

# **Managing an Effective Meeting General Guidelines Using Roberts Rules of Order**

## **District Parent Council**

Updated May 2014

### **I. By-laws**

The use of Roberts Rules of Order to run your meeting is typically mentioned in your organization's by-laws.

Are your by-laws available? Are they stored in a document file online? If you can't find any history of by-laws, have a board member create them! Though they aren't required for a 501(c)3, it lends continuity and credibility to your organization's business process. Note: Most of our EL councils have a copy of their by-laws on the DPC website in Council Archives.

### **Typical Basic By-law Articles**

#### **Article I: Name**

- There must be no ambiguity as to the identity of the group.

#### **Article II: Object and Reason for the group's existence**

- Commonly Known as a Mission Statement
- This will help you combat abuse of power and keep the organization focused.

#### **Article III: Members**

- This defines members by explaining the members' rights, limitations, and qualifications.

#### **Article IV: Officers**

- Explains methods for nominations, voting, elections, and filling vacancies, as well as term of office and duties.

#### **Article V: Meetings**

- Details quorum, regular meetings, special meetings, and conventions.

#### **Article VI: Executive Board or Board of Directors**

- The board's composition, power, and quorum are clearly stated in this article.

#### **Article VII: Committees**

- Standing committees must be described as to name, composition, manner of selection, attendance, and duties.

## **Article VIII: Parliamentary Authority**

- The rules of order must be clearly established. It could be Robert, Sturgis, Cannon, Demeter, Riddick, etc. The important thing is to have a document which assures order under fire. Regardless of the rule book, an organization is ruled first by local, state, and federal laws; and then by its parent organization; followed by any adopted special rules of order; and finally by its adopted parliamentary authority.

## **Article XI: Amendment of By-laws**

- Typically, a by-law can be amended with 2/3 of the collected votes, if a prior notice has been given during the prior meeting. Otherwise, it takes a majority of the entire membership to amend any by-law. This can be done by posting a school-wide notice of the amendment and allowing a period of time for objections. If no objection heard, by-law amendment would be verbally voted upon at the next council meeting.

## **II. Agendas**

Agendas are formed by the President and are presented or approved at the start of the meeting.

The meeting agenda generally lists business in the order resembling the following:

1. Review and approval of minutes
2. Special Speaker or Topic (optional)
  - Annual School Improvement Report (Principal)
  - School Board Nominees
  - AGTF Summary Report and Update
3. District Reports
  - Board of Education Representative
  - District Parent Council Representative
4. Principal Report
5. Council Board Reports
  - Secretary Report (i.e. correspondence)
  - Treasurer's Report (budget)
6. Council Committee Reports
  - Topics requiring a vote (i.e. creation of dissolution of a committee)
7. Unfinished Business (tabled discussion items or old business from previous meetings)
  - Tabled discussion items or old business from previous meetings
8. New Business

**Tip 1:** Include time allotments after each agenda item.

*If the agenda specifies times for the major sections, you can always assure that all issues will be addressed before the meeting is adjourned. This prohibits individuals from purposely taking a long time on an early item in order to table a later agenda issue due to time constraints. Also, using timed allotments as a guide will keep committee reports from becoming committee meetings (common issue.) If a committee report runs longer than 10 minutes, and an issue needs to be resolved, consider allocating that discussion to a separate committee-level meeting with resolution to be communicated to the Board President through email/phone or at the next meeting with resolutions to issues. Don't let your council meetings become committee meetings!!*

**Tip 2:** Approve the agenda at the start of each meeting.

*Voting on the agenda is optional, but doing so prevents people from suspecting that the President "sets the agenda". It sets a nice tone to get everybody in agreement with the meeting plan at the start of the session and ensures that all voices were heard in shaping business. If there are new items to be added, they would be indicated for discussion under New Business.*

**Tip 3:** Send a draft of the agenda to Board members, committee chairs, principal and BOE representative 1 or 2 days in advance.

*This allows individuals to identify and communicate issues in advance that might require a motion or in-depth discussion. The President should always be aware of all planned or potential motions that would be coming forward during the meeting.*

**Tip 4:** Start the Meeting with Non-Committee Items.

*Some parents prefer discussing big picture issues and would be turned off to meetings that commence with committee-level business. Starting with non-committee items allow those individuals the option to leave early while keeping them connected to the school community.*

### **III. Voting**

Typically councils vote on: budget approval (in September), budget line item adjustments (after September), add an item to the meeting agenda (optional), create a new committee (unless President or Board is given that authorization in the by-laws) and the nomination slate for Board office.

#### **1. Making a Motion**

- Motions must be seconded before discussed and/or acted upon.
- This prohibits persons from forcing items on an agenda or issues to a vote which the general assembly doesn't welcome.

## 2. Majority Vote in almost all cases

- Though most votes require majority vote, there are specific rules per Roberts Rules of Order when a 2/3 vote would apply (ie - amend meeting agenda, make a motion that is not on the agenda, call the question, early call to adjourn).
- All persons present who are parents or guardians of a student in that building may vote, including the President.

## 3. Motions to vote to approve the minutes or to adjourn are not required. President has the authority to do both without a vote.

- The minutes can be simply approved as read unless there are any corrections. No vote needed to approve or to make correction. *President states: "If there are no [further] corrections, the minutes stand approved as read [as corrected]"*
- Adjournment can be handled similarly: *"If there is no further business to come before the meeting, this meeting will now adjourn. [pause] Hearing none, this meeting is adjourned."*
- Note: any person may vote to adjourn the meeting at any point in the meeting before it is finished. An early adjournment motion requires a second and a 2/3 vote. Is a tactic used by those who want to avoid decision on an agenda item that appears later in the meeting.

## 4. Call the question

- If discussion regarding a motion is getting long and circular, a member may "call for the question". This does not stop all discussion at once, but tells the chair that they should wrap up discussion, ask for speakers who have not yet spoken, and then take a vote.
- A 2/3 vote is needed to call the question, however organizations with more informal rules simply handle it as a hint to get things moving.

## 5. Conflict of Interest

- If a member has a direct personal or monetary interest in a motion under consideration not common to other members, "he/she should not vote but he/she can't be compelled to refrain from voting."