

Great School Board Meetings

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Webinar



Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Great School Board Meetings

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Jurassic Parliament

Utah School Boards Association
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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Our topics

- I. Introduction
- II. Meeting discussion, Point of Order and Appeal
- III. How to do this?
- IV. Motions and Amendments
- V. Authority and role of chair
- VI. Conclusion

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

I. Introduction

Why are we here?

To invigorate you to run
great school board meetings

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

After taking this training you will be able to:

1. Describe how the authority of the group is more important than any single individual, even the chair.
2. Make motions and amendments.
3. Choose your board's discussion rules to improve efficiency.
4. Make the personal commitment necessary to run effective meetings.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Disclaimer

The material contained in this presentation is based upon the principles and practices of parliamentary procedure. I am not an attorney and nothing in this presentation constitutes legal advice.


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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Solution

Adopt common guidelines
as a group
and make a personal and
whole-hearted commitment
to following them.

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Personal? Whole-hearted?

Emotion is the artesian spring
of our being.
It is far more important
than procedure.

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I think, therefore I am.
Rene Descartes, French philosopher

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I feel, therefore I am.
Dacher Keltner, American psychologist

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Your personal commitment
is essential
to achieving the goal
of better meetings.

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules


**SAMPLE DISCUSSION GUIDELINES
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

Permission is granted to modify these guidelines as your organization prefers. Note that these guidelines refer to discussion within the body, not to comment by the public.

1. The chair of the meeting runs the meeting in the service of the body. The chair serves as the facilitator for the meeting and has the primary responsibility for maintaining order. The chair may take part in discussion, but may not answer each individual speaker back, nor lecture or criticize the members. When discussing substantive questions, the chair will usually speak and vote, if entitled to do so, after others have spoken.

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

**II. Meeting discussion, Point of
Order, and Appeal**

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Principle of Equality

All members have equal rights,
privileges and obligations.

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Key Point

Discussion in board meetings is
NOT A CONVERSATION.
It is **DEBATE** and has its own rules.

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Rules for debate

- No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.

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Rules for debate

- **No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.**

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Why don't we follow this rule?

- Boards tend to discuss their affairs in conversational mode.
- In conversations, dominant people tend to dominate.
- Agreeable people tend to let them.
- Must have a structure to make sure that everyone has an equal chance to speak.
- This is both fair and efficient.

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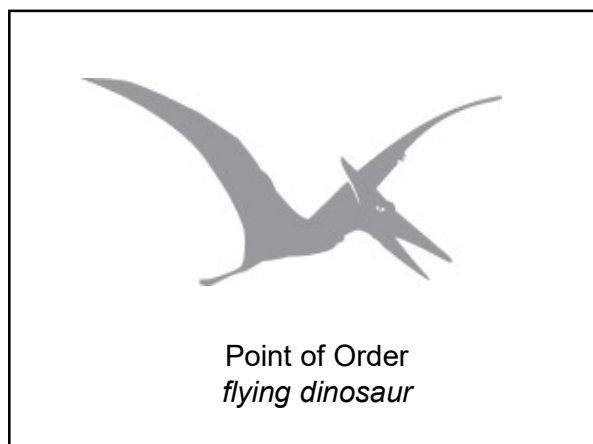
Point of Order

flying dinosaur

- When **ANOTHER MEMBER** breaks one of the rules, a member may make a **POINT OF ORDER**.
- Chair rules on the point.

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Point of Order

- A motion claiming that a procedural mistake has been made.
- According to Robert, can be made only by a member.
- We recommend authorizing key staff to do so also.
- Public may not raise a Point of Order.
- **May interrupt a speaker if necessary.**
- **Must be timely – made at the time of the offense.**

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Four steps to process Point of Order

1. Member: *Point of Order!*
2. Chair: *State your point.*
3. Member: *That remark breaks our rule against interrupting.*
4. Chair: *The point is well taken. Members will refrain from interrupting each other.*

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Language tip

- Use the “third person” to keep things neutral and lessen conflict.
- Note that the chair states the general rule.
- The chair is speaking on behalf of the rules of procedure.
- Do NOT say, “You are out of order” or “You made a mistake.”

