

Effective Meetings: Why Robert's Rules and Board Rules are your Friends

MAC Annual Conference

September 27, 2021

Eric Walcott and John Amrhein

MSU Extension





“TEAMMATES WHO
WORK TOGETHER
ARE THE TANGIBLE
DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN GOOD
TEAMS AND
GREAT TEAMS.”

—TOM IZZO



The Art of County Leadership in Michigan

- County Commissions in Michigan are granted limited authority to make decisions about budgets and services to benefit their constituents.
- Decision-making power is vested in the full board, not individuals.



The Art of County Leadership in Michigan

- Investopedia's definition of Fiduciary - "...a person or organization that acts on behalf of another person or persons, putting their clients' interest ahead of their own, with a duty to preserve good faith and trust. Being a fiduciary thus requires being bound both legally and ethically to act in the other's best interests."
- So...who is the "other" whose best interests we are looking out for?



Leadership is an Art

“The biggest problem facing America is not those issues that bombard us daily, from homelessness and failing schools to environmental devastation and the federal deficit...the crisis is that we as a people do not know how to come together to solve these problems.”

Frances Moore Lappe & Paul Martin Dubois



Building Teams – coming together to solve problems

- Build trust
- Demonstrate integrity, tolerance, and empathy
- Encourage others to express their opinions
- Develop your listening skills
- Inspire action and commitment in others
- Encourage new problem-solving approaches



Your Goal as a Board

- To have your County Board of Commissioners, who are a set of individuals, operate as one effective unit.



Board Rules



Context - Hierarchy of Rules

Counties created by the state, which is united with 49 other states in a federal government.

- US Constitution and laws
- Treaties with Native Sovereign Nations (12 in Michigan)
- MI Constitution allows broad intergovernmental cooperation



Context - Hierarchy of Rules

- More to this hierarchy of rules:
 - Michigan Constitution
 - Michigan laws, called statutes or Michigan Codified Laws, organized numerically – MCL 46.13a (www.legislature.mi.gov)
 - Local Ordinances
 - Board Rules
 - Parliamentary authority (usually Robert's Rules)
 - Custom or traditions



Authority to write Board Rules

- MCL 46.11
 - (m) – Establish rules and regulations in reference to the management of the interest and business concerns of the county as the board considers necessary and proper in all matters not especially provided for in this act or under the laws of the state.
 - (p) – Establish rules consistent with the Open Meetings Act, 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.261 to MCL 15.275, for the manner of proceeding before the board.



Board Rules

- Rules are most effective if they are in place before a problem arises
- Rules need to be clear and concise
- Specific to the board
- Re-adopt each year
 - Opportunity to review and update
 - New members become familiar



Board Rules Content

- Authority – for counties, MCL 46.11
- Meetings
 - Organizational
 - Regular - when
 - Special – how to call
 - Emergency
 - Location
 - Time
 - Schedule change



Board Rules Content

- Public Notice
 - Meetings and schedule changes – how, where, when
 - Notice to media
- Quorum and attendance
- Agendas
 - Special meetings
 - Distribution
 - Consent calendar – use or not – how to use



Board Rules Content

- Conduct of Meetings
 - Chair's role, vice chair's role
 - Form of address
 - Disorderly conduct
- Record of Meetings
 - Minutes
 - Discussion – in minutes or not
 - Request to include remarks
 - Public access and publication



Board Rules Content

- Committees
 - Appointment
 - Chairs
 - Standing committees
 - Meetings
 - Compliance with OMA
 - Committee of the Whole



Board Rules Content

- Closed Sessions
 - Motion
 - Two thirds vote
 - Other reasons
 - Minutes
- Motions and resolutions
 - Procedure, especially if different from Robert's
- Voting – abstentions, roll call, majority or higher level



Board Rules Content

- Parliamentary authority – Robert's, Mason's, other
- Administrative resolutions





