

# Reference Materials

Ann G. Macfarlane

*Professional Registered Parliamentarian*



REFERENCE MATERIALS  
for  
Utah School Boards Association  
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## 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Member says, "Point of Order."</li> <li>2. Chair says, "State your point."</li> <li>3. Member explains issue.</li> <li>4. Chair says, "The point is well taken," or "The point is not well taken."</li> </ol>
When someone says "Point of Order" but can't explain what they mean	<i>What rule has been broken?</i>
Process Point of Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Member says, "Point of Information."</li> <li>2. Chair replies, "State your question."</li> <li>3. Member states question.</li> <li>4. Chair can respond three ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Respond yourself.</li> <li>▶ Ask someone else to respond.</li> <li>▶ Say, "We'll get back to you later."</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
When "Point of Information" is misused to give information	<i>What information does the member need in order to decide how to vote?</i>
If someone is dominating the meeting	<i>No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once. Does anyone else wish to speak on this topic?</i>
When comments are not germane (relevant)	<i>Members will kindly keep their remarks strictly to the topic under discussion.</i>
If people are whispering	<i>Members will kindly refrain from sidebar conversations.</i>
Adjourning the meeting	<i>There being no further business, this meeting is adjourned.</i>

- Strive to be firm, fair and friendly.
- Use the "third person" to keep things neutral and lessen conflict.
- Give up on the word *but*. Always say *and*.
- Say *kindly*, not *please*, which sounds like pleading.
- Say *very well* and move on.
- Beware of "negativity bias." No frowning, no sarcasm, no eye-rolling.
- Keep an emotional connection with the members by emphasizing what we have in common.



# Eight Steps To Process A Motion

**Member A:** *I move that we hold a cruise on Dino Bay.*

**Member B:** *I second the motion!*

**Chair:** It has been moved and seconded that we hold a cruise on Dino Bay. We will now debate the motion. [debate]

**Chair:** Are you ready to vote?

The motion is that we hold a cruise on Dino Bay. All those in favor say “aye.” All those opposed say “no.” The “ayes” have it, the motion passes, and we will hold a cruise on Dino Bay. The Social Committee will make the plans for this event. Our next item of business is...

## Eight steps to process a motion

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

In taking the vote, the presider must call for the negative vote, or the vote is not legitimate.

The presider has a duty to make things clear so that members understand what they are doing.

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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.

The chair runs the meeting in the service of the board. He is not the “boss” but serves as a facilitator, helping the board to hold free and fair discussion and make good decisions.

Ordinarily a board member must make a motion before any discussion begins. If there is no second, the motion is not taken up.

If a member makes a motion to amend the main motion, it is discussed and voted on before the main motion. After amending a motion, a vote must be taken on the main motion as amended.

After discussion, the chair calls for the vote and announces the result. The motion passes when a majority of those voting vote in favor, unless state law or your bylaws require a higher vote. This is different from the requirement for a quorum.

If someone “calls the question,” the chair must take a vote on whether to vote now or continue discussion. It takes a 2/3 vote to cut off discussion.

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## ► DISCUSSION

All board members have equal rights, privileges and obligations. This means that discussion is not a conversation, but follows some important rules:

- The chair recognizes speakers in turn.
- No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.
- Interrupting is not allowed.

Board members must be courteous and respectful. They may not make inappropriate remarks such as personal remarks, insulting language, or comments that are irrelevant.

If a board member breaks the rules, the chair may correct him, or another board member may raise a point of order. The chair rules as to whether the point is correct, or not. A board member who disagrees with a ruling of the chair may appeal it. If another member seconds the appeal, the board decides.

The minority must be provided equal opportunity to debate, even if their views are unpopular. However, the decision of the majority voting at a meeting is the decision of the board as a whole.

## ► PUBLIC INPUT

Public hearings and other quasi-judicial proceedings must be run according to the requirements of state law.

Public comment sessions offer an opportunity for members of the public to inform the board of their views. We recommend not entering into back-and-forth exchanges. Community forums, one-on-one discussion, feedback forms on the website, surveys etc. are better channels for an exchange of views.

Under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the public is not bound by the same rules of decorum and courtesy as the board members.

The public should not engage in clapping, booing, hissing or other disruptive actions, since they intimidate speakers, may suppress free speech, and impede the work of the board.

### **Essential Guidelines for School District Boards**

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# Essential Parliamentary Procedure Guidelines for Junior & High Schools



## ► INTRODUCTION

In order to run good meetings, order is necessary.

Rules create order as long as everyone knows them and is willing to follow them.

There are some simple rules that will let any group run good meetings. They are easy to understand but sometimes hard to do.

These rules are called “parliamentary procedure.” Some of them are over 500 years old.

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A “parliament” is a group of people chosen to make decisions, and “parliamentary procedure” means the rules they should follow in making those decisions. The word comes from the French word “parler,” to speak.

Many organizations run their meetings according to Robert’s Rules of Order, which is the most common book giving the rules of parliamentary procedure. The book is long and complicated. This paper gives you the essentials.

These principles are fair to everyone. They are essential to our democracy.

### ▶ **STARTING THE MEETING**

The group must choose a leader.

This person is like an orchestra conductor. He or she helps the group to have good discussions and make good decisions.

