

River Mill Academy, Inc.

Fundamentals of Parliamentary Procedure

THE ORDER OF BUSINESS OR AGENDA

1. Call to order: By presiding officer

Be on time

Check the quorum

2. Opening exercise, if desired: by the presiding officer

Welcome, roll call, if customary

3. Approval of minutes

Approved as mailed/read or as corrected. Reading of minutes can be dispensed with by a majority vote – without debate. This means they are not read at the regular time. If dispensed with, reading can be ordered (by a majority vote without debate) any time later during the meeting when no other business is pending. If minutes are not approved before adjournment, they must be approved at the following meeting before action on later minutes.

4. Reports of officers

Treasurer's Financial report. *Note: We strongly recommend that this be sent out ahead of time in an advanced board packet with a cover sheet highlighting key areas.* Other officers only if they have a specific report.

5. Report of the Executive Director

The chief professional staff person of the organization presents a regular report as part of the board meeting. Often this is the first item of business on the agenda after the minutes and financial reports are concluded. *Note: We strongly recommend that this be sent out ahead of time in an advanced board packet. And that it is not read or rehashed at the board meeting. It should only be discussed if there are strategic issues or questions of clarification.*

6. Reports of Standing Committees I Reports of Special Committees

Standing committees listed in the by-laws are usually called on, in the order in which they are listed. A motion arising out of an Officer's report or Committee report is taken up immediately. *Note: There is no need for committees to report if there is nothing to report. Prepare you agenda based on the issues and priorities at hand.*

7. Unfinished business

A question postponed from the last meeting; any other unfinished business. (The Secretary should inform the Presiding Officer in advance so that the item can be included on the agenda.

8. New business

Correspondence that needs action

Financial matters

Further new business - member can introduce new items or can move to discuss any matter that is on the table.

9. Announcements

The Presiding Officer may make or may call on other Officers or members to make any necessary announcements.

10. Program

This is the main business or strategic problem the group is solving or a guest speaker. *Note: Although it is customary to place this at the end of the order of business, we recommend putting the most important items earlier in the agenda.*

11. Further business

The Presiding Officer asks if there is any further business before adjournment.

12. Adjournment

May be done by general consent or by vote.

PUTTING AN IDEA BEFORE THE GROUP

1. Obtaining the floor

Address the Presiding Officer by his/her official title. *Wait for recognition.* Once you have the floor, you may speak and with exceptions, no one can interrupt you.

2. Making a motion

All proposals for action by the group must be presented by a *motion*. Begin by saying "I move that " Make your motion brief and concise. If possible, have it written out ahead of time. The Secretary may request a written copy of any motion.

3. Seconding the motion

Before an idea may be discussed, it must be seconded. You need not agree with a motion in order to second it. If the Presiding Officer overlooks the absence of a second and debate or voting has begun, the second becomes immaterial. An absence of a second does not affect the validity of the motion's adoption.

4. Amending the motion

To add to, substitute or subtract from a motion that someone else has made, submit your idea to the group by *amending the motion*.

5. Amend the amendment

Altering the motion can be carried one step further by an *amendment to an amendment*. You now have a primary amendment and a secondary amendment to the main motion. You may not have more than these two.

6. Point of information

If the issues become confusing, you may ask for clarification by asking for a *point of clarification* from the Presiding Officer.

7. Divide the question

It is often possible that a motion may contain two or more parts that you wish to be considered separately. You may ask that each part be considered separately. This often helps clarify the entire motion and keeps only those parts that most benefit the group. This is usually done by general consent, as it only requires a majority vote.

LET'S STICK TO THE FACTS

1. Point of order

If you feel a violation in parliamentary procedure exists, call for a *point of order* to enforce the rules. The Presiding Officer rules, but is obliged to recognize you and pass on your inquiry to the group.

2. Appeal decision of presiding officer

If you disagree with the decision of the Presiding Officer, you can appeal (it must be done immediately following the ruling.) It does require a second, then the Presiding Officer must state the question and the whole group votes on whether to over-rule or sustain the Presiding Officer. Either a majority vote or a tie will sustain the Presiding Officer.

3. Orders of the day

If the meeting goes off on a tangent and does not follow the agenda or the order of business, you may remind the Presiding Officer by calling for *orders of the day*. This requires a 2/3 vote and is put to a vote at the discretion of the Presiding officer.