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Chair doesn't have to say “Point of Order”

- The chair has the duty of maintaining order and decorum, so doesn't need to say “Point of Order.”
- Just needs to take appropriate action.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

When in doubt, ask the group!

- Chair can always ask the group to decide if a point of order is well-taken (correct) or not.

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Chair subject to same rules

- If the chair breaks one of the rules, a member may raise a Point of Order.
- The chair rules on own behavior, which seems odd, but is the way the system works.

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Don't weaponize Point of Order!

- You may interrupt to make a Point of Order.
- Sometimes you have to.
- Usually it is NOT NECESSARY TO INTERRUPT, and you should hold back.
- Usually it is best NOT TO CALL A POINT OF ORDER FOR GERMANENESS.

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More points

- Point of Order does not count as a turn in discussion.
- Once the chair has ruled on a Point of Order, the only allowable form of discussion is to appeal the ruling.

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Appeal

The most important motion in all of
Robert's Rules –
and the least known!

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Chair's rulings can be appealed

- The CHAIR enforces order and decorum.
- The GROUP is the final authority.
- Any TWO MEMBERS can appeal a ruling of the chair (one member appeals and one seconds the appeal).
- EXCEPTION: If the ruling is a matter on which there cannot be two reasonable interpretations, the ruling cannot be appealed.

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Process Appeal

1. Member A: *Appeal!*
2. Member B: *Second!*
3. Chair: *The chair's ruling has been appealed. The members will decide. All those who believe the ruling should be sustained, please say "Aye."*
4. Members in favor: *"Aye!"*

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Process Appeal

5. Chair: *All those who believe the ruling should NOT be sustained, please say "No."*
6. Members opposed: *"No!"*
7. Chair: *The ayes have it and the ruling is sustained, OR The noes have it and the ruling is not sustained.*

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Point of Order and Appeal are
the heart of democracy



In our view, the motions Point of Order and Appeal are the heart of our democracy. They provide the mechanism to stop a disastrous chair who is acting like a "boss." They are essential for every level.

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III. How to do this?

- Seek recognition before speaking.
- No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.
- No interrupting (in general).
- No sidebar conversations or whispering.
- Courtesy and respect are always required.

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Seeking recognition

- **Members must seek recognition from the presider before speaking.**

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Seeking recognition

- Raise your hand and wait to speak until the presider (chair) calls your name, nods at you, or gives some other sign that you have permission to speak (you "have the floor")
- Online, you can use the "raise hand" function or raise your physical hand.
- On the telephone, for a Zoom meeting you can press *9 (star nine).

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Duty to remain silent

- When you have not been recognized, you have a duty to remain silent.
- The exception is a Point of Order when essential.

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Rights and Responsibilities of the Member



Weldon L. Merritt, PRP, CPP, has graciously authorized Jurassic Parliament to publish this listing of the rights and responsibilities of ordinary members of an organization. All citations are taken from *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition (RONR)*.

Please note that neither the list of member rights nor the list of member responsibilities is intended to be exhaustive. In addition, neither the rights nor the responsibilities are necessarily absolute in every instance. For example, the right to debate may be cut off or limited by motions for the Previous Question or to Limit Debate. And, while a member should not vote on a matter of direct personal interest, under Robert's Rules no member

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No one may speak a second time...

- until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.

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HOW to do this?

- Chair can keep track of who has spoken and who wishes to speak, using a chart.
- Chair can empower vice-chair to do this – good training for them.
- Use the “round robin.”

