

REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

Date: January 4, 2010
Item No.: 13.a

Department Approval

City Manager Approval

WJ Malinen

Item Description: Discussion of City Council Rules and Procedures

BACKGROUND

Each year, the Council adopts Council Rules and Procedures for ways to best conduct City business. Rules are reviewed annually. The Council may want to consider changes to Rule 6 and/or other methods of parliamentary procedures.

REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION

Discussion and adoption of Council Rules and Procedures.

Prepared by: **William J. Malinen, City Manager**

Attachments: A: 2009 Rules
 B: Suggested Change to Rule 6
 C: Rosenberg's Rules of Order

Roseville City Council

Rules of Procedure

April 21, 2008

Rule 1 Roberts' Rules of Order

The Council adopts the most recent edition of Roberts' Rules of Order for all Council meetings.

Rule 2 Timing of Council Packet Formation and Delivery

Every effort will be made to send draft agendas and supporting documents to Councilmembers ten days in advance of an item appearing on a Council agenda. This additional time will give Councilmembers adequate time to study an issue and seek answers to questions.

Rule 3 Agenda

The following shall be the order of business of the City Council:

- 1) Roll Call
- 2) Approve Agenda
- 3) Public Comment
- 4) Council Communications, Reports, Announcements, HRA Report
- 5) Recognitions, Donations, Communications
- 6) Approval of Minutes
- 7) Consent Agenda
- 8) Items Removed from Consent
- 9) General Ordinances
- 10) Presentations
- 11) Public Hearings
- 12) Business Items – Action
- 13) Business Items – Presentation/Discussion
- 14) City Manager Future Agenda Review
- 15) Councilmember Initiated Future Agenda Items
- 16) Adjourn

Councilmembers are encouraged to introduce new items including background information and supporting materials for discussion and possible action. Councilmembers have the right to place items on the agenda as follows:

A councilmember may, at a council meeting, request that an action item be placed on a future council agenda, or;

1 A councilmember may make a request for an agenda item outside of a council meeting by
2 submitting an email request to the city manager, with a copy of the email to the other
3 councilmembers, no later than noon of the Wednesday preceding the council meeting. That
4 agenda item will be included on the agenda for the next council meeting under the heading
5 "Councilmember Initiated Future Agenda Items" for notice purposes only, not for action or
6 removal from future agendas, but will not be an action item. The item will become a regular
7 council agenda item (i.e., for discussion and action) at the subsequent council meeting, or;

8
9 A councilmember may request the addition of an agenda item at the same meeting at which the
10 item is to be addressed. However, the addition of an agenda item shall require the approval of a
11 majority of the councilmembers present.

12 13 **Rule 4 Electronic and/or Paper Agenda Packets**

14 In an effort to reduce the amount of paper generated, documents will be made available
15 electronically, when feasible.

16 17 **Rule 5 Public Comment**

18 The City Council will receive public comment at Council meetings in accordance with the
19 following guidelines:

- 20
21 a. Public Comment at the beginning of a Council meeting and not pertaining to an
22 agenda item is for the purpose of allowing the public the opportunity to express
23 their viewpoints about policy issues facing their City government. Presentations
24 will be limited to 5 minutes per speaker.
25
26 b. Public Comment pertaining to agenda items is for the purpose of allowing any
27 member of the public an opportunity to provide input on that item. These public
28 comments will generally be received after the staff presentation on that agenda
29 item and before Council discussion and deliberation. These public comments are
30 also limited to 5 minutes per speaker.
31
32 c. Members of the public are always free, and encouraged, to reduce to writing their
33 comments about city business and to submit written comments to the Council or
34 staff before, during, or after a Council meeting.
35
36 d. Signs may be held and displayed during Council Meetings but only at the back of
37 the Council Chambers so that the view of the seated audience is not obstructed.
38
39
40 e. Public comment, like staff and Councilmember comments, will pertain to the
41 merits of an issue; personal attacks will be ruled out of order.
42
43 f. The Mayor or presiding officer may make special time-length arrangements for
44 speakers representing a group.
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46
47
48
49
50

