

## **Parliamentary Procedure: Robert's Rules of Order Course Transcript**

As a member of the ESC-20 Head Start Policy Council or Parent Committee it is important that you become familiar with parliamentary procedure. Meetings for both of these groups will be conducted according to these procedures.

### **What is Parliamentary Procedure?**

Parliamentary procedure is a set of guidelines for orderly conducting business at public meetings. The procedures provide a method to ensure everyone is heard and allowed to be part of the decision-making process. The principles help reduce confusion and allow for fairness and open discussion in meetings. Parliamentary procedure is intended to be a set of guidelines for conducting meetings, not rigid rules that restrict conversations or intimidate members.

### **What are Robert's Rules of Order?**

Parliamentary procedure is commonly referred to as "Robert's Rules of Order," named after Henry M. Robert who published the first manual on parliamentary procedures in America in 1876. Since this time the rules have become the standard method utilized for conducting business at meetings. The procedures can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization or public gathering.

### **Common Terminology**

Before discussing the principles of parliamentary procedure, it is important to become familiar with common terminology used within this method.

- **Chairperson:** Also referred to as the presiding officer. This individual leads the meeting, ensures the agenda is followed, allows for members to speak, and calls for motions to be voted upon by the group.
- **Order of Business:** The agenda of topics to be addressed at the meeting.
- **Quorum:** of members of the committee that must be present to conduct business and vote on motions raised at the meeting.
- **Majority:** More than one-half of the members of the committee.
- **Motion:** A proposal put to the group to take action on or discuss at the meeting.
- **Voting:** The means by which motions are accepted or rejected by the committee.

- **Second:** A verbal signal from a member of the committee that he or she wishes to consider a motion made to the group. The member states, "I second the motion."
- **Adjourn:** The Chairperson calls the meeting to an end.

### Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

Now that you are familiar with common terminology used within Robert's Rules of Order, let's discuss the basic principles for using parliamentary procedure at a meeting.

- All members of the committee have equal rights and privileges as other members.

### Structure of Meetings

When conducting meetings according to parliamentary procedure the meetings follow a set structure. This includes the following:

- **Call to Order:** The Chairperson of the committee starts the meeting with a call to order. Typically, the chairperson will say, "The meeting will please come to order."
- **Roll Call:** Attendance of members present at the meeting is taken through a verbal roll call. Individuals will say "present" as their names are called. The roll call allows for the committee to establish that a quorum of members is present at the meeting.
- **Minutes:** The minutes or notes from the previous meeting are shared. The committee may make a motion to approve the minutes are correct or to amend the minutes as needed.
- **Business:** During the business section of the meeting the following may occur:
  - Special presentations or reports may be provided to the committee on relevant topics
  - Follow-up discussion of business discussed at previous meetings
  - Introduction of new topics of discussion for the committee to consider
- **Announcements:** Time is allotted during the meeting for announcements, such as: future meeting dates, program reminders, and upcoming community events.
- **Adjournment:** The chairperson calls the meeting to a close.

## **Presenting a Motion**

During a committee meeting, members have the opportunity to make motions to take action on or discuss a specific topic. Let's take a look at the steps committee members should take when presenting a motion to the committee.

### *Step 1: Obtain the Floor to Speak*

- Prior to speaking, it is important for members to allow anyone currently speaking to finish.
- A member can then make a request to the Chairperson to speak.
- Once the member has been recognized by the Chairperson, the motion may be presented to the group.

### *Step 2: Present Your Motion to the Group*

- When making a motion to the group, the member should begin with the statement "I move that we..." and then complete the sentence with the desired action or subject to be discussed.
- Remember, when making a motion it is important to speak in a clear and concise manner.
- Also, when making a motion, use an affirmative statement of what the group should do, rather than a statement of what the group should not do (i.e. do not say "I move that we do not")

### *Step 3: Second of the Motion*

- After a motion is made, the Chairperson will ask the committee if any of the members second the motion.
- A second of the motion means another member of the committee is interested in bringing the topic forward to the group for discussion.
  - o Seconding a motion does not mean the member agrees with the motion, but rather that he or she agrees the topic should be discussed further by the committee.
  - o To second the motion, a member states, "I second the motion."
- If a committee member does not second the motion, the motion is considered lost and not open to further discussion at the meeting.
  - o In this situation, the Chairperson will state, "The motion is lost for want of a second."