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A great method – the “round robin”

- The chair goes around the table, asking each person in turn for their opinion. People may pass and speak at the end.
- Important to have a pencil in hand, to jot down points or questions for when your turn arrives.
- Chair must wait their turn also!
- This rule applies to questions and answers also, and to discussions with staff.
- Don't let any two people “hijack” the meeting.

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SPEAKING CHART

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	etc.
Garcia							
Jackson							
Juma							
Lee							
Patel							
Smith							
Young							

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Interrupting

- When a member has the floor, they have the right to speak until they have completed their comments.
- Members may not interrupt each other.
- Chair may interrupt members when necessary to bring them to order.
- Members may interrupt to make a Point of Order when essential.

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No sidebars or texting

- No “sidebar conversations” or whispering.
- No chat between members during meeting.
- No texting to each other or people outside during meetings.
- No posting on social media during meetings.

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Frustrating

- Structuring discussion in these ways can be frustrating.
- Council members sometimes say, “I wish we could just hash it out and have a free-form discussion.”
- The Open Meetings Act, and the press of time, mean that usually, this won’t serve your council well.
- However...

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An occasional exception...

- Sometimes there is benefit in the conversational style or “informal discussion.”
- This provides a sparky flow of ideas that can be beneficial.
- It can be useful at study sessions (Committee of the Whole), or in committee meetings.
- Do not make the conversational style your ordinary or “default” style of discussion.

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Fundamental guideline

Courtesy and respect are required.

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- It is a basic principle of parliamentary procedure that debate must be “germane” (relevant) to the topic at hand.
- Certain kinds of remarks are inappropriate because they are not relevant to the discussion.
- Therefore, courtesy and respect are required.

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These remarks are inappropriate

1. Personal remarks about others (except for conflict of interest issues)
2. Discourteous remarks – insulting language, attacks
3. Inflammatory language
4. Criticizing past actions of the group (unless subject is under discussion, or member is about to propose a change)
5. Remarks that are not germane (relevant) to the discussion

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Inappropriate Remarks on Local Government Councils



If you serve as an elected official on a local government council or board, you should know the types of remarks that are inappropriate during discussion at a meeting. Robert's Rules of Order and the common parliamentary law it is based on require that:

- Members of a council or board must be courteous to one another.

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Important note

- We are speaking here about discussion within board meetings.
- These prohibitions DO NOT APPLY to the public when they are giving public comment.

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Comment vs. disruption

- Attendees do not have the right to DISRUPT the meeting.
- In general, the courts have found that mere words do not constitute disruption.
- If a free speech issue comes to court, often the local government loses the case.
- Be prepared with an action plan in case of difficulties. Consult with your attorney and staff.

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Guidelines for Public Comment in Local Government



The public comment period is an essential part of local government meetings. These are our guidelines for public comment periods in local government. They refer to ordinary business and work or study meetings of councils, boards and committees. Public hearings and quasi-judicial hearings are governed by different rules.

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IV. Motions and Amendments

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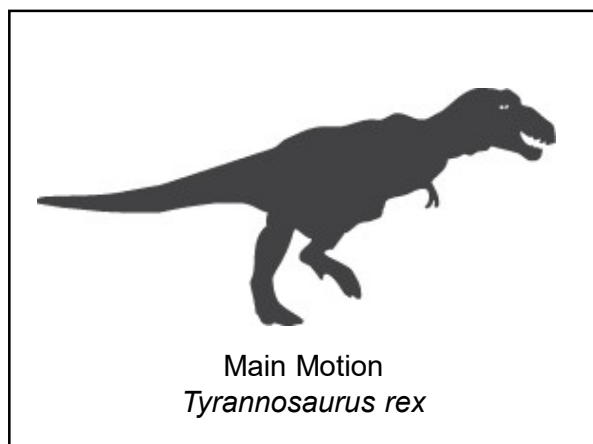
Main Motion

Tyrannosaurus rex

- A main motion is the usual and customary way to start the action of discussion and decision-making.
- For small boards (up to about 12 people), it is OK to have discussion before a motion is moved. Jurassic Parliament recommends moving the motion before discussing it whenever possible.

