



**MICHIGAN  
ASSOCIATION  
OF MAYORS**

# Effective Meetings with Parliamentary Procedure

November 17, 2023  
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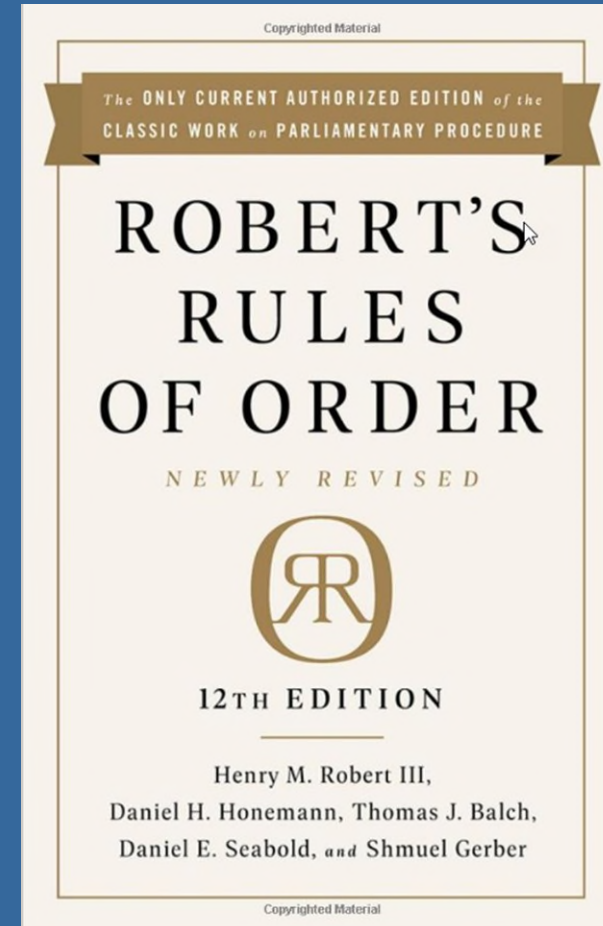


# Rules

*Where there is no law, but every man does what is right in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty.*

Henry M. Robert

# The most common parliamentary authority



# Your role in public service

When serving in an elected or appointed position, you are the government.

- Know your job:
  - Know the laws
  - Follow them
  - Do not practice “government by bluff”



# Who is responsible?



# Presiding officer

- Have working knowledge of the rules – no bluffing!
- Conduct the meeting according to the agenda
- Protect the rights of the members
- Set the tone of the meeting and serve as a good example
- Encourage appropriate input
- Mediate conflict
- Reach closure and move on
- Represent the board (or committee)
- Maintain impartiality and professional image
- Other duties as assigned by law, bylaws, board rules, custom

# Board Members

- Attend meetings
- Have working knowledge of rules and governing documents
- Read meeting handouts and materials ahead of time
- Participate in deliberation
- A right to enforcement of the rules
- Represent the opinions of constituency

# The role of the public

- Have a right to attend and speak at meetings
- Must obey your meeting rules
- Could use a friendly explanation of the rules up front
- Don't deliberate or vote
- Should be treated with respect