The leader announces the beginning and the end of the meeting.

The leader suggests an agenda (list of things to discuss in order). The group can change the agenda at the beginning of the meeting by majority vote. Later in the meeting, the group can change the agenda by a two-thirds vote.

The group discusses each item on the agenda in order.

### ▶ **WHAT THE LEADER CAN DO**

The leader has the right to tell people what to do so that everyone follows the procedure that the group has agreed upon.

The leader does not have the right to make decisions about the items himself or herself. The leader is the servant of the group, and the group is the final decider.

### ▶ **SPEAKING**

When one item is being discussed, everyone has to talk about just that item. If other subjects come up, they must be discussed later, unless the group decides to amend (change) the agenda.

During discussion, each person gets a chance to speak in turn. No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.

One good way to follow this rule is to use a “talking stick” that is passed from one person to the next. Whoever holds the stick has the right to speak.

Another way is for each person to raise their hand when they want to speak. The leader calls their name or nods at them to recognize them (give them permission to speak).

The leader has to enforce this rule. It is hard to do, but necessary! If someone starts to speak when it is not their turn, the leader should interrupt them to make sure that the rules are followed.

People must talk about the proposals on the agenda, and not about other people.

There are six kinds of things that no one may say during a meeting:

1. Personal remarks (remarks about another person’s appearance, background, personality, etc.)
2. Insulting remarks, personal attacks, or vulgar language
3. Inflammatory language (emotional and negative language)
4. Talking about why another member wants to do something (their motives)
5. Criticizing past actions of the group (except that if the group is discussing a past action, it is OK to criticize it).
6. Subjects that don’t relate to what is being discussed (that are not germane)

Interrupting is never allowed (except for a point of order if necessary).

### ► **DECIDING**

In order to make decisions, someone in the group should propose an action. For example:

I move that we ask permission of the principal to hold a bake sale and send the profits to the victims of the hurricane.

“I move” means that you want the group to do something. The “motion” is the proposal that you suggest. The person who suggests it is the “maker” of the motion.

There have to be at least two people who want to talk about the idea for the group to spend time on it. Another person shows that she wants to talk about the idea by calling out “second” loudly once the motion has been made.

Once a motion has been made and seconded, the leader should say out loud what it is. This makes sure that everyone understands the idea.

If a motion is complicated, it should be written down. This helps everyone know exactly what is being discussed.

Here are the eight steps to process a motion:

1. A member makes a motion
2. Another member seconds the motion
3. The leader states the motion
4. Members discuss the motion and amend (change) it if they wish to.
5. When everyone has had a chance to speak once or twice, the leader states the motion again and calls for the vote.
6. Members vote.
7. The leader states what the result of the vote is, whether the motion passes or fails, and what will happen next as a result.
8. The leader states the next item of business.

#### ▶ **WHEN RULES ARE BROKEN**

If someone is breaking the rules and the leader does not stop them, another member can say “point of order.”

If this happens, all business stops while the person explains what rule has been broken. The leader makes a ruling (says whether the “point of order” is correct or not). Once the point of order has been dealt with, discussion continues.

People may also make a point of order about something the leader has done, if it breaks the rules. The leader makes a ruling about his own actions, which seems strange, but is the way this system works.

If the leader makes a ruling and a person disagrees with it, the person can say “appeal.” If another person says “second,” then the group must decide whether to sustain (agree with) the leader’s ruling, or not.

### ▶ **VOTING**

The leader has the job of taking each vote and announcing the results.

To take the vote, the leader says, “All those in favor say ‘aye.’ [Everyone who is in favor says “aye.”] All those opposed say ‘no.’” [Everyone who is against says “no.”]

The leader then announces the result:

*The ayes have it, the motion passes, and we will request permission to hold a bake sale.*

OR

*The noes have it, the motion fails, and we will not request permission to do this project.*

A majority vote means that more than half of the people who vote, vote “yes.” Those people form the majority. The people who make up less than half of the voters form the minority.

It is a basic principle of democracy that the decision of the majority of the members voting at a meeting is the decision of the group as a whole. The minority must go along with it.

A two-thirds vote means that at least two-thirds of the people who vote, vote yes.

If there are the same number of votes in favor of the motion and against the motion, the vote is tied. A tied vote fails.

If someone doesn’t want to vote, they can abstain. This means that they are doing nothing. Their voice is not included in the result of the vote.

### ▶ **ENDING THE MEETING**

The meeting ends when all business is finished, or when members vote to adjourn (end) the meeting. The leader cannot adjourn the meeting on her own.

## ▶ CONCLUSION

There is much more to parliamentary procedure. Here are some core democratic principles:

- ▶ Order is necessary for good meetings.
- ▶ Everyone must receive notice (be told about) the meeting ahead of time, so everyone can come if they wish to.
- ▶ In order to be fair to everyone, at least a minimum number of members must attend the meeting. This number is called the “quorum,” usually a majority (more than half) of the members.
- ▶ A group must hear from all its members and respect all its members to make good decisions.
- ▶ The leader is the servant of the group, and the group is the final authority.
- ▶ If a majority vote in favor, that is the decision of the group and the minority must go along with it.
- ▶ Courtesy and respect are essential.