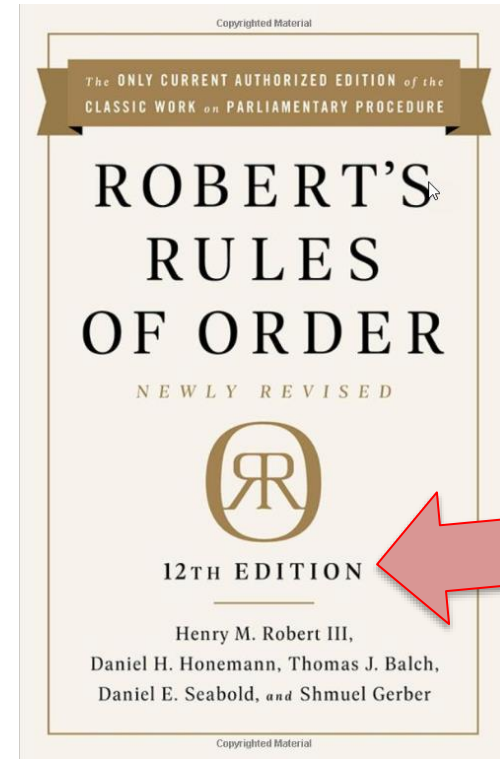
Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order



The most commonly used parliamentary authority:

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised



Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

1. The organization is paramount compared to the individual
2. All members are equal
3. A quorum must be present to legally transact business.
4. Only one main proposal at a time may be under consideration.
5. Only one member can have the floor at a time.



Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

6. Debate is allowed on all motions unless the rules don't allow debate.
7. The issue, not the person is always what is under consideration.
8. A question, once decided, cannot come back before the assembly in the same session in the same form.
9. A majority vote decides, unless a greater percentage is required.
10. Silence gives consent.



What are the six steps in handling a motion?

MOTIONS



1. A member is recognized by the chair and states a motion

**A MEMBER STANDS OR RAISES THEIR HAND OR
SAYS THE CHAIRPERSON'S TITLE:
"MADAM PRESIDENT" OR "MR. CHAIRMAN"**

**CHAIRPERSON RECOGNIZES THE MEMBER:
"THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES MR. SMITH"**

**MEMBER MAKES A MOTION:
"I MOVE TO...THAT...OR THE FOLLOWING
RESOLUTION..."**





2. A different member seconds the motion

ANOTHER MEMBER SAYS:

***"I SECOND" OR THE CHAIRPERSON MAY PROMPT
THE GROUP BY ASKING...."IS THERE A SECOND?"***



3. The chair states the motion

CHAIR:

"IT IS MOVED AND SECONDED TO...."

