



BY-LAW: V. General Meetings

Adopted September 22, 1976

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RULES OF ORDER

The Chair has the right to expect that his position will be treated with the respect due to himself, not as a person, but as a symbol of the authority of the Association.

In addition to his duties, the Chair also possesses certain rights. One of them is that all discussion must be addressed to him and all questions directed through him. No one may take the floor until “recognized” by the Chair. The Chair rules on the validity of any disputed point of procedure and his ruling is final unless repealed by a majority of the members. He casts the deciding vote in the event of a tie.

In all procedural matters, the following order of precedence shall apply:

1. WAPSO Constitution
2. WAPSO By-Laws
3. WAPSO Rules of Order (based on Robert’s Rules of Order)

The rules and order of business governing meetings shall be:

1. The President, or in his absence or at his request, the First Vice-President or Second Vice-President shall take the chair at the time specified, at all regular and special meetings. In the absence of the President or his designated representative, a chair shall be chosen by the Executive Committee.
2. When a member wishes to speak he shall first be recognized by the Chair and shall confine his remarks to the question at issue.
3. Speeches shall be limited to five minutes except by permission of the Chair.
4. A member shall not speak more than once upon a subject until all who wish to speak have had an opportunity to do so.
5. A member shall not interrupt another except it be to call to a point of order.
6. If a member be called to order he shall, at the request of the Chair, take his seat until the question of order has been decided.
7. Should a member persist in unparliamentary conduct, the Chair may ask him to withdraw from the meeting.

8. When a question is put, the Chair, after announcing the question, shall ask: “Are you ready for the question?” If no member wishes to speak, the question shall be put.
9. Questions may be decided by a show of hands, or a standing vote on the basis of one vote per member. A ballot vote may be demanded by two-thirds of the members present. In a ballot vote each member shall be entitled to one vote.
10. Any member may appeal the decision of the Chair. The Chair shall then put the question thus: “Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained?” The question shall not be debatable, except that the Chair may make an explanation of his decision.
11. The Chair shall have the same rights as other members to vote on any question. In case of a tie vote, he shall cast the deciding vote.
12. When the previous question is moved, no discussion or amendment of either motion is permitted. If the majority vote that “the question be now put”, the original motion has to be put without debate. If the motion to put the question is defeated, discussion will continue on the original motion.
13. A member shall not move a motion to refer back after he has spoken on the question at issue.
14. A motion to refer back is not debatable and when properly seconded, the question shall be immediately put to the meeting.
15. When a question is pending before the membership, no motion shall be in order, except – to refer – for the previous question – to postpone for a definite time. If any of the foregoing motions is negated, it cannot be renewed until after an intermediate proceeding.
16. A motion may be reconsidered provided notice of motion is given for consideration at the next meeting, and said notice of motion is supported by two-thirds of the members.

BASIC RULES OF ORDER

THE MOTION

The motion is the foundation of all rules of order. Without a motion, no report can be dealt with, no new business introduced, no discussion closed, no meeting adjourned. Yet, in spite of its importance, it is a simple thing. Complications arise in amendments, and amendments to amendments.

The motion occurs generally during new business. For example, Mr. Smith is recognized by the Chair and rises to speak. He says:

“Mr. Chairman, I move that this Association hire a consultant to assist in preparations for the upcoming negotiations.”

He sits down. Another member seconds the motion, simply saying: “I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.”

The Chair then says: “It has been moved and seconded that this Association hire a consultant to assist in preparations for the upcoming negotiations. Is there any discussion?”

(It is important to note that a motion cannot be considered unless it is seconded. This is based on the assumption that an idea that does not appeal to more than one member is not worth discussing.)

The Chair should give the floor to Mr. Smith to enable him to give his reasons for making the motion. Others then follow. When discussion has ended, the Chair re-states the motion and obtains the meeting's decision, as follows: "All those in favour of the motion that this Association hire a consultant to assist in preparations for the upcoming negotiations, please signify by raising their right hand."