1 **Rule 6 Issue and Meeting Curfew**

2 City Council meetings generally occur on the second, third and fourth Mondays of the month
3 beginning at 6:00 p.m. The Council recognizes that meetings are for the benefit of the citizens of
4 Roseville so Council meetings will end by 10:00 p.m. If a time sensitive item has not been
5 addressed by 10:00 p.m., Council meetings may be extended upon the vote of the City Council,
6 but at no time will a meeting run past 11:00 p.m. If Council business remains on the agenda, the
7 Council may continue the meeting to a future date or table such items until the next meeting, if
8 needed.

9
10 To ensure that meetings finish their business in a timely manner, the Council will not consider
11 new items for discussion after 10:00 p.m.
12

13 **Rule 7 City Council Task Force or Subcommittee Formation**

14 The Council shall, as issues arise, establish a two-member task force to study the issue. The
15 membership will be agreed upon by the full Council. The task force will have a specific topic or
16 issue to address and the task force will report its findings or recommendations by a specific
17 deadline established by the Council.
18

19 **Rule 8 Recording of Meetings**

20 Except for closed executive sessions authorized under state law, all meetings of the City Council
21 shall be shown live when technically possible and recorded in their entirety for replaying on the
22 municipal cable channel and for web streaming except when the City Council directs by motion
23 otherwise.
24

25 **Rule 9 Suspension of Rules**

26 Pursuant to Section 25 of Roberts' Rules of Order, these Rules may be suspended in specific
27 situations upon a 2/3s vote of the City Council.
28

29 **Rule 10 Effective Date**

30 These Rules shall become effective upon adoption by a majority of the City Council and shall
31 remain in effect until amended or repealed by subsequent vote of the Council.
32

33 *2008_Rules_amended_080421.doc*

Rule 6 Issue and Meeting Curfew

City Council meetings generally occur on the second, third and fourth Mondays of the month beginning at 6:00 p.m. The Council recognizes that meetings are for the benefit of the citizens of Roseville so Council meetings will end by 10:00 p.m.

Council meetings may be extended until 11:00 p.m. for the item currently being considered upon the vote of the City Council. Council meetings may also be extended until 11:00 p.m. for other selected agenda items upon an additional vote of the City Council.

Per Rule #9, Suspension of the Rules, the City Council may extend the meeting past 11:00 p.m. with a super majority vote of the City Council.

If Council business remains on the agenda, the Council may continue the meeting to a future date or table such items until the next meeting, if needed.

Date: December 28, 2009

To: City Manager Malinen, Mayor Klausing, and City Council Members

From: Dan Roe, Council Member

Subject: Proposed Changes to Rule #6

In response to the proposed draft language change for Rule #6 of the Council Rules of Procedure that was included in the pre-packet materials, I have some suggested changes/additions, which I have summarized below:

(See attached revised language, titled "Roe alternate – 1/14/10.")

First, I have made some minor wording changes to the first paragraph to clean up the language. (The reference to meeting dates should be eliminated, as this is a rule on meeting and issue curfews, not on meeting dates, for instance.) I also added the language about business being conducted at a reasonable hour, since this would seem to be the purpose of a curfew.

In the second paragraph, I have added language to provide for a means to allow the Mayor to extend the meeting to finish a single issue, up to 15 additional minutes. I think that would simplify the process if there is just a short extension needed. I also attempted to clear up the structure of the grammar with respect to the other provisions for extension by vote.

In the "suspension of the rules" provision, I clarified that that could be done either to consider one additional item or more than one item.

Finally, I added language at the end of the rule to clarify what business may happen after the curfew.