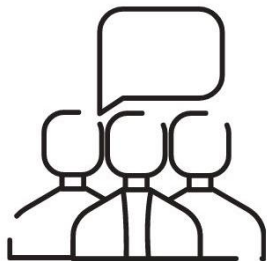


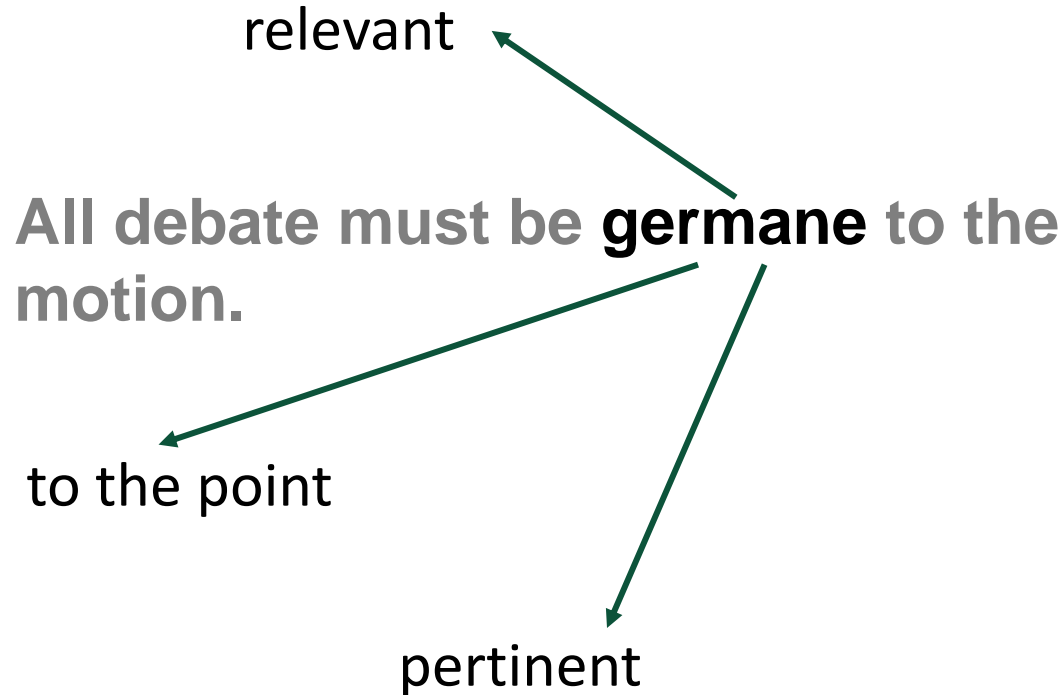
4. **Members debate the motion**

**THE CHAIR TURNS TO THE MAKER OF THE MOTION
TO OFFER FIRST RIGHT OF DEBATE. THE CHAIR SAYS**

***"IS THERE ANY DEBATE?" OR
"ARE YOU
READY FOR THE QUESTION?"***

***THE CHAIR SHOULD ASK FOR OPPOSING VIEWS AND
ALTERNATE BETWEEN THEM.***





5. Chair puts the question to a vote

CHAIR:

*"THE QUESTION IS ON THE ADOPTION
OF THE MOTION TO...."*

*"THOSE IN FAVOR OF SAY "AYE." (PAUSE FOR
VOTES)*

"THOSE OPPOSED SAY "NO." (PAUSE FOR VOTES)



6. Chair announces result of the vote

CHAIR:

"THE AYES HAVE IT AND THE MOTION IS ADOPTED"

OR

"THE NO'S HAVE IT AND THE MOTION IS LOST"

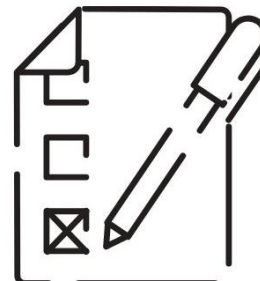
***CHAIR STATES THE EFFECT OF THE VOTE AND IF
APPLICABLE GIVES ORDERS FOR ITS EXECUTION.***

CHAIR:

"THE NEXT ITEM OF BUSINESS IS _____"

OR

"IS THERE ANY FURTHER BUSINESS?"



**The County Commission in Spartyville County
is having a regular meeting.**

Let's look at some scenarios.



Noting the next item on the agenda, “Upgrading of the County Park” one Commissioner says the next step in the park update is approval of the splash pad.

He asks, “What does everyone think about adding that Splash Pad to the park?”

The Chair says, “Before we discuss this issue, do you wish to make that a motion?”



The chair is correct in requiring a motion before discussion begins.

True or False?



There should be no discussion until there is a motion on the floor.

Always having a pending motion keeps the discussion focused on one topic at a time.



A Commissioner is recognized by the Chair and states “I make a motion that the County Commission use its county park upgrade money this year to add a Splash Pad in the amount of \$200,000.”

Another Commissioner says “So moved.”



Both members used the correct parliamentary language for the motion?

True or False?



Debate on the merits of the Splash Pad has continued for quite some time. One Commissioner is tired of the whole thing and decides to end the issue by saying, “I move to table this motion.” It is immediately seconded.