A show of hands results and the Chair observes how the members voted. He then says: "All those opposed will signify in the same manner." He again observes the vote and announces "The motion is carried" or "The motion is lost", whichever way the vote went.

Occasionally, the mover or seconder of a motion changes his mind and wishes to withdraw his motion. This can be done only with the unanimous consent of the meeting. Once a motion is passed and seconded it becomes the property of the meeting.

A motion which has been defeated cannot be brought up again, even if differently worded, at the same meeting.

At any time during the discussion on a motion, except when someone actually has the floor, a member may ask that the text of the motion be read out by the Secretary. This is an important rule, and is thoroughly justifiable, especially when a motion is lengthy and complicated.

AMENDING THE MOTION

A motion, as originally proposed, will not always satisfy the meeting. Someone may feel that something should be added to or taken from the motion. This can be done by moving an amendment to the motion. It is important to remember that an amendment is in order only if it pertains to the motion. It may modify the motion but not radically alter or contradict it. A motion may be amended by:

1. Adding certain words;
2. Deleting certain words;
3. Deleting certain words and substituting or adding others.

To give examples in each case, amendments to the motion by Mr. Smith might be as follows:

1. "That the following words be inserted after the word 'negotiations': 'and to be the Chair of our Negotiating Team.' "
2. "That all the words following the word 'consultant' be struck out."
3. "That the word 'consultant' be struck out and the word 'lawyer' be substituted therefor."

An amendment is seconded in the same way as a motion. Discussion then follows on the amendment. In voting, the vote is taken first on the amendment.

Let us assume that the amendment was number (3) above. The Chair then says: "All those in favour of the amendment that the word 'consultant' be struck out and the word 'lawyer' be substituted therefor, please signify in the usual manner." If the amendment is carried, the

Chair then says: "All those in favour of the motion as amended please signify in the usual manner." The motion may then be carried as amended and the net result is that the Association will now have to hire a lawyer, whose job it will be to assist in preparations for the upcoming negotiations. If the motion is defeated, then the whole matter is dropped. If one amendment is defeated, it is in order to move another.

AMENDMENT TO THE AMENDMENT

A member may not always be satisfied with the amendment under consideration and may wish to improve it by moving an amendment to the amendment. That is, he will move that certain words be added to or struck from the amendment. Since this requires much more careful handling than an amendment alone, one or two examples are given in detail.

Suppose a motion is moved and seconded that "this Association rent larger office space." After some discussion, someone moves an amendment that "and such office space shall include a coffee room." This, too, is seconded, and discussion then proceeds on the amendment. Soon after, a member gets up and moves an amendment to the amendment that the following words be added to the amendment: "in which only coffee shall be available." This is duly seconded.

Here is the situation the Chair is now confronted with. There is a main motion to rent larger office space. Some members apparently want to have a larger office, but want a coffee room as part of it. Other members want to make sure that only coffee will be served in, if there is to be larger office space at all with a coffee room in it.

The Chair puts the amendment to the amendment to a vote first. Let us assume it is carried. The Chair then says: "All those in favour of the amendment as amended, please signify." If the amendment as amended is defeated, there is still the motion to be voted on by itself. (After all, the members may not want a larger office at all.) However, if the amended amendment is carried, the Chair says: "All those in favour of the motion as amended and sub-amended, please signify." Those voting in favour of the motion would be voting for a larger office with strings attached. Those voting against might either be voting against have larger office space under any circumstances, or might be expressing opposition to having an office which includes a coffee room. If the motion as amended and sub-amended is carried, then the Association gets a larger office which includes a coffee room in which only coffee is available. If the motion is defeated, the whole matter is dropped.

If the original amendment to the amendment had been defeated, it would have been in order to move another one. For example, someone might have moved that the following words be added: "in which only non-alcoholic beverages be available for members and guests."

It is clear that the purpose of the amendment to the amendment is the same as of the amendment. It is to clarify the proposal already before the meeting, or to make some compromise arrangement in the interest of gaining support for it.