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Main Motion

We recommend this sequence for agenda bills:

- Staff presents proposal in writing and answers any questions. Each board member may ask one or two questions, then the next member has a turn.
- Motion is moved and seconded.
- Members discuss motion and may amend it.
- Members vote on motion.

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Characteristics of Main Motion

- It should be in writing.
- It should be **clear** and unambiguous. Don't say, "I move what he just said," or "so moved."
- It should be phrased in the grammatical **positive**.
- It must comply with the **bylaws** and the **procedural** law of the land.
- You can have only **one main motion** at a time.

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Fundamental guideline

One thing at a time.

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How do you introduce a Main Motion?

Three little words:

I move that...

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Member must be clear

- The member has the responsibility of formulating the motion.
- Don't mix up your ideas about the subject with the motion itself. Save those for debate.

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Our employees are really under a lot of stress right now, they're worried about an asteroid striking the earth and wiping us all out, if they had better nutrition, their performance would improve, so I think organic meals would be great.

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State the exact motion clearly

I move that the employee cafeteria will serve only organic vegetarian meals.

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You can request a moment to write it down

- May I have a few minutes to write this motion down?
- Chair may also request that motion be written.
- Can use 3-part motion forms.

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Second

Director Smith seconds the motion!

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Second the motion

- You "second a motion" to show that you would like to talk about it.
- No need to be recognized. Just give your name and call out "second."
- It is OK to second a motion you disagree with, if you want to explain why it's a bad idea.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

If no second...

- If there is no second, the chair says:
There being no second, the motion will not be considered.
- Then moves immediately to next item of business.

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Clerk should speak up

- If the clerk did not hear who seconded the motion, he or she should speak up.
The clerk inquires, who seconded this motion?
- In general, clerk **MUST** do this when lack of clarity prevents clerk from doing their job, and council must be patient!

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Eight steps to process a motion

1. **Member makes motion.**
2. Another member seconds motion.
3. **Presider states motion.**
4. Members debate and/or amend motion.
5. **Presider restates motion.**
6. Members vote on motion.
7. Presider states results of vote, whether motion passes or fails, and what happens next as a result of the vote.
8. Presider states next item of business.

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Discussion

- Chair: *It has been moved and seconded that the employee cafeteria will serve only organic vegetarian meals. The person who makes the motion has the right to speak first. Do you care to speak to your motion?*

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Discussion

Ginkgo farmer: *Well, the advantages of a plant-based diet have been established for a long time. I believe that this change will result in substantial improvements in employee health. In the long run, our employees will thank us for it.*

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Discussion

Social worker: *I think this is a terrible idea! If we do this, it's likely that some of our employees who are CARNIVORES will start eating the other employees.*

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DISCUSSION

- *[blah blah blah]*

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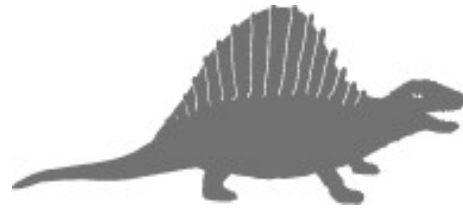
Amendment

Dimetrodon

- You amend a motion to improve it.
- The amendment applies to the main motion.
- The amendment must be germane (relevant).
- Anyone may move to amend, even the person who made the motion.

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Amendment

Dimetrodon

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Amendment

- The amendment changes the main motion.
- The amendment is processed using the same eight steps that we just saw for a main motion.

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Four ways to amend

1. Add or insert words.
2. Strike out words.
3. Strike out words and insert words in their place.
4. Substitute.

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Amendment

Dimetrodon

Dancer: *I move to amend the motion by adding the words "to be provided exclusively from local vendors."*

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If adopted, will read:

- The Employee Cafeteria will serve only organic vegetarian meals, **to be provided exclusively from local vendors.**

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Process Amendment

- The amendment is processed using the same eight steps that we just saw for a main motion.