#### *Step 4: Chairperson States the Motion and Opens to the Committee for Discussion*

- Once a second of the motion has been made, the Chairperson will restate the motion to the membership of the group for consideration and action.
  - The Chairperson will state, “It has been moved and seconded that we...”
- This opens the motion to the group for discussion or if the group determines the motion can be taken directly to vote.
- General guidelines for discussion of a motion include the following:
  - Prior to speaking, a member must seek recognition from the Chairperson.
  - A member who has not yet spoken has preference for speaking over a member who has already spoken.
  - Discussion is limited to the specific motion that was raised. Other topics may not to be discussed at this time.

#### *Step 5: Committee Votes on the Motion*

- After members have had the opportunity to fully discuss the motion, the Chairperson will ask the group if they are ready to vote on the motion.
  - If members are not ready to vote, they may request:
    - The motion to be postponed for discussion at a future meeting
    - The motion be referred to a subcommittee within the group for further discussion, or
    - Make a motion to amend the motion being discussed.
  - Members may also request to move the previous question, thus bringing the motion to immediate vote.
- If the group has no more discussion on the topic, a vote will be taken.
- Once the vote is taken, the Chairperson will state the result of the vote to the group.

#### **Removal of a Member from a Committee**

Members of a committee are expected to act ethically and professionally at all meetings. In the event a member does not follow the guidelines of the committee or acts in an unprofessional or unethical manner at meetings, the member may be removed from the committee.

If a member acts out of turn at a meeting, the Chair of the meeting will remind the member of the proper procedures for conducting business according to

parliamentary procedure. If the behavior does not stop, the Chair will call the member to order by stating “The member is out of order and will be seated.”

At this point, if the unruly behavior continues, the Chair will address the member by name and request the secretary to record the behavior in the meeting minutes. The committee may then determine if a motion should be raised to impose a penalty against the member.

Penalties may include:

- A motion for the member to apologize.
- A motion for the member to leave the meeting room for the remainder of the meeting.
- A motion to censor a member – to censor it to formally warn the member that if the behavior continues, the member may be suspended or removed from the committee.
- A motion to suspend the member's rights on the committee for a specified period of time.
- A motion to expel or remove the member from the committee.

Although the need to remove a member from a committee for unprofessional behavior is rare, it is important to be aware that parliamentary procedure provides specific guidelines to be followed if such a situation occurs.

### **Voting on a Motion**

There are several methods a committee may use to vote upon a motion.

Depending on the situation and the committee by-laws, the Chairperson may call for a vote in the following ways:

- **Vote by Voice:** The Chairperson asks those members in favor of the motion to say, “aye”, and those opposed to the motion to say “no”.
  - A member may move for an exact count of the vote to be taken if desired.
- **Vote by Roll Call:** The Chairperson reads out the name of each member of the committee. The member answers “yes” or “no” when his or her name is called out.
  - This method of voting is used when a record is needed of how each member of the committee voted.

- Vote by General Consent: If a motion is relatively minor or not likely to be opposed, the Chairperson may request a vote of general consent.
  - The Chairperson will say, “If there is no objection...” – if no objections are raised by the committee and the members remain silent, the motion is passed.
  - If any members raises an objection, the motion must be voted upon.

### **Final Reminders**

You now have a general overview of the use of parliamentary procedures to conduct meetings. Remember, these procedures are intended to ensure meetings are conducted orderly and allow for open, fair discussion. Parliamentary procedure will only work when used properly by all members of the group. As a committee member, remember to speak clear and concisely, obtain consent from the Chairperson prior to speaking, and most important be courteous to your fellow committee members.