The Chair says, “A motion to table has been made. Since this is not a debatable motion, we will now vote on whether to table.”

**The Member used the motion
“to lay on the table” correctly.**

True or False?



Avoid the use of “Table”

- Lay on the Table is not debatable
- Requires only a majority vote
 - This is an improper use of the motion to Lay on the Table. If a member opposes a main motion, they should speak and vote against it. To suppress action on a main motion, a member should move to Postpone Indefinitely (which is debatable).



One Commissioner is getting frustrated by the discussion and strongly opposes another Commissioner's opinion. They call out "you are nothing but a sleazy con artist trying to benefit from the installation of county park equipment at the county's expense!" A third member jumps in quickly saying, Ms. Chair, "I rise to a Point of Order." The Chair responds, "state your point."

The Commissioner says "my fellow Commissioner has used the term "sleazy con artist" in referring to another Commissioner. Under Robert's Rules of Order, insults are inappropriate." The Chair responds, "the point is well taken, and Commissioners will refrain from using this term or other insults."



**The Member used the motion
"point of order" correctly.**

True or False?



The discussion is STILL continuing on the building of the splash pad. One Commissioner checks his watch and realizes that this meeting has lasted longer than any in recent memory. People are starting to repeat arguments that have already been made several times. He stands up and says, “I call the question.”

The Chair says, “The question has been called. That means that debate is ended, and we will now vote on the motion about building the Splash Pad. The motion is.....”



The Chair is correct. Once the question has been called all debate must stop.

True or False?





One commissioner cannot end debate. The motion for the previous question must be decided by a vote.



The motion is not debatable and it requires a 2/3 vote to pass. If it is ordered, then debate ends and the pending motion is put to an immediate vote.



The motion to end debate is lost and another commissioner says “I move to amend the motion by striking out “this year” and adding to the end “in 2022 if the fund balance remains \$200,000.” There is a second. The Chair says “It is moved and seconded to amend the motion by striking out “this year” and adding “in 2022 if the fund balance is over \$200,000 to the end.” If adopted the motion would be “The County Commission of Spartyville will use its county park upgrade funds to add a Splash Pad in the amount of \$200,000 in 2022 if the fund balance is over \$200,000.”



The procedure to amend a motion was followed correctly.

True or False?



Amending a Motion

To amend a motion:

- ✓ To insert or add words (or paragraphs)
- ✓ To strike words (or paragraphs)
- ✓ To strike & insert words (substitution)

Secondary amendments:

- ✓ amend an amendment
- ✓ must be germane to the amendment



The Chair requests a roll-call vote. She counts 3 yes's and 2 no's. She realizes there are 2 abstentions.

The Chair then announces that since there was a majority in the affirmative, the motion is adopted.



**The chair is correct.
True or False?**



Abstentions are not counted

Abstentions ordinarily do not have to be counted (or asked for) since it means the person is NOT voting.

The vote in this case was 3 to 2.
The majority is in the affirmative.
Therefore the motion is adopted.



One Commissioner who voted in favor of spending the \$200,000 on the Splash Pad remembers a major waterline project is upcoming that they believe will cost Spartyville County significant dollars.



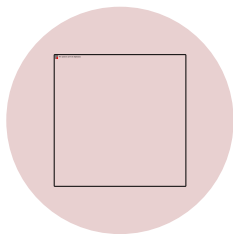
The Commissioner says “I move to reconsider the installation of a Splash Pad in 2022.”

The motion is in order at this time.

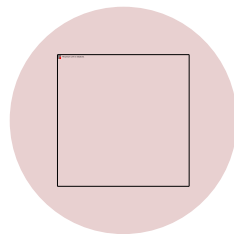
True or False?



