Information Sheets
Abbreviated Rules of Order for Meetings

General

1. Rules of Order for any meeting are designed to ensure an orderly meeting in which the minority have the right to be heard, and the majority have the right to make decisions. Because volunteer organizations are not debating societies, they have followed more relaxed meeting rules than are found in rules of order books. Most books on rules of order run into hundreds of pages and cover rules for many obscure situations that do not occur in volunteer organization meetings. In general, as well, there are very few people who know anything about formal rules, but throughout tradition, courtesy, and common sense, rules of conduct for meetings have grown, and are in widespread use. The purpose of this set of rules is to make available common sense meeting rules appropriate to the volunteer organizations.

Chair

2. Every meeting shall have a Chairperson who shall act as impartial moderator of the meeting. If regular officers of the organization are not available, the meeting shall elect a Chair. The Chair shall not engage in any debate, nor shall move or second motions. In the event that a discussion has not examined all information on a subject, the Chair may provide information to ensure a full and complete discussion of the subject at hand.

3. In the event that the Chair wishes to enter into debate on a motion, the meeting shall be turned over to another person who shall act as the Chair. If the regular Chair vacates the Chair position to enter a debate, he or she shall not return to the Chair position until after the motion has been disposed of.

Secretary

4. Every meeting shall have a Secretary to record minutes of the meeting. If regular officers of the organization are not available, the meeting shall elect a Secretary. Tape recordings of a meeting shall not be used to replace a Secretary, although they may be used to aid in recording the process of the meeting. The Secretary may enter into any discussion, and may move, second, or vote on motions, providing he or she is entitled to vote by the by-laws or constitution of the organization.

Agenda

5. For orderly conduct of business, each meeting shall have an agenda, which gives the purpose of the meeting and the items to be examined. Normally the agenda should be prepared, printed, and circulated ahead of time, although it may be decided verbally by members at the meeting, The Chair should ensure that the minimum meeting agenda item requirements are met. The Chair may also include items upon which the Chair, or other members of a directing board, desire discussion and action. The meeting shall adopt an agenda by motion. Any agenda prepared ahead of time may be changed as desired by the meeting.

6. As a minimum, an agenda shall have the following items:
   a) Declaration of a quorum by the chair;
   b) Adoption of an agenda;
   c) Approval of the minutes of the last meeting;
   d) Business arising from the minutes;
   e) New Business;
   f) Adjournment

Motions and Discussion

7. The three main purposes of a meeting are to make decisions on the running of the organization, to provide information about the affairs of the organization, and to provide an opportunity for members to raise questions of concern about past or future events in the organization. Every person attending a meeting shall have the right to hear information and to raise matters of concern. Only members have a right to make decisions about the organization.

8. A motion is a decision making tool of a meeting. All motions under these rules require a mover and a seconder. There are four stages of a motion: forming a motion where the desired decision is put into words; stating by the Chair of the actual motion; discussion of the motion; and finally, acceptance or rejection of the motion by voting.

9. Because it is essential that members know what they are voting for or against; it is the duty of the Chair to make sure the motion is clear. If the motion is unclear, the Chair may ask that it be re-worded, or may suggest re-wording to make it clear, bearing in mind the original intent of the motion. Any person attending the meeting may request clarification of a motion.

10. Motions may be formed before or after discussion of a report. In large meetings it is usual to have a motion on the floor and then discussion. In small meetings, it is typical to have some discussion with a motion being formed from the result of the discussion. In the event of discussion before a motion is formed, the Chair shall monitor the discussion and ask for a motion to be formed. If no motion is formed, the Chair may rule that the meeting move on to the next item of business.

11. All remarks should be directed to the Chair, although in small meetings this rule may be relaxed somewhat, with the provision that every person present should be able to hear clearly any discussion taking place.

12. With the approval of the mover and seconder, a motion under discussion may be changed, in which case, it shall be re-stated by the Chair. A motion may be withdrawn by the mover with the agreement of the seconder at any time. If the seconder does not agree, the motion shall stand for discussion and a vote.

13. Except for a motion of appeal which takes precedence over all matters, only one motion shall be open for discussion at any one time. Only one amendment to the main motion under discussion shall be open at any one time. An amendment must be voted upon or withdrawn before the main motion question is put. Even if the amendment is passed, the main motion must be voted upon or withdrawn.

14. A motion to reconsider a matter already decided upon at a meeting requires the approval of two-thirds of the members present.

Voting

15. Except where required by the governing rules of the organization, all motions shall be decided by a majority vote of members or delegates eligible to vote. Although non-members or non-delegates may speak at a meeting, they shall not vote.

16. There shall be no proxy voting or alternate delegates, unless authorized in the constitution or by-laws of an organization.

17. Before any question is voted upon, the Chair shall ask the meeting it is ready for the question. If there is no further discussion, the Chair shall ask how many are for the motion, and then how many are against the motion. If necessary, the Chair may require an actual count to be made to determine the outcome.

18. Voting shall be by a show of hands, or if the matter warrants, such as elections of persons to positions where a choice has to be made, by secret ballot. If the voting is by a show of hands, the Chair shall vote only in the event of a tie vote, or the equivalent for motions that require more than a majority vote. If the voting is by secret ballot, the Chair, with no exceptions permitted, shall vote at the same time as the other members.

Appeal of Chair Rulings

19. Every ruling by the Chair can be appealed. Any member or delegate disagreeing with a ruling of the Chair has the right to move immediately a motion of appeal of a ruling. The appeal must be seconded. Debate on the appeal motion is allowed, and if the Chair wishes to enter into the debate, he or she must vacate the chair as outlined above. A majority vote for the motion of appeal defeats the Chair's ruling. If the motion is defeated, the Chair position is supported. If the Chair’s ruling is defeated, the Chair must return the matter under discussion before the ruling was made.

Point of Order

20. At any time during the meeting, a person may raise a point of order stating what rule of order of business is being violated. The Chair shall immediately make any corrections required, or shall rule that the procedure in question is acceptable. Any such ruling is appealable.

Minutes

21. The Secretary shall prepare and sign a written set of minutes which shall contain a summary of what took place and the decision and at a meeting. Verbatim minutes shall not be made. The minutes may be posted or circulated as is required or customary in an organization. At the next meeting of the organization, the Chair shall request a motion of acceptance of the minutes of the last meeting. After the motion has been moved and seconded, the Chair shall then ask if there are any errors or omissions in the minutes. If there are, they shall be recorded by the Secretary in the current meeting's minutes. When there are no further corrections, the Chair shall put the question. No further business of the current meeting shall be done unless the minutes of the previous meeting are accepted, or accepted with corrections. After the motion of acceptance has been passed, the Chair shall sign and date the minutes of the last meeting with the notation of "Accepted", or "Accepted with corrections".

Matters not Covered by Rules

22. The meeting shall decide by majority vote on any matter or procedure not covered by these rules of order, such decisions shall be only valid for the meeting making the decision.

Note: Changes are indicated in italics

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