1 **Strike-out Copy:**

2
3 **Rule 6 Issue and Meeting Curfew**

4
5 ~~City Council meetings generally occur on the second, third and fourth Mondays of the~~
6 ~~month beginning at 6:00 p.m. The Council recognizes that meetings are for the benefit of~~
7 ~~the citizens of Roseville, and that City business should take place at a reasonable hour.~~
8 ~~so Therefore, City Council meetings will end by 10:00 p.m.~~
9

10 Upon reaching the 10:00 p.m. curfew, Council meetings may be extended until no later
11 than 10:15 PM by ruling of the Mayor (subject to the rules for objections to such rulings),
12 or until no later than 11:00 p.m. by majority vote of the City Council, for to complete the
13 item currently being considered upon the vote of the City Council. Council meetings
14 may also be extended until no later than 11:00 p.m. by majority vote of the City Council
15 for to take up other selected agenda items upon an additional vote of the City Council. A
16 vote to take up other items after 10:00 p.m. may be taken concurrently with a vote to
17 complete the item being considered, or may be taken separately upon completion of an
18 item after 10:00 p.m.
19

20 Per Rule #9, Suspension of the Rules, the City Council may extend the meeting past
21 11:00 p.m. to complete the item currently being considered and/or to take up other
22 selected agenda items with by a super majority vote of the City Council.
23

24 If Council business remains on the agenda at 10:00 p.m. or at the end of any extension of
25 the meeting, the Council may continue the meeting to a future date and time or table such
26 items until the next meeting, if needed. Such actions to continue the meeting or table
27 items may be taken by the City Council after the expiration of the meeting time or any
28 extension.
29

30 Agenda items/orders of business #14 (City Manager Future Agenda Review) and #15
31 (Councilmember Initiated Future Agenda Items) may be taken up after the expiration of
32 the meeting time or any extension.
33

“Clean” Copy:

Rule 6 Issue and Meeting Curfew

The Council recognizes that meetings are for the benefit of the citizens of Roseville, and that City business should take place at a reasonable hour. Therefore, City Council meetings will end by 10:00 p.m.

Upon reaching the 10:00 p.m. curfew, Council meetings may be extended until no later than 10:15 PM by ruling of the Mayor (subject to the rules for objections to such rulings), or until no later than 11:00 p.m. by majority vote of the City Council, to complete the item currently being considered. Council meetings may also be extended until no later than 11:00 p.m. by majority vote of the City Council to take up other selected agenda items. A vote to take up other items after 10:00 p.m. may be taken concurrently with a vote to complete the item being considered, or may be taken separately upon completion of an item after 10:00 p.m.

Per Rule #9, Suspension of the Rules, the City Council may extend the meeting past 11:00 p.m. to complete the item currently being considered and/or to take up other selected agenda items by a super majority vote of the City Council.

If Council business remains on the agenda at 10:00 p.m. or at the end of any extension of the meeting, the Council may continue the meeting to a future date and time or table such items until the next meeting, if needed. Such actions to continue the meeting or table items may be taken by the City Council after the expiration of the meeting time or any extension.

Agenda items/orders of business #14 (City Manager Future Agenda Review) and #15 (Councilmember Initiated Future Agenda Items) may be taken up after the expiration of the meeting time or any extension.

Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century

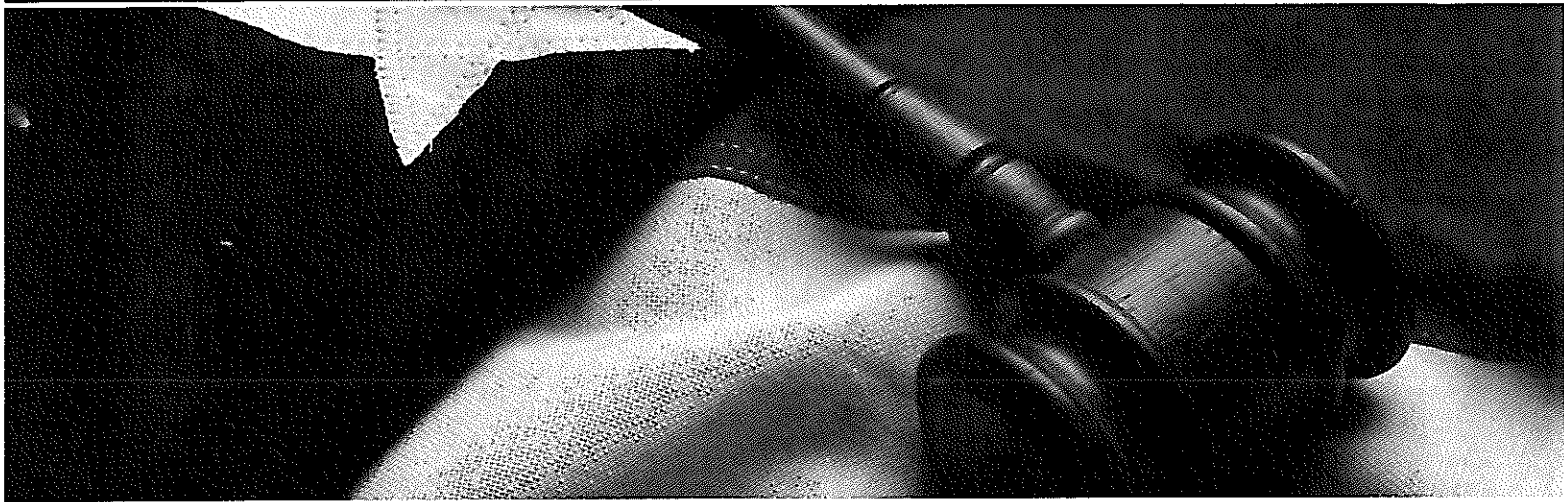


MISSION:

To restore and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians.

VISION:

To be recognized and respected as the leading advocate for the common interests of California cities.



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Established in 1898, the League of California Cities is a member organization that represents California's incorporated cities. The League strives to protect the local authority and autonomy of city government and help California's cities effectively serve their residents. In addition to advocating on cities' behalf at the state capitol, the League provides its members with professional development programs and information resources, conducts educational conferences and research, and publishes *Western City* magazine.

About *Western City* Magazine

Western City is the League of California Cities' monthly magazine. *Western City* provides lively, interdisciplinary analyses of issues affecting local governance. Its goal is to offer immediately practical ideas, information and bigger-picture policy issues and trends. For more information, visit www.westerncity.com.

"Rosenberg's Rules of Order" first appeared in *Western City* magazine in August and September 2003.

About the Author

Dave Rosenberg is an elected county supervisor representing the 4th District in Yolo County. He also serves as director of community and intergovernmental relations, director of operations, and senior advisor to the governor of California. He has served as a member and chair of numerous state and local boards, both appointed and elected, and also served on the Davis City Council for 12 years, including two terms as mayor. He has taught classes on parliamentary procedure and has served as parliamentarian for large and small governing bodies. In the fall of 2003, Gov. Davis appointed Rosenberg as a judge of the Yolo County Superior Court.

Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century

by Dave Rosenberg

The rules of procedure at meetings should be simple enough for most people to understand. Unfortunately, that hasn't always been the case. Virtually all clubs, associations, boards, councils and bodies follow a set of rules, *Robert's Rules of Order*, which are embodied in a small but complex book. Virtually no one I know has actually read this book cover to cover.

Worse yet, the book was written for another time and purpose. If you are running the British Parliament, *Robert's Rules of Order* is a dandy and quite useful handbook. On the other hand, if you're running a meeting of a five-member body with a few members of the public in attendance, a simplified version of the rules of parliamentary procedure is in order. Hence, the birth of "Rosenberg's Rules of Order."

This publication covers the rules of parliamentary procedure based on my 20 years of experience chairing meetings in state and local government. These rules have been simplified and slimmed down for 21st century meetings, yet they retain the basic tenets of order to which we are accustomed.

"Rosenberg's Rules of Order" are supported by the following four principles:

1. **Rules should establish order.** The first purpose of the rules of parliamentary procedure is to establish a

framework for the orderly conduct of meetings.

2. **Rules should be clear.** Simple rules lead to wider understanding and participation. Complex rules create two classes: those who understand and participate and those who do not fully understand and do not fully participate.
3. **Rules should be user-friendly.** That is, the rules must be simple enough that citizens feel they have been able to participate in the process.
4. **Rules should enforce the will of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority.** The ultimate purpose of the rules of procedure is to encourage discussion and to facilitate decision-making by the body. In a democracy, the majority rules. The rules must enable the majority to express itself and fashion a result, while permitting the minority to also express itself (but not dominate) and fully participate in the process.