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### Essential Parliamentary Procedure Guidelines for Schools

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# Follow four fundamental guidelines for successful meetings



Gig Harbor, Washington City Council. ©Jurassic Parliament 2018.

Robert's Rules of Order includes **four fundamental guidelines** that will create successful meetings. They are easy to say but take some effort to apply, since prevailing culture is often very different. Run your meetings according to these guidelines so your meetings—and your organization—will flourish.

## **I. The person running the meeting is the servant of the group, and the group is the final authority.**

We are so used to our work situation, where the “boss” is in charge of the “employees,” that we often bring the same habits of mind to meetings of nonprofit boards, city councils, and other volunteer organizations. But in a board of directors or a council, all the members have equal standing. They are peers, and **the leader is one among equals.**

The chair has special duties to RUN the meeting, but does not determine the OUTCOME of the meeting. It is the group that must decide what it wishes to do. It is the chair's duty to assist the group in this task. And the group has the ability to overturn a decision or ruling made by the chair. Read about Point of Order and Appeal [on our website](#) to learn how this is done.

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## **II. All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations. To ensure this, no one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.**

Every member of a board has an equal right to speak. In practice, however, boards often discuss their affairs in conversational mode. And in conversations, dominant people tend to dominate, and agreeable people tend to let them.

This often leads to a few people dominating the discussion, which is not fair and can lead to poor outcomes. Your quiet, introverted members have important insights that need to be heard.

If you adopt and apply the rule that **no one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once**, you will find that your meetings take on an entirely different nature—for the better!

## **III. Courtesy and respect are required at all times.**

In these difficult times, people can be loud, rude and disorderly at meetings. Your chair and your members must insist on **courtesy and respect at all times**. These are not frills, but vital to the democratic process. No personal remarks, no insulting language, no attacks, no interrupting, no sidebar conversations, no disrespectful body language. If this happens, gently but firmly put a stop to it. Read about inappropriate remarks on our website ([local government here](#) and [nonprofit boards here](#)).

## **IV. One thing at a time**

When a group is discussing a certain item, it must stick with that item, or make a conscious decision to set it aside to deal with something else. **You can't slip from one topic to another**, but must be deliberate in how and when you address each issue. Create a thoughtful agenda, time each item, and follow the agenda with flexible care.

Try these four guidelines, which we explain in greater detail in our [book](#), and see what a difference they make to your meetings.

### **Follow four fundamental guidelines for successful meetings**

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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.

It is important for elected officials and for the public to be very clear about the purpose of the public comment period. This is an opportunity for members of the public to inform the governing body about their views. The meeting itself belongs to the governing body. The public does not PARTICIPATE in the decision-making. Instead, it PROVIDES INPUT to the governing body, which takes the input into consideration in making its decisions.

A governmental body must craft its requirements with care in order to to preserve the free speech rights of its citizens. If questions arise about the public comment period, consult your attorney. State law and regulations and your specific bylaws or rules of procedure have higher standing than Robert's Rules of Order, other parliamentary authorities, or these guidelines.

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▶ **TIME CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Establish specific periods for public comment during your meetings, in a way that is consistent with your community's expectations and customs.
2. Set a length of time by which each period will conclude, unless the council votes to extend it.
3. Set a time limit for each individual to speak.
4. Speakers may not give their time to other people.

▶ **WRITTEN GUIDELINES**

5. Provide printed copies of the guidelines and expectations.
6. Review the guidelines at the beginning of each comment period if necessary, and explain that this is the time for citizens and residents to express their views in order to inform the council. Explain that the council will not engage in dialogue with the public during this time.
7. The council has the right to set limits on what subjects may be addressed, how long public comment will be, and how many times people may speak. All such limits must be viewpoint neutral: they must not favor one point of view over another.

▶ **DURING PUBLIC COMMENT**

8. Check your state law as to whether you may require speakers to give their name and address.
9. Require all speakers to address their remarks to the chair.
10. Require all speakers to keep to the time limits. It is important to be consistent for the appearance of fairness. Some jurisdictions provide a visible public timer, so the speaker knows how much time is available.
11. The chair should thank each speaker, whether positive or negative.
12. In general, it is best not to respond at all to public comment. However, the chair may provide brief factual information, if appropriate. This must not degenerate into lecturing or criticism.
13. The chair must not under any circumstances enter into back-and-forth exchanges with the public. See our blog entry below for more information.
14. We recommend using surnames to address speakers. If you use first names for some speakers, use them for all.
15. Councilmembers refrain from speaking during this portion of the meeting.
16. Have staff ready to note input or questions from the public and to provide responses at a later date. Do not call on staff to give public answers on the spot.

▶ **BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS**

17. Model courtesy and respect and encourage members of the public to do the same.
18. The public has the right to make critical and harsh remarks. Courts have consistently found that public bodies may not require members of the public to follow the rules of decorum that apply to council members themselves. (See our blog entry below for more information on decorum rules.)
19. Members of the public do not have the right to disrupt the meeting. However, mere words most likely do not constitute a disruption in themselves. All concerned should become familiar with case law on this point, and be able to determine when conduct becomes truly disruptive.
20. The council may prohibit demonstrations (booing, hissing, clapping). These can be chilling to discourse and inhibit free speech, both on the part of the elected officials and of the public.

