION)**

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If a question has been referred, or a task assigned, to a committee that has not yet made its final report, and if a meeting wants to take the matter out of the committee's hands (either so that the meeting itself can deal with the matter or so that the matter can be dropped), such action can be proposed by means of a motion to discharge the committee from further consideration of a topic or subject.

Such a motion cannot interrupt another speaker, must be seconded, is debatable (including the question that is in the hands of the committee), and is amendable. Because the motion would change action already taken by the meeting, it requires:

- A two-thirds vote, or
- A majority vote when notice of intent to make the motion has been given at the previous meeting or in the call of the present meeting, or
- A vote of the majority of the entire membership—whichever is the most practical to obtain.

A negative vote on this motion can be reconsidered, but not an affirmative one.