Sometimes the motion is amended and sub-amended to reduce or to increase the Association's obligation under it. For example, suppose the motion is that "this Association raise its dues to \$6.00 per person per month". Someone who thinks the idea all right but the amount too high, may offer an amendment reducing the amount to \$5.00 and someone else may move a sub-amendment that it be reduced further to \$4.00. The wording of the

Amendment and the sub-amendment would be along these lines: “That the sum \$6.00 (or \$5.00) be deleted and the sum \$4.00 be substituted therefor.”

It would appear that in such a motion, carrying the sub-amendment should carry the main motion, since the principle remains unchanged, only the amount having been altered. However, this is not so. Some members may choose to vote for the sub-amendment as the least objectionable proposal and then vote against the main motion because they don't like the whole idea. The members are entitled to vote not only on the changes in detail which the amendment and sub-amendment would make but on the principle contained in the main motion. The Chair is thus duty-bound to put the vote on this kind of amended and sub-amended motion in the same way as in the previous example.

TO RECONSIDER A MOTION

The rules of order of the Association provide for reconsideration of a motion.

A motion to reconsider is in order provided the mover of the motion voted with the majority and provided that notice is given for reconsideration at the next meeting. Such notice of motion must get the support of at least two-thirds of the members present.

The notice of motion is brought up at the next meeting under new business. It is debatable and subject to the dilatory motions referred to in the following pages. This means that it would be in order to move that the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, that consideration be postponed to a specified time or that it be referred to a committee.

CLOSING THE DISCUSSION

Debate on a motion need not necessarily continue until the members have completely exhausted their oratorical powers. There are various means of closing discussion which are effective, reasonable and democratic. Each of them requires the consent of either a majority or two-thirds of those present, so that, unless there is obvious abuse of them, they are legitimate devices for expediting business:

TO LAY ON THE TABLE

To move “that the question be laid on the table” is one way of halting debate. It is a means of postponing a decision, indefinitely if need be, rather than of closing it by a decisive vote. Such a motion is neither debatable nor amendable. When it is moved and seconded, the Chair must immediately put it to a vote. If it is carried, the subject is closed. A simple majority is sufficient. To lay on the table is a device often used to “kill” some silly or unpopular proposal without discussion or vote. It must be noted, however, that a piece of business so disposed of can be revived if it is subsequently moved and seconded that the matter laid on the table be taken up. In such an event, a vote is taken and, if carried, the subject is reopened.

MOVING THE PREVIOUS QUESTION

To move the previous question is a familiar method of trying to end a debate and obtain a vote. This motion is neither debatable or amendable.

If a motion “that the previous question be put” is moved and seconded, all discussion must come to an end, and the Chair must put this motion to a vote. If carried, he then proceeds to take a vote on the main motion, i.e., the question which was being discussed. If the motion to

put the previous question is defeated, debate may be resumed on the main motion as though no interruption had occurred.

The previous question may be moved at any time unless a motion to amend has been made but it cannot be moved by a member who has spoken on the main motion. A simple majority is sufficient.

TO POSTPONE TO A SPECIFIC TIME

As may be seen from its name, this is a motion to put off further discussion and decision for a period of time, whether until later in the same meeting, or until a certain date. As with the two previous types of motion, if carried, it means closure of debate. A simple majority is sufficient.

This motion may be amended as to the time specified in it. It may be debated but only with regard to the advisability of postponement, and no reference may be made to the main motion. It is subject to a motion to put the previous question. A two-thirds vote is required to re-open the question before the specified time.

TO COMMIT (TO REFER)

To commit is simply to refer the business under discussion to a committee. This is generally done when the business seems too complicated or insufficiently prepared for proper study by the meeting. A subject may be referred or committed for further study, for re-wording, for reconsideration, etc., and instructions given to the committee to report back at a future meeting. If carried, this motion shuts off debate. It may be amended by altering the committee or giving it instructions. It is not debatable.

PRIVILEGED MOTIONS

In addition to the various types of motions dealt with hitherto, there are a few motions which are referred to as “privileged” because they take precedence over all other motions. This means that they may be introduced at any time during the meeting and take priority over everything else:

TO ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn is just what it says. It is neither debatable nor amendable, and requires only a simple majority to carry it.