# Rules Governing Deliberative Assemblies (Government)

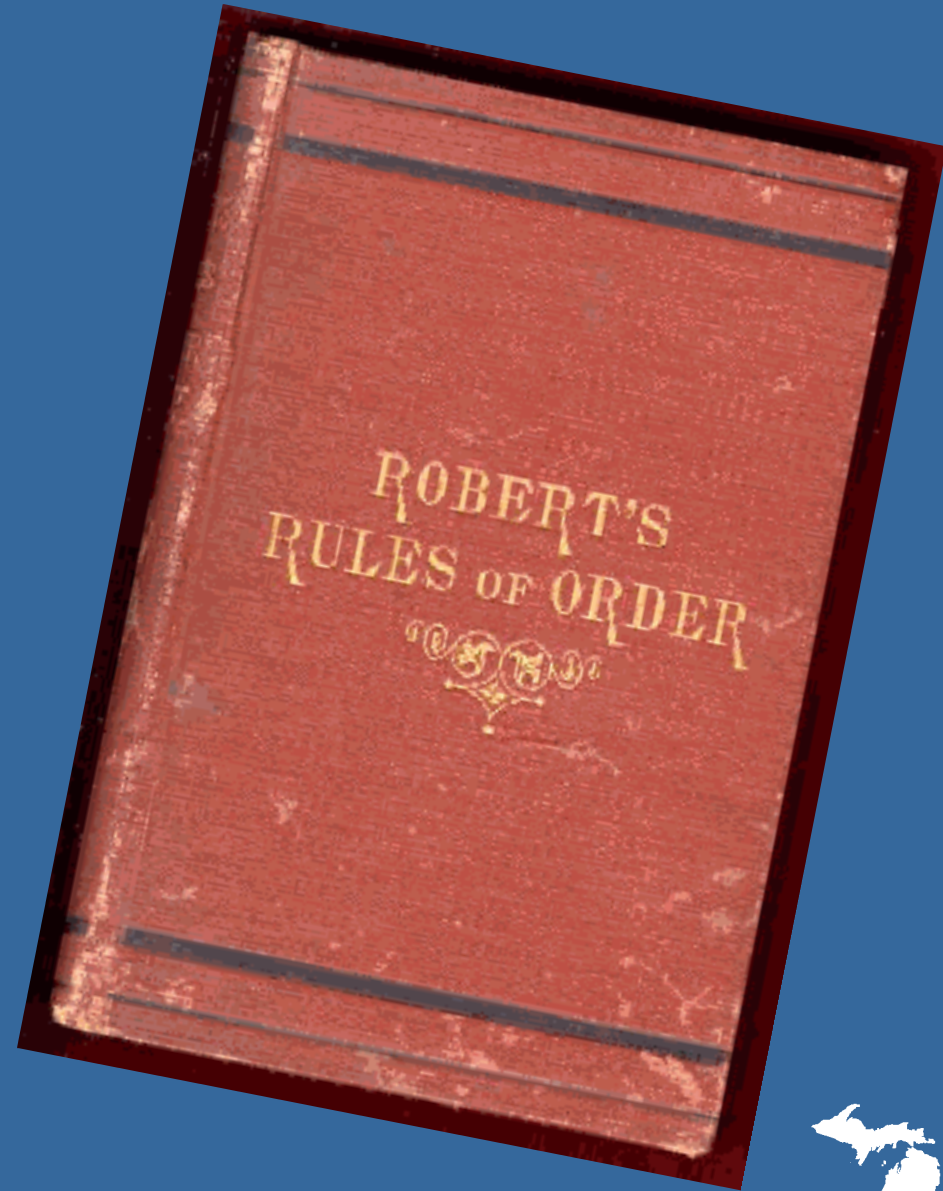
- Federal & State Constitutions
- State Laws, Court Interpretations
- Bylaws
- Board Rules/Standing Rules
- Parliamentary authority →
- Custom

Rules of procedure used to govern the meeting on questions not covered by any of the preceding rules.

# What is in your adopted rules?

- Review annually
- Lots of examples
- Use a committee
- Things to include:
  - Order of business
  - Use of consent agenda
  - Committees and process
  - Specific rules that deviate from RONR:
    - Time limits for speaking (# and duration)
    - Informal discussion allowed without motion on the floor
    - Time limits on reconsidering a motion
  - Conflict of interest process
  - Public comment rules
- What has been helpful to your board?

# Consensus or Tyranny?



# Basic Parliamentary Principles

- The organization is paramount
- All members have equal rights
- An established minimum number of members must be present in order to transact business
- Only one main proposal may be before the assembly at a time and only one member may have the floor at a time

# Basic Parliamentary Principles

- Full debate should be allowed before the vote on a main motion, except when the members, by motion, impose limitations
- A question, once settled may not be presented again in the same form, in the same session, except by reconsideration

# Basic Parliamentary Principles

- A majority vote decides a question except where basic rights of members are involved or the rules of the organization take precedence, then a larger vote is required
- What are the two most basic rights of a member of a deliberative assembly?
  - Right to debate
  - Right to vote

# Basic Parliamentary Principles

- Silence gives consent
- A proposition or issue is the item under discussion, never the person who introduced it.

# 6 steps in handling a motion

1. A member is recognized by the chair and states a motion
2. A different member seconds the motion
3. The chair states the motion
4. Members discuss the motion
5. Chair “puts” the question to a vote
6. Chair announces result of the vote



# Main Motion

- the business at hand

“I move to...” ,  
“I move that...”

---

Main Motion

Can you interrupt a speaker to make this motion? **No**

Does this motion need a second? **Yes**

Is this motion debatable? **Yes**

Is this motion amendable? **Yes**

What type of vote does it need to pass? **Majority**

May it be reconsidered? **Yes**

# Main Motion

Made orally, or in writing depending on the length, complexity or importance

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

The maker always gets first right to speak to the motion so that they can explain what they are proposing

In small groups there is often discussion prior to making a main motion and RONR says that is ok.