The Chairperson Should Take a Back Seat During Discussions

While all members of the governing body should know and understand the rules of parliamentary procedure, it is the chairperson (chair) who is charged with applying the rules of conduct. The chair should be well versed in those

rules, because the chair, for all intents and purposes, makes the final ruling on the rules. In fact, all decisions by the chair are final unless overruled by the governing body itself.

Because the chair conducts the meeting, it is common courtesy for the chair to take a less active role than other members of the body in debates and discussions. This does *not* mean that the chair should not participate in the debate or discussion. On the contrary, as a member of the body, the chair has full rights to participate in debates, discussions and decision-making. The chair should, however, strive to be the last to speak at the discussion and debate stage, and should not make or second a motion unless he or she is convinced that no other member of the body will do so.

The Basic Format for an Agenda Item Discussion

Formal meetings normally have a written, published agenda; informal meetings may have only an oral or understood agenda. In either case, the meeting is governed by the agenda and the agenda constitutes the body's agreed-upon road map for the meeting. And each agenda item can be handled by the chair in the following basic format.

First, the chair should clearly announce the agenda item number and should clearly state what the subject is. The chair should then announce the format that will be followed.

Second, following that agenda format, the chair should invite the appropriate people to report on the item, including any recommendation they might have. The appropriate person may be the chair, a member of the governing body,

There are exceptions to the general rule of free and open debate on motions. The exceptions all apply when there is a desire to move on.

a staff person, or a committee chair charged with providing information about the agenda item.

Third, the chair should ask members of the body if they have any technical questions for clarification. At this point, members of the governing body may ask clarifying questions to the people who reported on the item, and they should be given time to respond.

Fourth, the chair should invite public comments or, if appropriate at a formal meeting, open the meeting to public input. If numerous members of the public indicate a desire to speak to the subject, the chair may limit the time of each public speaker. At the conclusion of the public comments, the chair should announce that public input has concluded (or that the public hearing, as the case may be, is closed).

Fifth, the chair should invite a motion from the governing body members. The chair should announce the name of the member who makes the motion.

Sixth, the chair should determine if any member of the body wishes to second the motion. The chair should announce the name of the member who seconds the motion. It is normally good practice for a motion to require a second before proceeding with it, to ensure that it is not just one member of the body who is interested in a particular approach. However, a second is not an absolute requirement, and the chair can proceed with consideration and a vote on the motion even when there is no second. This is a matter left to the discretion of the chair.

Seventh, if the motion is made and seconded, the chair should make sure everyone understands the motion. This is done in one of three ways:

1. The chair can ask the maker of the motion to repeat it;
2. The chair can repeat the motion; or
3. The chair can ask the secretary or the clerk of the body to repeat the motion.

Eighth, the chair should now invite discussion of the motion by the members of the governing body. If there is no desired discussion or the discussion has ended, the chair should announce that the body will vote on the motion. If there has been no discussion or a very brief discussion, the vote should proceed immediately, and there is no need to repeat the motion. If there has been substantial discussion, it is normally best to make sure everyone understands the motion by repeating it.

Debate on policy is healthy; debate on personalities is not. The chair has the right to cut off discussion that is too personal, too loud or too crude.

Ninth, the chair takes a vote. Simply asking for the "ayes" and then the "nays" is normally sufficient. If members of the body do not vote, then they "abstain." Unless the rules of the body provide otherwise or unless a super-majority is required (as delineated later in these rules), a simple majority determines whether the motion passes or is defeated.

Tenth, the chair should announce the result of the vote and should announce what action (if any) the body has taken. In announcing the result, the chair should indicate the names of the members, if any, who voted in the minority on the motion. This announcement might take the following form: "The motion passes by a vote of 3-2, with Smith and Jones dissenting. We have passed the motion requiring 10 days' notice for all future meetings of this governing body."