Normally, a motion for adjournment is made at the conclusion of all business. It is in that case, merely a formality. There are times, however, when it may be moved before the conclusion of the business on the agenda. For example, a meeting may reach a deadlock on a certain issue, and adjournment may seem the best way out; or some unusual occurrence may make the members’ presence elsewhere urgent (a fire in the building, an accident, etc.).

POINT OF PRIVILEGE

It is the duty of the Chair to see that no member or the meeting itself is referred to improperly. This includes name-calling or insinuations reflecting on the member’s character or intentions. The Chair should rule such remarks out of order and advise the speaker to refrain from any further remarks of this nature. If the Chair, however, is remiss in his duty, the member aggrieved or any other may rise to a point of privilege and draw the Chair’s attention to the breach in procedure.

A point of privilege is always in order except when adjournment has been moved and seconded. It does not require a seconder and may be made even when another member has the floor. As in the case of the point of order, the Chair must rule on its validity and his ruling is subject to appeal.

POINT OF ORDER

No Chair is infallible, and the point of order is the device available to the members to draw the Chair's attention to an irregularity of procedure. A point of order may be raised:

1. If discussion seems to be getting away from the topic in the main or subsidiary motion. For example, the motion may be to have a social. During the discussion someone may suggest the evening classes be started for new members. The Chair should rule this out of order himself, but if he has not been paying attention, a member may rise on a point of order, and draw the Chair's attention to the irregularity.
2. If the laws of the Association are being infringed.
3. If the agenda, or standing orders, are being ignored. For example, a motion to buy a movie projector is out of order during old business.
4. If a member tries to speak on a privileged motion which does not permit debate. For example, a motion to adjourn.

A point of order may be raised even if someone else has the floor. A member has merely to state: "Mr. Chairman, I rise to a point of order." The Chair then says: "Mr. So-and-so, state your point of order." The member makes his point and sits down. It is then up to the Chair to rule whether or not the point is well taken.

APPEAL FROM THE CHAIR

Members may not always agree with the ruling of the Chair. If a member feels that way, he may appeal against the ruling. A member gets up and says: "I appeal the decision of the Chair." Another member says: "I second the appeal."

Under these rules, an appeal from the Chair is not debatable. The Chair may explain his decision. Otherwise, he simply puts the question: "Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained?" A vote is taken and a simple majority is enough to sustain or overrule the Chair's decision. If the vote is against the Chair, his ruling is rescinded and the debate goes on.

POINT OF INFORMATION

This is a method of directing a question to a speaker. It should be used only to obtain information, but is often abused by members asking frivolous question, or questions which are intended to convey an opinion rather than to obtain information. Neither the Chair nor the speaker is obliged to answer a point of information. If, however, the speaker is willing or able to do so, he must answer by directing himself to the Chair. The Chair is the intermediary for both parties. Members may not address one another during a meeting. All discussion is addressed to Chair.

TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Occasionally it may be necessary to alter the agenda of a meeting. An important report, for example, may be scheduled to be given late in the evening, but the member who makes the report must leave soon to go on the night shift. A motion to suspend the rules in order to

permit him to make his report may be made to overcome this difficulty. Such a motion is neither debatable nor amendable, and requires unanimous consent. At the conclusion of the member's report, the meeting goes on as before.

PRECEDENCE

It will be seen from the foregoing that some motions take priority over others. In other words, they have precedence in procedure. A motion to adjourn, for example, takes precedence over all other motions. Similarly, a motion to postpone takes precedence over a motion to amend. Following is the order of precedence for the more important motions or points:

1. Adjourn
2. Point of Privilege
3. Appeal from the Chair
4. Point of Order
5. Withdrawal of Motion
6. Suspension of Rules
7. Lay on the Table
8. Previous Question
9. Limit or Extend Limits of Debate
10. Postpone to Definite Time
11. Refer or Commit
12. Amend
13. Main Motion
14. Reconsideration