21. Consult with your attorney and develop an action plan for steps to take in case of disruption. The League of California Cities has excellent material available on their website. In cases of serious disruption, state law may allow you to adjourn the meeting to a different location.
22. Be very cautious about ordering a disruptive member of the public to leave the meeting. It may be advisable to give three warnings to cease from the disruptive behavior before taking any action. Consult with your attorney before doing this.

▶ **RESPONSIVENESS TO THE PUBLIC**

23. The body language and manner of the chair and other elected officials are critical to running successful public comment sessions. Councilmembers should listen to each person speaking as if there were no one else in the room.
24. Councilmembers should keep an interested expression on their faces and refrain from checking electronic devices, whispering to each other, or otherwise demonstrating lack of interest in what the public is saying.
25. It is helpful to see oneself on video in order to gauge the impression given to the public. We recommend a facial expression that projects warmth and genuine interest. If a speaker is highly negative, it is appropriate to keep a neutral, serious expression. Do not frown, grimace, sigh, or roll your eyes.
26. It is vital for elected officials to be responsive to their public, and to appear responsive. Given the limitations on the public comment period, we recommend establishing other channels to connect with your public, such as community forums, personal discussions, “coffee with the mayor,” a form on your website, surveys, etc.

▶ **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

27. The council has the right to invite anyone to speak whom it wishes to hear from at other times than the public comment period. This is done by unanimous consent or a majority vote.
28. Provide clearly marked paper inviting individuals who are not heard during the public comment period due to time constraints to provide written comment for the council.
29. We recommend that detailed public comment should not be included in the minutes. It is sufficient to say, “Public comment was given.” See our blog entry below for more information.

▶ **SAMPLE POLICY**

- Now is the time to hear from our public. We welcome your comments which are very important to us. Note that all comments are limited to three minutes.
- As a reminder, please go to the podium to comment. It is helpful for the council if you would give us your name. Please address your remarks to the chair.
- Note that we will not be entering into dialogue at this time. The purpose of this agenda item is for YOU, the public, to inform US, the council, about your views.
- If members of the public have factual questions, staff will be glad to address them. Please speak with the executive assistant who is seated next to the dais.

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More information:

- [Don't get into back-and-forth exchanges during public comment](#)
- [Don't include detailed public comment in meeting minutes](#)
- [Citizen's Guide to Effective Conduct of Public Meetings](#)
- [Inappropriate remarks on local government councils](#)

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#### **Guidelines for Public Comment in Local Government**

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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.
- They must speak to the issues, and not to personalities.
- They must stay on topic, and keep their remarks relevant to the item at issue.

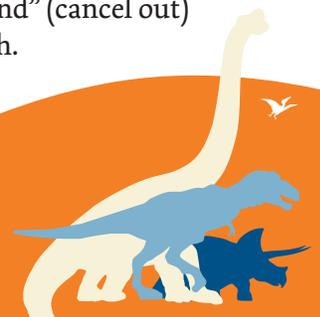
## ▶ Why are these remarks inappropriate?

A list of inappropriate remarks is given below. They are inappropriate because they are considered to be “not germane” (irrelevant) to discussion. We are offering parliamentary information here, and nothing in this paper constitutes legal advice. It is a fact, however, that courts have affirmed the right of councils and boards to define the frame of reference for their discussions, and to require elected members of the council or board to keep their remarks “germane” (relevant).

## ▶ List of inappropriate remarks that are not germane under Robert's Rules of Order

1. Personal remarks – remarks that pertain to an individual's appearance, background, ethnicity or other personal aspects, rather than their views on issues.
2. Insults, obscenity, vulgarity and personal attacks.
3. Inflammatory language – remarks that incite high emotions rather than addressing the issues.
4. Criticizing past actions of the group, with two exceptions:
  - a. If the group itself is discussing a past action, it is fine to criticize it.
  - b. If the council member intends to propose to “amend” (change) or to “rescind” (cancel out) the action at the end of his speech, they may criticize it during their speech.
5. Remarks that are not “germane” (relevant) to the discussion.

➡ over



▶ **Can members of the public make these inappropriate remarks?**

These restrictions apply to discussion by the members of the council or board themselves, and not to the public. When citizens or residents offer public comment, they have greater freedom than the elected officials. The council may set time limits for public comment, or require that public comment be limited to a subject under discussion by the council or board. However, any such restrictions must be “viewpoint neutral.” Under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, councils may not discriminate in favor of one point of view over another.

▶ **Who decides that a remark is inappropriate?**

The chair of the meeting has the duty of enforcing the rules and should speak up and stop a council member who makes one of these remarks. If the chair neglects to do this, any council member can raise a Point of Order. When that happens, the chair makes a ruling as to whether the remark can be allowed in discussion.

Any two council members can challenge the chair’s ruling by appealing it. In that case, the council or board will decide, by majority vote, whether the remark can be made. There are no “parliamentary police”—the council itself interprets its own rules, based on its chosen parliamentary authority, and decides what remarks can be allowed in discussion, and what not. The council is the final authority—subject of course to any legal advice you receive from your attorney.