Motions in General

Motions are the vehicles for decision-making. It is usually best to have a motion before the governing body prior to discussing an agenda item, to help everyone focus on the motion before them.

Motions are made in a simple two-step process. First, the chair recognizes the member. Second, the member makes a motion by preceding the member's desired approach with the words: "I move ..." A typical motion might be: "I move that we give 10 days' notice in the future for all our meetings."

The chair usually initiates the motion by:

1. Inviting the members to make a motion: "A motion at this time would be in order."

2. Suggesting a motion to the members: "A motion would be in order that we give 10-days' notice in the future for all our meetings."
3. Making the motion.

As noted, the chair has every right as a member of the body to make a motion, but normally should do so only if he or she wishes a motion to be made but no other member seems willing to do so.

The Three Basic Motions

Three motions are the most common:

1. **The basic motion.** The basic motion is the one that puts forward a decision for consideration. A basic motion might be: "I move that we create a five-member committee to plan and put on our annual fundraiser."
2. **The motion to amend.** If a member wants to change a basic motion that is under discussion, he or she would move to amend it. A motion to amend might be: "I move that we amend the motion to have a 10-member committee." A motion to amend takes the basic motion that is before the body and seeks to change it in some way.

3. **The substitute motion.** If a member wants to completely do away with the basic motion under discussion and put a new motion before the governing body, he or she would "move a substitute motion." A substitute motion might be: "I move a substitute motion that we cancel the annual fundraiser this year."

Motions to amend and substitute motions are often confused. But they are quite different, and so is their effect, if passed.

A motion to amend seeks to retain the basic motion on the floor, but to modify it in some way.

A substitute motion seeks to throw out the basic motion on the floor and substitute a new and different motion for it.

The decision as to whether a motion is really a motion to amend or a substitute motion is left to the chair. So that if a member makes what that member calls a motion to amend, but the chair determines it is really a substitute motion, the chair's designation governs.

When Multiple Motions Are Before The Governing Body

Up to three motions may be on the floor simultaneously. The chair may reject a fourth motion until the three that are on the floor have been resolved.

When two or three motions are on the floor (after motions and seconds) at the same time, the *first* vote should be on the *last* motion made. So, for example, assume the first motion is a basic "motion to have a five-member committee to plan and put on our annual fundraiser." During the discussion of this motion, a member might make a second motion to "amend the main motion to have a 10-member committee, not a five-member committee, to plan and put on our annual fundraiser." And perhaps, during that discussion, a member makes yet a third motion as a "substitute motion that we not have an annual fundraiser this year." The proper procedure would be as follows.

First, the chair would deal with the *third* (the last) motion on the floor, the substitute motion. After discussion and debate, a vote would be taken first on the third motion. If the substitute motion *passes*, it would be a substitute for the basic motion and would eliminate it. The first motion would be moot, as would the second motion (which sought to amend the first motion), and the action on the agenda item would be complete. No vote would be taken on the first or second motions. On the other hand, if the substitute motion (the third motion) *failed*, the chair would proceed to consideration of the second (now the last) motion on the floor, the motion to amend.

If the substitute motion failed, the chair would then deal with the second (now the last) motion on the floor, the motion to amend. The discussion and debate would focus strictly on the amendment (should the committee be five or 10 members). If the motion to amend *passed*, the chair would now move to consider the main motion (the first motion) as *amended*. If the motion to amend failed, the chair would now move to consider the main motion (the first motion) in its original format, not amended.

The challenge for anyone chairing a public meeting is to accommodate public input in a timely and time-sensitive way, while maintaining steady progress through the agenda items.

Third, the chair would now deal with the first motion that was placed on the floor. The original motion would either be in its original format (five-member committee) or, if amended, would be in its amended format (10-member committee). And the question on the floor for discussion and decision would be whether a committee should plan and put on the annual fundraiser.

To Debate or Not to Debate

The basic rule of motions is that they are subject to discussion and debate. Accordingly, basic motions, motions to amend, and substitute motions are all eligible, each in their turn, for full discussion before and by the body. The debate can continue as long as members of the body wish to discuss an item, subject to the decision of the chair that it is time to move on and take action.