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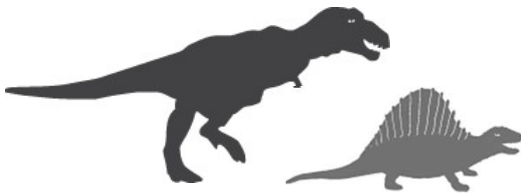
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The challenge is...

- We vote on amendments before we vote on the main motion, in order to make the main motion as good as possible - to **perfect** the motion.

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Amendment blocks Main Motion

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Fate of the Amendment

- People sometimes get confused, and don't realize that after voting on the amendment, the process continues.
- Once the fate of the amendment has been decided, debate continues on the main motion.

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More amendments are possible...

- Once you've dealt with one amendment, you may have others...
- provided that they apply to a *different aspect* of the main motion.
- It takes special actions (reconsideration) to go back and change something we've already amended.

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The process continues

- After all amendments have been processed, the body still must vote on the AMENDED MAIN MOTION.

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"Friendly amendment"

- Often misused.
- Handle this the same as any other amendment.
- Ask, "Is there a second?" etc.
- Once a motion has been stated by the chair, the maker and seconder have same rights as any other member.
- DO NOT turn to maker and seconder to ask if they accept the amendment – this give them improper power.

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Moving to vote

- When it seems that discussion is finished, chair asks, "Is there any further discussion?" or "Are you ready to vote?"

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Voice vote

- Chair repeats the motion.
- Chair says, "All those in favor say 'aye,' all those opposed say 'no.'"
- Chair announces results of vote, whether motion passes or fails, and what will happen next as a result of the vote.
- Chair announces next item of business.

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Voice vote

- *The "ayes" have it, the motion passes, and we will direct the cafeteria supervisor to create an organic vegetarian menu, OR*
- *The "noes" have it, the motion fails, and no change will be made to the cafeteria menu.*

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VOTING CHART

MOTION	#1			#2			Etc.
	Aye	No	Abstain	Aye	No	Abstain	
Name							
Garcia							
Jackson							
Juma							
Lee							
Patel							
Smith							
Young							

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Other points

- On a voice vote, the chair must call for the negative vote, even if it seems obvious that the motion is unanimous.
- Robert's Rules says that "to abstain" is to do nothing, and that the chair should not call for abstentions.
- However, local government bodies generally will call for abstentions, and that is fine.

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V. Authority of chair

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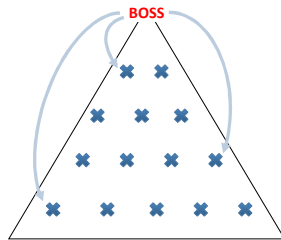
Note on role of chair

- Robert has different rules for small boards (up to about 12 people).
- In a small board, chair may make motions, discuss, and vote, unless law, regulations or bylaws say otherwise.
- We recommend chair exercise restraint by speaking and voting last, and refrain from making motions (this is a Jurassic Parliament suggestion).

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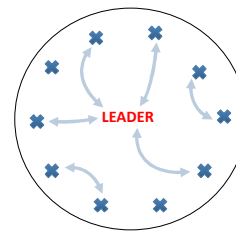
Accountability Hierarchy



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Voluntary Association



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Key Point

During meetings,
the chair controls the process
so the group can make the decisions.

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Fundamental guideline

During meetings,
the chair is the servant of the group,
and the group is the final authority.

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You have both types of structure

- The board forms a voluntary association.
- The superintendent and staff form an accountability hierarchy.

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Three things you must have:

1. Knowledge of how this system works
2. A majority on your council in favor of civility and this system.
3. The personal moxie, chutzpah, energy and drive to put it all into practice.