Note that Appeals pertaining to language and decorum may not be debated. It is just a straight up/down vote. Learn more about Point of Order and Appeal [in this blog post](#).

▶ **Where can I find the inappropriate remarks in Robert’s Rules of Order?**

You can find the rules about these remarks in *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition*, the only current authorized version of Robert’s Rules, on pages xxxiv, 43, and 392-393.

*Thank you for your interest in running effective meetings using Robert’s Rules of Order. Visit our website, [www.jurassicparliament.com](http://www.jurassicparliament.com), for much more information on how to do this. Or contact us at [info@jurassicparliament.com](mailto:info@jurassicparliament.com) or 206-542-8422. We look forward to hearing from you!*

**inappropriate Remarks on Local Government Councils**

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P.O. Box 77553, Seattle, WA 98177

TEL 206.542.8422 | EMAIL [info@jurassicparliament.com](mailto:info@jurassicparliament.com)

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- On the other hand, people want to be connected, and it is a service to create a platform for this to happen.
  - Since the bank balance is still over \$10 million, the club can coast for a few months without worrying about its lack of income.
5. After discussion, Pat moved to recommend to the Board of Directors that the club hold a monthly series of Zoom social events in the fall at no charge. The motion passed.
  6. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Prepared by Tony Tyrannosaurus, Secretary

**Action Item:**

Amy Ankylosaurus to present the committee recommendation to the Board of Directors at its September meeting.

**Minutes record what is DONE, not what is SAID**

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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 dictatorial chair who is acting like a “boss.” They are essential for every local government body, nonprofit board, and any group that functions on democratic principles. Learn how to use them to ensure that the group is the final authority.

In this discussion, whenever we say “member,” we mean a voting member of the governing body.

## ► What is a Point of Order?

Point of Order is a motion that requires the chair to abide by the organization’s rules or parliamentary rules, or to require another member to abide by the rules. If an error isn’t obvious, the member may have to briefly explain how the rules are being broken.

This motion is made by just one member and in most circumstances the motion must be made at the time of the rule violation. When this motion is made it immediately and temporarily stops business until the Point of Order is ruled on by the chair, who will either agree with the member and enforce the rules, or may disagree with the member. Once the chair rules that the Point of Order was “well taken” (correct) or “not well taken” (incorrect), the business that was interrupted then continues (unless the chair’s ruling is immediately appealed).

## ► How does a member raise a Point of Order?

The member who sees a rule violation and wants the rule enforced should call out, “Point of Order!” or stand up and say, “I rise to a Point of Order.” If necessary, you may interrupt a speaker, but don’t do this lightly!



▶ **What happens next with a Point of Order?**

The chair should say, “State your point.” The member then explains the problem. Finally, the chair gives a ruling.

- If the chair agrees with the Point of Order, the chair says, “The point is well taken” and enforces the rule.
- If the chair disagrees, the chair says, “The point is not well taken,” and moves on with the business at hand.

▶ **Can a member raise a Point of Order about the chair’s actions?**

Yes. Everyone in the meeting must follow the rules. If this happens, the chair issues a ruling on their own action.

▶ **Can a member of the public or the audience who is not a member of the body raise a Point of Order?**

No. Only a member of the body itself can raise a Point of Order.

▶ **Sample script for “Point of Order”**

Member: *Chair, I rise to a Point of Order.*

Chair: *State your point.*

Member: *My esteemed colleague has used the term “cream-faced loon” in referring to the mayor of Dinoville. Under Robert’s Rules of Order, insults are inappropriate.*

Chair: *The point is well taken, and members will refrain from using this term.*

▶ **What should members do when they disagree with a ruling by the chair?**

A member can appeal the chair’s ruling (which must be seconded). This tells the chair that two members are in disagreement with the chair’s interpretation and want the body to decide it for themselves. The motion must be made immediately. If other business intervenes, then it is too late to appeal the chair’s decision or ruling.

When the Appeal is made, it immediately and temporarily stops the pending business until a decision is reached on the Appeal. After a vote is taken on the Appeal by the members, the business that was interrupted then continues.

▶ **How is an Appeal conducted?**

A member stands and without waiting to be recognized, says: “I disagree with the ruling by the chair.” The chair must recognize an Appeal, even if worded simply as, “I don’t think that’s right - I disagree with you.” The formal wording is, “I appeal from the decision of the chair.” The chair then processes the motion, which may or may not be debatable.

Read more about how to process a Motion to Appeal, including a sample script, in this [this blog post](#), “Keep the chair in line using Appeal.”

Many thanks to Beverly Przybylski, PRP, for providing the original content of this paper. Any errors are, of course, the responsibility of Jurassic Parliament.

**Point of Order and Appeal are the heart of democracy**

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P.O. Box 77553, Seattle, WA 98177

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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 may be compelled to abstain on such a matter. Finally, as with all matters of parliamentary procedure, any right or responsibility established by RONR or any other parliamentary authority will yield to a contrary rule in the bylaws or in any applicable procedural statute.

