

19 Meetings & Parliamentary Procedure

19.1 Running an Effective Meeting

Careful planning is the secret to running an effective meeting. Poorly planned or unplanned meetings are typically viewed as boring, unproductive, and a waste of time. However, with proper planning any meeting can be productive and fun. The following steps will guide you in planning a meeting that is informative and enjoyable to all members.

19.1.1 *Before the Meeting:*

- Define the purpose of the meeting. If as officer's you can not come up with a purpose for a meeting, don't have a meeting. Without a purpose, members may feel that their time was wasted and it could discourage their attendance at future meetings.
- *Develop an Agenda*
 - A well-planned agenda will allow you to run effective and productive meetings (Appendix p. 73). With an orderly, well-planned agenda, members can be better prepared to participate in the meetings.
 - There is no one right way to develop an agenda, but the following will assist you:
 - If possible, distribute the agenda before the meeting. If this is not possible, hand out the agenda as members arrive at the meeting.
 - Put the names of the members who are responsible for a report on the agenda.
 - Encourage members to contribute ideas for the agenda.
 - A sense of humor helps when you are developing the agenda.
 - A little fun will make the meeting more enjoyable for everyone
 - Choose an appropriate meeting time. Set a time limit and stick to it. Remember that members have other commitments.
 - Distribute the agenda and any other materials before the meetings so that members can be prepared.
 - The location of the meeting is very important. Choose a location that is easy for members to find. Be sure to select a location that will accommodate the size of your organization. Take time to check the room prior to your meeting to ensure that the space is appropriate. Small rooms with too many people get stuffy and create tension. Larger rooms are more comfortable and encourage individual expression.
 - If possible, arrange members so that they face each other. For larger groups, try U-shaped rows. A leader is in better position to communicate when he/she is centrally located.
 - Be sure that everyone knows where and when the meeting will be held. If possible, hold meetings at the same time and place every week.

19.1.2 *During the meeting:*

- Greet members to make them feel welcome and be sure to introduce any new members.

- If possible, serve light refreshments.
- Start on time. End on time.
- Review the agenda and set priorities for the meeting.
- Follow the agenda.
- Encourage group discussion to get all viewpoints and ideas. You will have better quality discussions as well as more highly motivated members.
- Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities and commitment to the organization improve when members see their impact on the decision-making process.
- Keep conversation on topic, toward an eventual decision. Feel free to ask for only constructive comments.
- Delegate responsibilities and establish due dates. Give members a voice in decision-making.
- Keep minutes of the meeting for future reference in case a question or problem arises.
- The leader or facilitator should model leadership skills such as staying on task, listening, valuing members, appreciating diverse points of view, having confidence in members. Admit your mistakes.
- Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a unifying or positive note. For example, volunteer thoughts of things they feel are good or successful, reciting a group's creed, or an inspirational thought.
- Set a date and time for the next meeting.

19.1.3 After the meeting:

- Write up and distribute the minutes within 2-3 days. Quick action reinforces the importance of the meeting and reduces error of memory.
- Discuss any problems that may have surfaced during the meeting with officers so that improvements can be made.
- Follow up on delegated tasks. Make sure that members understand and carry out their responsibilities.
- Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
- Place unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Conduct a periodic evaluation of meetings. Weak areas can be analyzed and improved for meetings that are more productive.

19.2 Parliamentary Procedure

Any organization that conducts a business meeting should become familiar with basic parliamentary procedure (See Appendix). Without order, a meeting can turn into total chaos in a matter of minutes. The purpose of parliamentary procedure is to provide order to conduct business in as efficient and orderly a manner as possible. Remember, parliamentary procedure should help you run your meetings, not hinder your progress. Use it wisely, but do not get so caught up in it that it gets in the way of conducting business.

This is not to be considered as a complete set of rules to cover all possible questions that might arise. The following guide covers the points most often encountered in parliamentary

procedures. For a more detailed set of rules, consult *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised* (available for checkout in UC 226) and *Sturgis Parliamentary Manual*.

19.2.1 Addressing the President

The president should conduct all meetings. Members addressing the president should refer to him/her as Mister/Madam President.

19.2.2 Obtaining the Floor

Before a member may make a motion or speak in debate, he/she must obtain the "floor." To claim the floor, a member raises his/her hand and waits to be "recognized" by the president. The president will recognize the member by announcing his/her name or title. This member then has the floor and can stand and speak until he/she yields the floor by resuming his/her seat. While a motion is open to debate, there are three important cases where the floor should be assigned to a person who may have been the first to rise and address the president. These cases are:

1. If the member who made the motion claims the floor and has not already spoken on the question, he/she is entitled to be recognized in preference to other members.
2. No one is entitled to the floor a second time as long as any other member who has not yet spoken to the pending motion requests the floor.
3. The president should attempt to alternate opposite opinions on a question if he/she is aware of members requesting the floor that have opposing views.