# 6 steps in handling a motion

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# 6 steps in handling a motion

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

“I move to...” ,

“I move that...”

“I move the adoption of the following resolution:”



# 6 steps in handling a motion

2. A different member seconds the motion.

“Second”

or

“I second the motion.”

# 6 steps in handling a motion

3. The chair states the motion:

*“It is moved and seconded...”*

At this point the motion belongs to whom?

4. Members discuss/debate the motion

relevant

To the point

All debate must be germane to the motion.

pertinent



# Rules of Debate

- All remarks must be addressed to and/or through the chair
- The maker of the motion is entitled to speak first
- All remarks must be confined to the pending question
- A member may not speak against his own motion but may vote against it
- No member is entitled to speak a second time while any other member wishes to make a first speech
- Personal comments should be avoided
- No member may comment adversely on any prior act of the board not under consideration
- No person should speak a second time while any other person wishes to speak for a first time
- The chair shall make an effort to alternate between supporting and opposing arguments

# 6 steps in handling a motion

5. Chair “puts” the question (takes the vote)

*“The question is on the adoption of the motion to...”*

*“Those in favor, say Yes.  
Those opposed, say No.”*

# Taking the vote

- Voice
- Rising vote
- Show of hands
- A count
- Ballot or roll call
- Unanimous Consent

“All in favor say  
Aye. All opposed  
say no sign.”

# What kind of vote is required?

- Majority
- Majority of those elected (and serving)
- 2/3
- 3/4
- Roll call, Unanimous Consent

# 6 steps in handling a motion

## 6. Chair announces result of the vote

*“The motion is adopted”*

*...the chair instructs staff to prepare the contracts. The next item on the agenda is...”*

*“The motion is lost” ... The next item on the agenda is...”*

# 6 steps in handling a motion

1. A member is recognized by the chair and states a motion
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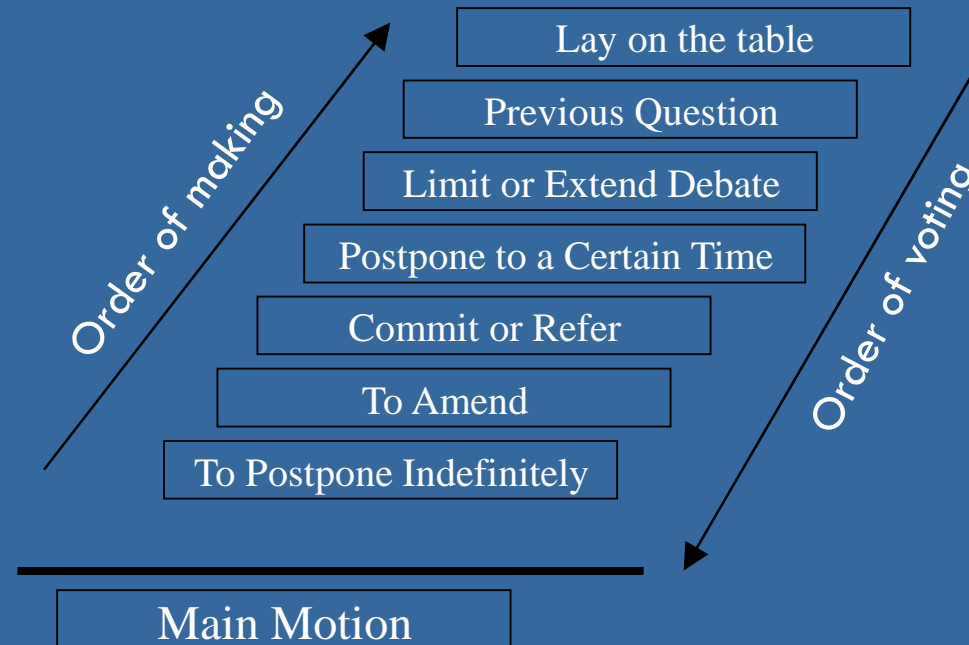
# There is a motion for that!

Members have the right to conclude their debate with a higher-ranking motion than the one pending.