## **A MEMBER OF A DELIBERATIVE ASSEMBLY HAS THE RIGHT**

1. to make motions. (p. 3, l. 4)
2. to speak in debate. (p. 3, l. 4)
3. to vote. (p. 3, l. 5)
4. to abstain from voting. (p. 407, ll. 12-15)
5. to be given copies of the assembly's governing documents, special rules of order (if any), and standing rules. (p. 14, ll. 32-35, p. 15, l. 1)
6. to unilaterally modify or withdraw a motion the member has made before it has been stated by the chair. (p. 40, ll. 8-9)
7. to speak first in debate on a motion the member has made. (p. 31, ll. 1-3)
8. to insist on the enforcement of the rules of order, through the raising of a Point of Order. (p. 247, ll. 3-7)
9. to require the assembly to adhere to its agenda, program, or order of business, by a Call for the Orders of the Day. (p. 219, ll. 4-8)



10. to require a Division of the Assembly if the member doubts the result of a voice vote or a show of hands. (p. 71, ll. 11-17)
11. to change his or her vote up to the time the results are announced. (p. 408, ll. 21-26)
12. to demand a ballot vote on the question of guilt and on the imposition of a penalty in a disciplinary proceeding. (p. 647, ll. 31-35, p. 648, l. 1)
13. to not have allegations against his or her good name made except by charges brought on reasonable ground. (p. 656, ll. 1-3)
14. to have due process in any disciplinary proceedings. (p. 656, ll. 3-6)
15. to require Division of the Question when a single motion consists of two or more unrelated questions, each of which is capable of standing alone. (p. 270, ll. 30-35)
16. to make a Parliamentary Inquiry or a “Request for Information” (also called “Point of Information.”) (p. 292, ll. 16-20)

#### **A MEMBER OF A DELIBERATIVE ASSEMBLY HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY**

17. to become familiar with the assembly’s bylaws and procedural rules. (p. 15, ll. 1-3)
18. to obtain the floor before making a motion or speaking in debate. (p. 29, l. 11-15)
19. to refrain from criticizing a ruling of the chair unless the member has appealed from the ruling. (p. 256, ll. 4-5)
20. to refrain from debating a matter that is not pending. (p. 386, ll. 6-8)
21. to confine remarks to the merits of the pending question. (p. 392, ll. 6-10)
22. to refrain from attacking or questioning the motives of other members. (p. 392, ll. 13-17)
23. to address all remarks to or through the chair. (p. 392, ll. 28-29)
24. to refrain from referring to members by name. (p. 393, ll. 1-3)
25. to refrain from speaking adversely on a prior action not pending. (p. 393, l. 13-17)
26. to refrain from speaking against the member’s own motion. (p. 393, ll. 20-22)
27. to read from reports, quotations, or other documents only with permission of the assembly. (p. 393, ll. 30-33)
28. to be seated during any interruption by the chair. (p. 394, ll. 2-7)
29. to refrain from disturbing the assembly. (p. 394, ll. 13-16)
30. to refrain from explaining his vote during voting. (p. 408, ll. 17-19)
31. to abstain from voting on a matter of direct personal interest. (p. 407, ll. 22-25)

Jurassic Parliament expresses its gratitude to Weldon Merritt for allowing us to share this valuable information with our readers.

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# 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.
2. Members will give their full attention to their colleagues and will put away their cell phones, unless in an emergency situation.
3. All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations. To ensure this, no one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.
4. Members will seek recognition from the chair before speaking. In general, interrupting is not allowed. If necessary to enforce a guideline, the chair may interrupt a member. A member may interrupt a speaker in order to make a Point of Order, which should be done infrequently.
5. During business meetings all remarks must be addressed to the chair, and members may not speak directly to each other.
6. During work study sessions or committee meetings, members may speak in conversational mode, in which members speak without recognition and to each other. The chair will ensure that everyone has an equal chance to speak and that no one person dominates the discussion.



- 
7. Members may address presenters directly once recognized by the chair. Questions for presenters or staff may not become lengthy exchanges.
  8. Discussion should be focused on the issues at hand and remarks must be relevant. Members may not paraphrase other members. The body is the final authority as to whether remarks are permissible.
  9. Remarks must be courteous and respectful. Personal remarks about other members are not allowed, except for conflict of interest issues. Insults, personal attacks, vulgarity or obscenity, or inflammatory language are not allowed. Members may not criticize the body.
  10. Remarks criticizing past actions of the body are not allowed, unless the body as a whole is discussing the topic, or the member is about to introduce a motion to amend or rescind the action at the end of their speech.
  11. A member may not speak against their own motion. If discussion has changed a member's mind, the member may ask permission to withdraw the motion.
  12. If a guideline is broken or a question arises as to whether a remark is allowed under the guidelines, a member may make a Point of Order. The chair rules, subject to Appeal. The chair may also turn to the body immediately to decide the matter. A Point of Order must be made at the time of the offense.
  13. Individual speeches are limited to a maximum of 5 minutes. The body may adopt a shorter limit, or an overall time limit for a given topic, by a two-thirds vote without debate. If a speaker runs over the limit, the chair will interrupt and request that they conclude their remarks.
  14. The motion "Previous Question" or "Call the Question" requires a second and a two-thirds vote, without debate, in order to cut off discussion and vote immediately on the pending motion. Members may not call out "Question!" but must be recognized in order to make this motion.
  15. These guidelines are in effect unless superseded by law, regulation, or adopted policy. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition* is the parliamentary authority.