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Chair must control who speaks when

- The chair serves as a BENEVOLENT DICTATOR, enforcing the rules the group has chosen.
- Individual members must SEEK RECOGNITION before speaking.

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Chair controls who speaks when

- If someone speaks up without being recognized, STOP THEM.
- If someone speaks out of turn, INTERRUPT THEM.
- If someone makes insulting remarks, CUT THEM OFF.

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Duty to obey the chair

- Members have a duty to obey the chair's directions.
- If they disagree, they can't argue back.
- What can they do?
- They can raise a Point of Order or Appeal.

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Ultimately...

It is the group's call.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Guide your members by stating the obvious

- You as chair know more about the process than anybody else.
- You must repeat yourself, and state the obvious, to help bring everyone along.

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Keep things moving! Be brisk! Speak crisply!

- Well, I guess the agenda is adopted...*
- I'll kind of get a thumbs up from the board next week...*

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

CHEAT SHEET

LANGUAGE TIPS FOR MEETING MANAGEMENT

SITUATION	CHAIR CAN SAY
Call to order	<i>This meeting of the [name of organization] is called to order.</i>
Unanimous consent	<i>Without objection... if there is no objection...</i>
To begin discussion	<i>It has been moved and seconded that... Is there any discussion?</i>
If there is no second	<i>Since there is no second, the motion will not be considered.</i>
To end discussion	<i>Is there any further discussion? or Are you ready to vote?</i>
Process Point of Order	1. Member says, "Point of Order." 2. Chair says, "State your point." 3. Member explains issue. 4. Chair says, "The point is well taken," or "The point is not well taken."
When someone says "Point of Order" but can't explain what they mean	<i>What rule has been broken?</i>
Process Point of Information	1. Member says, "Point of Information." 2. Chair replies, "State your question."

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

When in doubt, ask the group!

- Chair can always ask the group to decide a question.

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- Chair: *The chair is uncertain about the word "malarkey." The chair will ask the board to decide this matter. All those who believe that the word "malarkey" is insulting, please say "aye."*
- Board members in favor: *Aye.*

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- Chair: *All those who believe the word "malarkey" is not insulting, please say "no."*
- Board members opposed: *No.*
- Chair: *The ayes have it and the word "malarkey" may not be used, OR the noes have it and the word "malarkey" is acceptable.*

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HOW to control?

The chair should never get excited.

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition, p. 456

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VI. Conclusion

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Keep in touch!

- You are invited to subscribe to our monthly newsletter.
- Subscribe to the blog on our website for insight, tips and inspiration, including our new advice column, "Dear Dinosaur."
- Email any time.

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MASTERING COUNCIL MEETINGS
 A GUIDEBOOK FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS
 Ann G. Macfarlane, PRP, CAE and Andrew L. Estep, CAE
Jurassic Parliament

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Essential Guidelines for School District Boards

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Follow these essential guidelines of parliamentary procedure to take the pain out of your meetings, hold productive discussions, and serve your school community better.

► **BASICS**
 A quorum must be present for business to be done. Usually a quorum means a majority (more than half) of the voting members in office.

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Jurassic Parliament Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Essential Parliamentary Procedure Guidelines for Junior & High Schools

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Next steps

1. Hold a board discussion on these ideas.
2. Develop your own board discussion guidelines.

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Next steps

3. Commit to using this information as a tool for better meetings, not a weapon.
4. Plan an “education minute” at the start of each meeting to remind, and set the tone.
5. Be kind to each other during meetings.

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

*Kindness is within our power.
Liking is not.*

Samuel Johnson, British author

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

*Serving on a local government board
is like being in a marriage
arranged by the citizens.*

Tami Tanoue, Colorado Intergovernmental
Risk Sharing Agency

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 Mastering meetings using Robert's Rules

Why are we here?

To invigorate you to run
great school board meetings

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Disclaimer: Nothing in this presentation constitutes business or legal advice.

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