4. Motion to limit the debate

To prevent a discussion from dragging on endlessly you can:

- Move to limit each speaker's time
- Move to limit the number of speakers
- Move to limit the overall time of debate
- Move to close the debate at a set time and vote

These questions require a 2/3 vote - this is an important safeguard as it proves that twice as many vote for an issue as against it.

5. Motion to refer

When it is advisable to give further study to a proposal, move that the matter be referred to a specific committee.

6. How to end debate

Call for the Previous Question - This will close debate on a pending issue and require immediate vote by the group on whether to close the debate. A 2/3 vote is required to close the debate. If passed then you can vote on the issue.

POSTPONING CONSIDERATION

1. Motion to table

A move to *lay on the table* means to temporarily put aside one motion to consider another. It is not debatable and, after a matter has been tabled, it may be taken from the table at the same meeting (if other business has intervened) or at the next regular meeting. After that, it would be *dead* and the matter would have to be reintroduced.

2. Postpone to a certain time

“I move that action on this matter be postponed until ___ (state the time).” If carried, the matter is postponed to the time specified and comes up as *unfinished business*.

3. Postpone indefinitely

Primarily a strategic motion used to reject the main question without incurring direct vote on it.

VOTING AND ADJOURNING

1. Voting a motion

Once a motion has been moved, seconded and discussion is concluded, the Presiding Officer asks for a vote.

Depending upon the nature of the motion (see by-laws for any specifications), the majority carries the motion.

2. Division of the house

To get a more accurate count than a voice vote call for a *division of the house*. A demand of a single member compels the division. This is really a request to revote. If no request for a division is made when the vote is announced, the only motions that can change a vote are to reconsider or to rescind.

3. Motion to adjourn

May be made at anytime-requires a majority to pass.

NICE TO KNOW

1. What's a quorum in a committee?

A majority of its members unless otherwise stated in the by-laws.

2. Can debate be limited in committee?

No.

3. What rights do ex-officio members have?

All of the rights of any other member, but none of the obligations. Not counted in quorum or in voting.

4. May a motion be withdrawn?

Yes. *If it has not been stated by the Presiding Officer*, the maker of the motion may withdraw his/her motion. (A withdrawn motion does not appear in the minutes). Once the Presiding Officer has stated a motion, it can be withdrawn only by general consent or a majority vote.

5. How can action already voted on be reconsidered?

By a move to reconsider the vote. This must be done on the same day the vote was taken and a motion to reconsider may only be made by one who voted on the prevailing side.

6. In a standing committee or special committee ...

... a motion to reconsider a vote may be made any time regardless of the time that has elapsed. It may be made by anyone who voted with the prevailing side or did not vote at all

7. Can a motion be rescinded-when?

Any member can move to rescind a motion. The motion is in order at any time until action has been taken on the matter. The motion to rescind requires a majority vote with previous notice or a 2/3 vote without notice. The motion and the action to rescind appear in the minutes of the respective meetings where the actions were taken. *Note: The motion to rescind-repeal, annul-reopens the whole question for discussion.*

8. What is a substitute motion?

It is a motion of similar but different intent than the pending motion, If a substitute motion carries by majority vote, the second motion becomes the pending question for consideration and the first motion is discarded and is no longer before the assembly.

9. Can the presiding officer introduce new business?

Yes, but the motion to act must come from the floor.

10. Do motions have to be in writing?

If possible, write out your motion. The Presiding Officer and/or Secretary may request your motion in writing.

Parliamentary Procedure Overview

Use this as a quick reference tool when you need to refresh your parliamentary procedure knowledge

To do this:	Say this:	Interrupt Speaker?	Second required?	Is motion debatable?	Is motion amendable?	What vote is required?
Adjourn meeting before business is completed	I move that we adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess the meeting	"I move that we recess until..."	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Suspend further consideration of an issue	I move we table it."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
End Debate	"I move the previous question."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Two-Thirds
Study an issue further	I move we refer this matter to a committee."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce business (primary motion)	"I move that"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move that this motion be amended by..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Object to procedure or a personal affront	"Point of Order"	Yes	No	No	No	No vote, chair decides
Take up a previously tabled matter	"I move we take from the table..."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Consider an issue out of its scheduled order	"I move we suspend the rules and consider...."	No	Yes	No	No	Two-Thirds