**Sample Discussion Guidelines for Local Governments**

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# Table, Postpone, or Postpone Indefinitely



The motion “To Lay on the Table” is commonly shortened to “Table.” This is a motion that is often misused. The correct use of this motion is to put a Main Motion aside for a short while because some other more urgent business has arisen. It can only be made once a Main Motion is actually under consideration, and you can’t table a whole class of business.

The motion is commonly stated like this:

**Member:** *I move to table this motion.*

Note that the preferred language according to Robert is:

**Member:** *I move to lay this motion on the table.*

## **Table has a high rank**

This motion has a rank of 8 in the precedence of motions. (Read our article [Precedence of Motions in Robert's Rules](#) for this concept.) It requires a second, it cannot be debated, and it takes a majority vote to pass. If it passes, the Main Motion is placed in the secretary’s care—on the secretary’s table, as it were. There is no set time to take it up again. The motion just waits until it is “Taken from the Table,” like this:

**Member:** *I move to take the motion from the table.*

The motion “to Take from the Table” similarly requires a second, is not debatable, and takes a majority vote. If it passes, the group resumes discussion of the Main Motion where it left off. The motion “to Take from the Table” can be made when the group is considering items of the same class (unfinished business, new business, etc.) as the Main Motion.



However, if the group declines to pass “Take from the Table,” then the Main Motion remains on the table. It will remain available to be taken from the table later if the group chooses at this meeting or the next meeting. (There is a restriction here: the next meeting must occur within a quarterly time interval, that is, not later than the end of the third month away.) Again, at the next meeting, when the proper class of business is reached, a member will have to move “to Take the Motion from the Table.”

If by the end of the next meeting the Main Motion has not been “taken from the table,” then it falls to the ground, and is functionally dead—but see below about killing a motion.

### **Don’t say “table until.” Move to Postpone instead**

You can see from this description that when a motion is tabled, it has a special status until it is taken from the table. If on the other hand you want to defer this motion to a specific time, the correct thing to do is to move to Postpone the Motion to a Definite Time, like this:

**Member:** *I move to postpone this motion to the next meeting/until tomorrow’s meeting/until after our scheduled recess.*

The Motion to Postpone to a Definite Time has a rank of 5, needs a second, can be debated, and takes a majority vote to pass.

Under *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition*, the next meeting (if within less than a quarterly time interval) is the farthest time to which a motion can be postponed. If you would like to put something off to a more distant time than the next meeting, you should refer it to a committee. Alternately, at the next meeting, you could vote to postpone the motion again, to the next meeting, and so on.

### **Want to kill a motion? Don’t use “Table!”**

Another common mistake occurs when people move to table a motion in order to kill it. They imagine that this will allow them to sweep the motion under the rug, as it were, without having to take a formal vote. This is incorrect and can lead to this dialogue:

**Member:** *I move to table the motion*

**Chair:** *For what purpose does the member seek to table the motion?*

**Member:** *I want to kill it!*

**Chair:** *That is an incorrect use of the motion to Table. Would the member like to move to Postpone the Motion Indefinitely instead?*

This is a rare instance where the chair may ask what a member is trying to do.

### **Postpone the Motion Indefinitely**

The name of this motion always makes me laugh, but the motion performs a useful function. Moving “to Postpone the Motion Indefinitely” allows a group to cease consideration of a motion when it isn’t desirable either to approve it or to defeat it. In other words, they decline to take any position at all. There may be political reasons why a body would rather punt on an embarrassing motion, and sometimes it’s wise to do so.

**Member:** *I move to postpone this motion indefinitely.*

This motion has the very low rank of 2. The body must have disposed of all the other subsidiary motions that could have been made, such as “Refer to Committee” or “Amend,” before making this motion. I’m always looking for good examples of this motion, so if you have one, please [share it with us](#).

Motion to Postpone Indefinitely needs a second, is debatable, and takes a majority vote to pass. A motion that is postponed indefinitely is disposed of for this meeting. However, it can be brought up again (renewed) at a future meeting, if the patience of your group will bear it. Read about this in our article, [Renewing defeated motion at future meeting](#).

Colette Collier Trohan has written an excellent summary of these three motions, with more specific details, in her article, *Avoiding Action in Robert’s Rules*, which are we are honored to share with you as a [guest article here](#).

You may also find our article [When can you withdraw a motion](#) of interest.

### **Table, Postpone, or Postpone Indefinitely**

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P.O. Box 77553, Seattle, WA 98177

TEL 206.542.8422 | EMAIL [info@jurassicparliament.com](mailto:info@jurassicparliament.com)

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# School Board President Role and Responsibilities

This list of school board president role and responsibilities was presented by former Board President John Burton and Superintendent Sam Jarman of the Alpine School District at a workshop organized by the Utah School Boards Association. It was prepared with input from the board, especially former board member Debbie Taylor.

Jurassic Parliament is grateful for the opportunity to share this example with school board members and staff. Refer to your own district policies and guidelines for the specifics of your situation.