There are exceptions to the general rule of free and open debate on motions. The exceptions all apply when there is a desire of the body to move on. The following motions are *not* debatable (that is, when the following motions are made and seconded, the chair must immediately call for a vote of the body without debate on the motion):

A motion to adjourn. This motion, if passed, requires the body to immediately adjourn to its next regularly scheduled meeting. This motion requires a simple majority vote.

A motion to recess. This motion, if passed, requires the body to immediately take a recess. Normally, the chair determines the length of the recess, which may range from a few minutes to an hour. It requires a simple majority vote.

A motion to fix the time to adjourn.

This motion, if passed, requires the body to adjourn the meeting at the specific time set in the motion. For example, the motion might be: "I move we adjourn this meeting at midnight." It requires a simple majority vote.

A motion to table. This motion, if passed, requires discussion of the agenda item to be halted and the agenda item to

be placed on "hold." The motion may contain a specific time in which the item can come back to the body: "I move we table this item until our regular meeting in October." Or the motion may contain no specific time for the return of the item, in which case a motion to take the item off the table and bring it back to the body will have to be taken at a future meeting. A motion to table an item (or to bring it back to the body) requires a simple majority vote.

A motion to limit debate. The most common form of this motion is to say: "I move the previous question" or "I move the question" or "I call for the question." When a member of the body makes such a motion, the member is really saying: "I've had enough debate. Let's get on with the vote." When such a motion is made, the chair should ask for a second to the motion, stop debate, and vote on the motion to limit debate. The motion to limit debate requires a two-thirds vote of the body. Note that a motion to limit debate could include a time limit. For example: "I move we limit debate on this agenda item to 15 minutes." Even in this format, the

the motion fails. If one member is absent and the vote is 3-3, the motion still fails.

All motions require a simple majority, but there are a few exceptions. The exceptions occur when the body is taking an action that effectively cuts off the ability of a minority of the body to take an action or discuss an item. These extraordinary motions require a two-thirds majority (a super-majority) to pass:

Motion to limit debate. Whether a member says, "I move the previous question," "I move the question," "I call for the question" or "I move to limit debate," it all amounts to an attempt to cut off the ability of the minority to discuss an item, and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

Motion to close nominations. When choosing officers of the body, such as the chair, nominations are in order either from a nominating committee or from the floor of the body. A motion to close nominations effectively cuts off the right of the minority to nominate officers, and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

pend the rules for a particular purpose. For example, the body (a private club) might have a rule prohibiting the attendance at meetings by non-club members. A motion to suspend the rules would be in order to allow a non-club member to attend a meeting of the club on a particular date or on a particular agenda item.

The Motion to Reconsider

There is a special and unique motion that requires a bit of explanation all by itself: the motion to reconsider. A tenet of parliamentary procedure is finality. After vigorous discussion, debate and a vote, there must be some closure to the issue. And so, after a vote is taken, the matter is deemed closed, subject only to reopening if a proper motion to reconsider is made.

A motion to reconsider requires a majority vote to pass, but there are two special rules that apply only to the motion to reconsider.

First is the matter of timing. A motion to reconsider must be made at the meeting where the item was first voted upon or at the very next meeting of the body. A motion to reconsider made at a later time is untimely. (The body, however, can always vote to suspend the rules and, by a two-thirds majority, allow a motion to reconsider to be made at another time.)

Second, a motion to reconsider may be made only by certain members of the body. Accordingly, a motion to reconsider may be made only by a member who voted *in the majority* on the original motion. If such a member has a change of heart, he or she may make the motion to reconsider (any other member of the body may second the motion). If a member who voted *in the minority* seeks to make the motion to reconsider, it must be ruled out of order. The purpose of this rule is finality. If a member of the minority could make a motion to reconsider, then the item could be brought back to the body again and again, which would defeat the purpose of finality.