19.2.3 Making a Motion

1. When making a motion, make sure that the motion is for or against something, instead of "I motion that we vote on this event."
2. Obtain the floor as follows: Address the President by saying, "Mr./Madame/Chair President" and then wait to be recognized before presenting a motion.
3. State the motion carefully. This is usually done by saying, "I move that . . ." or "I move the adoption of the following resolution."
4. The motion must be seconded. A motion cannot be discussed unless it is seconded. If a motion does not receive a second, it is lost. Any eligible voter, other than the one making the motion, may second it. He/she usually simply says, "I second the motion."
5. The president then states the "question" on the motion. Neither making nor the seconding of the motion places it before the organization, only the president can do that by stating the question. When the president has stated the question, the motion is pending and is open to debate (providing that it is a debatable motion). If the organization decides to do what the motion proposes, it adopts a motion or it is carried. If it decides against the motion, it is rejected or lost.
6. After the discussion, the vote is taken by one of the following ways: 1) by consent, 2) by standing or raising the hand, 3) by roll call, or 4) by ballot

19.2.4 Steps for Presenting a Motion

1. Obtain the floor – wait until the speaker is finished. Rise and address the chair
2. Make your motion – speak clearly and concisely. State your motion affirmatively, "I move that..."
3. Wait for a second – another member will second the motion or the chair will call for a second. If there is no second, your motion will not be considered

4. Chairman states your motion – the chair must say, “It is moved and seconded that we...” After this happens, debate or voting can occur. Your motion is now “assembly property” and you cannot change it without the consent of members.

19.2.5 Four Types of Motions

1. Main Motions – introduce subjects to the assembly for its consideration. They cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly. They yield to privilege, subsidiary, and incidental motions. For example, “I move that we purchase...”
2. Subsidiary Motions – Change or affect how the main motion is handled (voted on before the main motion). For example, “I move the questions before the assembly be amended by striking out...”
3. Privileged Motions – Are most urgent about special or important matters not related to pending business. For example, “I move we adjourn.”
4. Incidental Motions – Are questions of procedure that arise out of other motions, must be considered for other motion. For example, “I move to suspend the rules for the purpose of.”

19.2.6 Amending a Motion

The motion to amend is to modify a pending motion before it is acted upon. An amendment must be closely related to or have some bearing on the subject of the motion to be amended. An amendment may be one of four things:

- A. Add or insert a certain word or words or a sentence to the motion under consideration.
- B. Strike a certain word or words or a sentence out of a motion.
- C. Substitute another motion for the one being considered.
- D. Substitute words to replace wording under consideration.

An amendment, like the principle motion, must be seconded. It is also debatable and may again be amended. The proper form for making an amendment is: “I move to amend the motion to read . . .”

The amendment to a motion, if seconded, must be voted upon before the original motion. An amendment is adopted by a majority vote even in cases where the motion to be amended requires a 2/3 vote for adoption. If the amendment to the motion is carried, the original motion must be voted upon as amended.

19.2.7 Approval of the Minutes

At the beginning of regularly schedule meetings, it is optional to distribute copies of minutes of the previous meeting for study by members. If minutes are distributed the president then asks, “Are there any corrections to the minutes?” and pauses. Then the president says, “If there are no corrections” (or no further corrections), the minutes will be approved.

19.2.8 Point of Order

A point of order may be raised by a member whenever an unparliamentarily or disorderly procedure has been made. This may be done without being recognized by the chair. A point of order:

- Can be applied to any breach of the rules
- Is in order when another has the floor (over rules person speaking)
- Does not require a second
- Is not debatable unless the president, being in doubt, submits the point to a vote of the membership; in which case, the rules governing its debateability are the same as for an appeal.

19.2.9 Previous Question

The previous question is the motion used to bring the meeting to an immediate vote on one or more pending questions. The motion for previous question:

- Takes precedence over all debatable or amendable motions to which it is applied
- Can be applied to any immediately pending debatable or amendable motion
- Is out of order when another has the floor
- Must be seconded
- Is not debatable
- Is not amendable
- Requires a 2/3 vote

19.2.10 Postpone indefinitely

A motion to postpone indefinitely is a motion that the membership declines to take a position on the main question. Ursas option kills the main motion, at least for the duration of the session, and avoids a direct vote on the question. It is useful in disposing of a badly chosen main motion that cannot be adopted or expressly rejected without possibly undesirable consequences. The motion to postpone indefinitely:

- Is out of order when another has the floor
- Must be seconded
- Is debatable
- Requires a majority vote

19.2.11 Adjourn

To adjourn means to close the meeting. The motion to adjourn is to close the meeting immediately, made under conditions where some other provision for another meeting exists and where no time for adjourning the present meeting has already been set. The motion to adjourn:

- Is not applied to any motion and no motion can be applied to it
- Is out of order when another has the floor
- Does not need to be seconded
- Requires a majority vote