## 1. Represent the board of education

- a. Sign all warrants ordered by the board, to be drawn upon the business administrator for school money.
- b. Represent the will of the board to the superintendent.
- c. Represent the united voice of the board to the district, media, community.
- d. Prepare agendas with the vice president and the superintendent.
- e. Speak on behalf of the board at administrator conferences, new teacher orientation, new administrator luncheons, training, foundation meetings, etc.
- f. Attend legislative luncheons and other meetings with city officials.
- g. Represent the board at other meetings when requested by the superintendent.
- h. Be present at meetings or events that need board representation when no other board member can attend.



**2. Facilitate and protect board processes**

- a. Ensure, protect, and facilitate board processes for decision-making.
- b. Protect and nurture the collaborative governance model.
- c. Preside at all meetings of the board to facilitate board processes and procedures.
- d. Conduct meetings of the board—study sessions, board meetings, closed sessions, and other meetings sponsored by the board, unless delegated otherwise.
- e. Facilitate board members' issues, concerns, etc.
- f. Ensure every board member has an opportunity to share their thoughts.
- g. With assistance of the vice president, appoint board members to staff committees, through board discussion.
- h. Be reserved (board president) in expressing his/her opinion until all board members have spoken—must listen, facilitate discussion or deliberation, and maintain order.
- i. Build a relationship of trust and collaboration with the superintendent.
- j. Follow Robert's Rules of Order to insure a fair process.
- k. Facilitate the evaluation, compensation, and reappointment process for the business administrator and superintendent.
- l. Manage the process of filling a vacancy on the board, if necessary, according to policy.

**3. Board professional development**

- a. Help each board member learn how to be an effective board member and feel valued.
- b. Help build trust between board members.
- c. Help build trust with the superintendent and board.
- d. Address inappropriate conduct of board members.
- e. Orient new board members with the superintendent.
- f. Ensure the board's commitment to the district's mission, vision, values and goals through review, understanding and when necessary, refinement or revision.
- g. Plan professional development activities including in-service, state and national associations, board trainings, site-visits, etc., with assistance of the vice president and other board members as needed.

### **BOARD MEMBER REMINDERS**

1. The board works with the superintendent and business administrator as a team.
2. If a board member hears of issues from patrons or staff, take them directly to the superintendent. Do not take them to staff members.
3. There should be no surprises in public meetings for the superintendent, board president, fellow board members, or staff.
4. What you say reflects on the whole board and district—be prudent.
5. Be prepared for and attend your meetings.
6. Ask questions rather than make demands—no single board member has authority over the staff or superintendent.
7. Encourage and facilitate patrons in resolving issues at the most local level, working through the system to the superintendent if needed. Then get out of the way and let the staff handle it.
8. A board member that continually interferes inhibits a good resolution to the problem and undermines trust.
9. Don't ever talk negatively to patrons about staff or personnel.
10. Stay focused on an issue and the process to get it resolved.
11. Board members have no authority to resolve issues by themselves and are the court of last appeal as a full board. If a single board member gets too involved in the issue and its resolution, they could be asked to recuse themselves if it came to the board for review.
12. Check and read all board communications daily.
13. Hold in confidence personal conversations with the superintendent, fellow board members, staff and other school personnel.

### **PROMISES A BOARD MEMBER SHOULD NEVER MAKE**

1. Never promise to vote a certain way on an upcoming issue.
2. Never make a promise of employment to anyone.
3. Never promise to have an employee dismissed.
4. Never promise parents a specific result or circumstance for their child at their school.
5. Never promise vendors a contract.

## CAUTIONS

1. Board members should be careful with their titles on social network sites, that they do not represent their posts as the position of their district unless it is an official statement from the district or board.
2. Board members are no longer private citizens.
3. When they speak or write, they are viewed as a board member of the board of education, and likely as representing the board. Board members have to be more discreet and prudent in their public expressions. If they choose to attend a public meeting, they should be there to listen, not to make comments.

## CLOSED SESSION AND PERSONNEL CONFIDENTIALITY

1. There is a danger of litigation for the district, and a personal liability for the board member, if closed session information is disclosed outside of the meeting.
2. Board members must be especially careful about what they say about personnel. Closed session and personnel matters are confidential.

## CONDUCTING VARIOUS MEETINGS

1. The board president usually conducts study session, board meeting, closed session and board training, and presides at all meetings of the board of education.
2. He/she has the responsibility for keeping order, ensuring board member opportunities for input and discussion, maintaining a respectful process, and moving the agenda along.

## REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

1. When serving on a community board or district committee as a representative of the board of education, a board member needs to represent the position of the whole board rather than his/her own.
2. There should be time set aside at each board meeting for individual board members to report on their community board and district committee attendance. This section on the board agenda could be titled “Board Members’ and Superintendent’s Information Items.”

## AGENDA ITEMS

How do individual board members get items on a board agenda?

1. They communicate with the board president and superintendent.
2. Board leadership (president and vice president in conversation with the superintendent) has the discretion to determine the appropriate timing for an agenda item request.
3. Once the agenda is set, it should be followed.

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## Reference Materials

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P.O. Box 77553, Seattle, WA 98177

TEL 206.542.8422 | EMAIL [info@jurassicparliament.com](mailto:info@jurassicparliament.com)

[www.jurassicparliament.com](http://www.jurassicparliament.com)