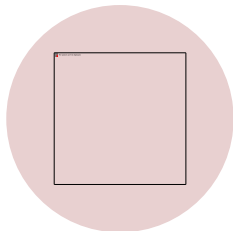
Motions that Bring a Question Again Before the Assembly



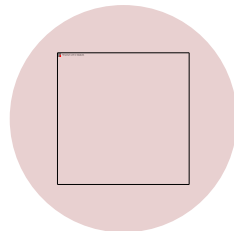
Take from the Table – take up a motion that was tabled in the same meeting or in the previous meeting



Rescind – repeal an action previously taken



Amend Something Previously Adopted – change an action previously approved



Reconsider – consider a question again that was already decided at the same meeting



The items on the agenda seem to have been completed. The Chair says, “We have come to the end of our agenda, there is no further business, I declare this meeting adjourned.”



The Chair was correct in not asking for a motion to adjourn and then having the membership vote on adjourning.

True or False?



How can I be a respectful participant?

DEBATE & DECORUM



Rules of Debate

- The maker of a motion is entitled to speak first.
- A member must obtain the floor by being recognized by the chair.
- No member is entitled to speak a second time while any other member wishes to make a first speech.
- Having obtained the floor, a member may speak for ten minutes.
- Rights in debate are not transferable.
- A speaker may not speak against the motion s/he has made, but may vote against it.



Rules of Debate continued...

- A 2/3 vote is required to close debate.
- The chair should alternate debate between the affirmative and negative positions.
- The chair may not close debate without the consent of the assembly.



Decorum in Debate

- Remarks must be confined to the merits of the pending question.
- A member's motives must not be attacked.
- All remarks must be addressed to or through the chair.
- Members may not speak directly to one another.
- The use of members' or officers names is to be avoided.
- Reading from books, reports, etc. is allowed only with permissions of the assembly.
- No member may comment adversely on any prior act of the assembly that is not pending.



“It is better to debate a question without settling it,
than to settle a question without debating it.”

— Joseph Joubert





"There's no way we can come to a decision yet - this meeting has only lasted 30 minutes."



MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.



United States Department of Agriculture



In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, and American Sign Language) should contact the responsible State or local Agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online, at www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-program-discrimination-complaint-form.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA.

The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

fax:
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442;

email:
program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Conforme a la ley federal y las políticas y regulaciones de derechos civiles del Departamento de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos (USDA), esta institución tiene prohibido discriminar por motivos de raza, color, origen nacional, sexo, edad, discapacidad, venganza o represalia por actividades realizadas en el pasado relacionadas con los derechos civiles (no todos los principios de prohibición aplican a todos los programas).

La información del programa puede estar disponible en otros idiomas además del inglés. Las personas con discapacidades que requieran medios de comunicación alternativos para obtener información sobre el programa (por ejemplo, Braille, letra agrandada, grabación de audio y lenguaje de señas americano) deben comunicarse con la agencia estatal o local responsable que administra el programa o con el TARGET Center del USDA al (202) 720-2600 (voz y TTY) o comunicarse con el USDA a través del Servicio Federal de Transmisión de Información al (800) 877-8339.

Para presentar una queja por discriminación en el programa, el reclamante debe completar un formulario AD-3027, Formulario de queja por discriminación del programa del USDA, que se puede obtener en línea, en

www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-program-discrimination-complaint-form.pdf, en cualquier oficina del USDA, llamando al (866) 632-9992, o escribiendo una carta dirigida al USDA. La carta debe contener el nombre, la dirección y el número de teléfono del reclamante, y una descripción escrita de la supuesta acción

discriminatoria con suficiente detalle para informar al Subsecretario de Derechos Civiles (ASCR, por sus siglas en inglés) sobre la naturaleza y la fecha de la presunta violación de los derechos civiles. La carta o el formulario AD-3027 completado debe enviarse al USDA por medio de:

correo postal:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; o

fax:
(833) 256-1665 o (202) 690-7442;

correo electrónico:
program.intake@usda.gov.

Esta institución ofrece igualdad de oportunidades.