# Subsidiary motions

RONR In Brief pp126-127

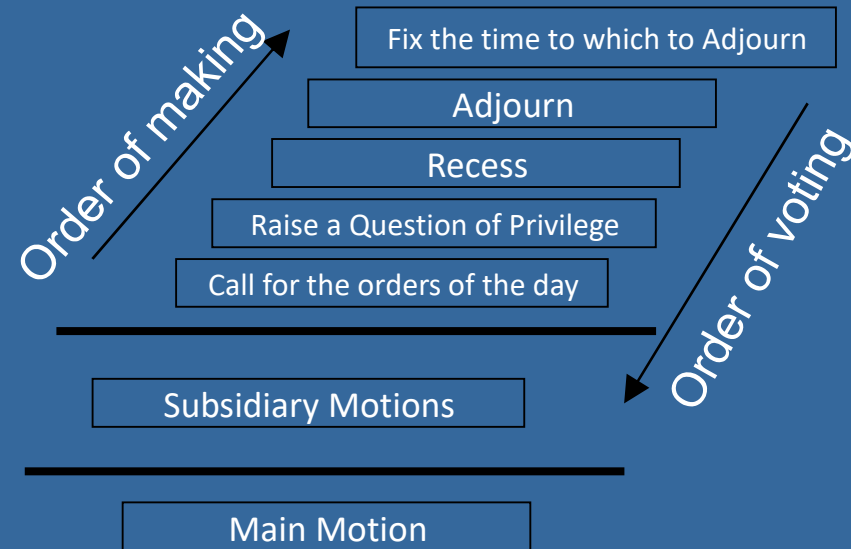
- Do something to the main motion
- Have a rank and order
- Vary in characteristics because of purpose





# Privileged Motions

- Have a rank and order
- Answer immediate questions of process
- Do not relate to pending business
- Rank higher than subsidiary because of their immediacy
- Are not debatable in most circumstances



# Incidental Motions

Deal with matters of procedure related to pending business

Many allow a member to interrupt a speaker

Most are undebatable

- Point of order - That's against the rules!
- Parliamentary inquiry - I have a question about meeting process or rules
- Request for information - I need clarification before I vote
- Appeal from the decision made by the Chair
- Suspend the rules – put aside a parliamentary or standing rule in order to do something different in the meeting.

Motions that bring a question again before the assembly (enable an assembly to change its mind)

- Reconsider
- Rescind/Amend Something Previously Adopted
- Take from the table
- Discharge a committee

# Subsidiary Motions you need to know more about...

- To amend a motion
  - insert or add
  - strike words
  - strike & insert words
- To postpone or refer
  - To another meeting
  - To a committee
- Stop Debate and vote
  - Previous question
  - Call the question

# Avoid the use of “Table”

- Instead:
  - Determine why you are “tabling”
  - Make the motion to postpone (and set the time for the issue to come back)
  - Make the motion to refer to a committee (provide instructions to the committee)
  - If you are attempting to “kill” a motion
    - Use postpone indefinitely – followed by previous question
    - Ask yourself why the issue is before the group and WHY are you trying to “kill it” - is it good policy to do that?

# Consent Agenda/Consent calendar

- Part of the order of business
- To be effective takes a prepared board
- Items are removed at the request of one member
- Might contain
  - Minutes
  - Staff or committee reports
  - Tributes or resolutions
  - Items ready for final discussion and adoption moved over from committee or past meetings

# Minutes

- Technically: What was done not what was said
- Committee Meetings & work session meetings need to help group maintain continuity of conversation and assignment (call them “notes”)
- Planning Commissions and ZBA make administrative decisions – legal requirements exist and require more detail (if it isn’t in the minutes it didn’t happen)