If you are running the British Parliament, *Robert's Rules of Order* is a dandy and quite useful handbook.

motion to limit debate requires a two-thirds vote of the body. A similar motion is a *motion to object to consideration of an item*. This motion is not debatable, and if passed, precludes the body from even considering an item on the agenda. It also requires a two-thirds vote.

Majority and Super-Majority Votes

In a democracy, decisions are made with a simple majority vote. A tie vote means the motion fails. So in a seven-member body, a vote of 4-3 passes the motion. A vote of 3-3 with one abstention means

Motion to object to the consideration of a question. Normally, such a motion is unnecessary, because the objectionable item can be tabled or defeated straight up. However, when members of a body do not even want an item on the agenda to be considered, then such a motion is in order. It is not debatable, and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

Motion to suspend the rules. This motion is debatable, but requires a two-thirds vote to pass. If the body has its own rules of order, conduct or procedure, this motion allows the body to sus-

If the motion to reconsider passes, then the original matter is back before the body, and a new original motion is in order. The matter may be discussed and debated as if it were on the floor for the first time.

Courtesy and Decorum

The rules of order are meant to create an atmosphere where the members of the body and the members of the public can attend to business efficiently, fairly and with full participation. And at the same time, it is up to the chair and the members of the body to maintain common courtesy and decorum. Unless the setting is very informal, it is always best for only one person at a time to have the floor, and it is always best for every

It is usually best to have a motion before the governing body prior to discussing an agenda item, to help everyone focus.

lege relate to anything that would interfere with the normal comfort of the meeting. For example, the room may be too hot or too cold, or a blowing fan might interfere with a person's ability to hear.

Order. The proper interruption would be: "Point of order." Again, the chair would ask the interrupter to "state your point." Appropriate points of order

Withdraw a motion. During debate and discussion of a motion, the maker of the motion on the floor, at any time, may interrupt a speaker to withdraw his or her motion from the floor. The motion is immediately deemed withdrawn, although the chair may ask the person who seconded the motion if he or she wishes to make the motion, and any other member may make the motion if properly recognized.

Motions to amend and substitute motions are often confused. But they are quite different, and so is their effect, if passed.

speaker to be first recognized by the chair before proceeding to speak.

The chair should always ensure that debate and discussion of an agenda item focus on the item and the policy in question, not on the personalities of the members of the body. Debate on policy is healthy; debate on personalities is not. The chair has the right to cut off discussion that is too personal, too loud or too crude.

Debate and discussion should be focused, but free and open. In the interest of time, the chair may, however, limit the time allotted to speakers, including members of the body. Can a member of the body interrupt the speaker? The general rule is no. There are, however, exceptions. A speaker may be interrupted for the following reasons:

Privilege. The proper interruption would be: "Point of privilege." The chair would then ask the interrupter to "state your point." Appropriate points of privi-

lege relate to anything that would not be considered appropriate conduct of the meeting; for example, if the chair moved on to a vote on a motion that permits debate without allowing that discussion or debate.

Appeal. If the chair makes a ruling that a member of the body disagrees with, that member may appeal the ruling of the chair. If the motion is seconded and after debate, if it passes by a simple majority vote, then the ruling of the chair is deemed reversed.

Call for orders of the day. This is simply another way of saying, "Let's return to the agenda." If a member believes that the body has drifted from the agreed-upon agenda, such a call may be made. It does not require a vote, and when the chair discovers that the agenda has not been followed, the chair simply reminds the body to return to the agenda item properly before them. If the chair fails to do so, the chair's determination may be appealed.

Special Notes About Public Input

The rules outlined here help make meetings very public-friendly. But in addition, and particularly for the chair, it is wise to remember three special rules that apply to each agenda item:

Rule One: Tell the public what the body will be doing.

Rule Two: Keep the public informed while the body is doing it.

Rule Three: When the body has acted, tell the public what the body did.

Public input is essential to a healthy democracy, and community participation in public meetings is an important element of that input. The challenge for anyone chairing a public meeting is to accommodate public input in a timely and time-sensitive way, while maintaining steady progress through the agenda items. The rules presented here for conducting a meeting are offered as tools for effective leadership and as a means of developing sound public policy. ■