# The “power of one”

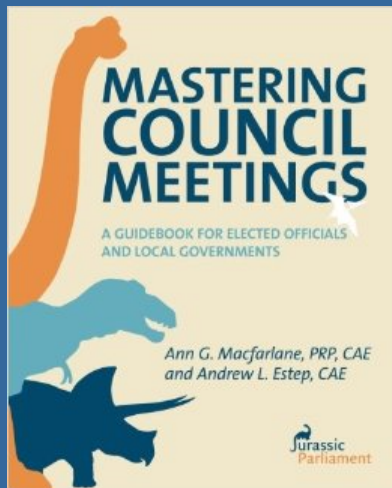
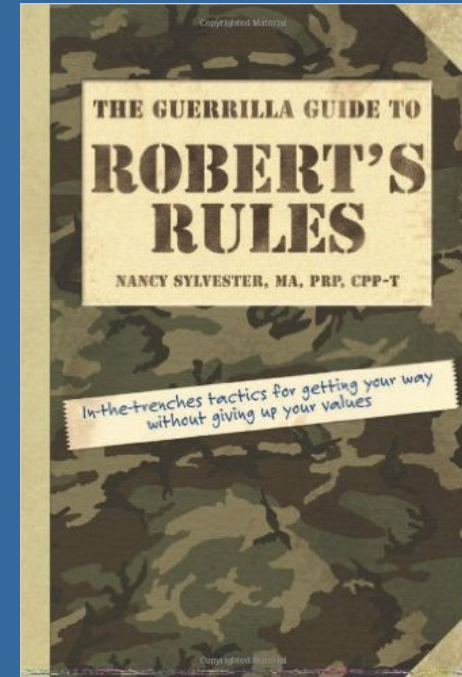
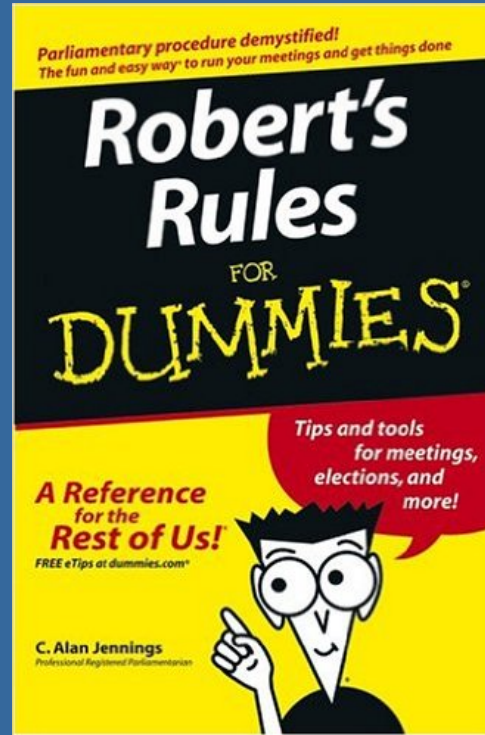
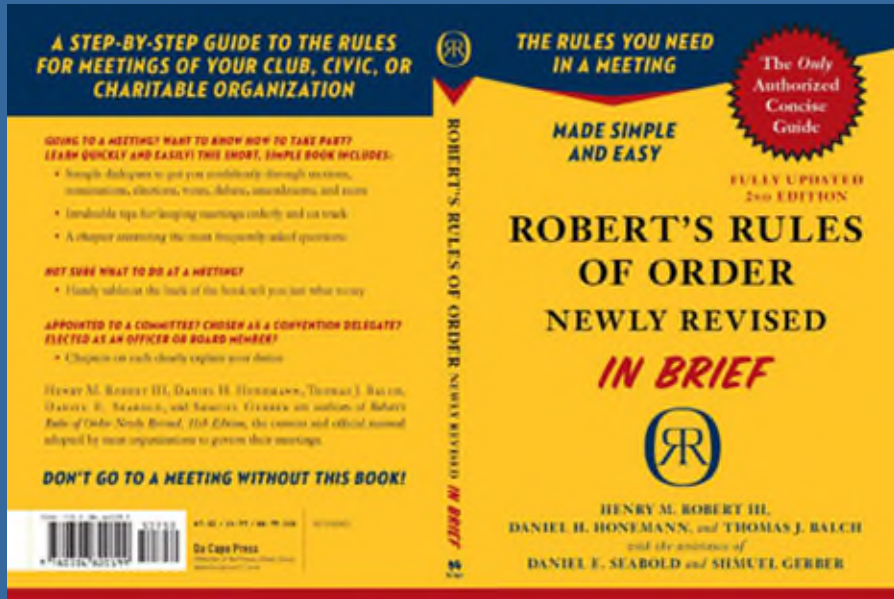
- Request for information/Parliamentary Inquiry
- Point of Order
- Call for the orders of the day
- Call for a separate vote of an independent subject included in a single motion (consent agenda)
- Make a quorum
- Change a vote
- Object to unanimous consent





[michiganmayors.org](http://michiganmayors.org)





National Association of Parliamentarians  
(NAP)

[www.parliamentarians.org](http://www.parliamentarians.org)

[michiganmayors.org](http://michiganmayors.org)



# Resources

- Roberts Rules of Order 12th Edition
- Roberts Rules of Order 12th Edition, In Brief – 3rd Edition
- Michigan State Association of Parliamentarians [www.michiganparliamentarian.org](http://www.michiganparliamentarian.org)
- National Association of Parliamentarians [www.parliamentarians.org](http://www.parliamentarians.org)
- Roberts Rules Association [www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com)



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**Thank you and good luck!**



## Business in small boards (& committees)

- Members not required to obtain the floor
- The chairman can speak, make motions and vote
- No limit to how many times a person can speak
- Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion pending
- Motions to close or limit debate should not be entertained
- Motions don't need a second