

MERCER TRIGIANI

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

The Basics

Community association meetings are typically conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order – tailored to each community. Community association meetings include board and committee meetings, as well as membership meetings. Depending upon whether the meeting is for the board, a committee or the members, participation varies.

Created in 1876 by Major Henry Martyn Robert, Robert's Rules of Order were adapted from rules and practices followed by the U.S. House of Representatives. Designed to create order, ensure participation and facilitate the conduct of meetings, Robert's Rules can be complex and subject to debate. Developing a basic understanding of Robert's can enhance participation and meeting conduct.

PURPOSE

- Ensure majority rule.
- Protect the rights of the minority and individual members.
- Provide order, fairness and decorum.
- Facilitate the transaction of business .
- Expedite meetings.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations.
- All members have the right to participate in discussion, *before* any one member may speak a second time.
- At all times, members have the right to know the question under consideration. Only urgent matters may interrupt a speaker.
- Only one motion may be discussed at a time.
- A majority decides a question.

PROPER MOTIONS

Propose a new idea.

Once recognized by the meeting presider, present the motion. A second is required for the motion to be discussed or considered.

Propose changes to motion wording.

After recognition by the meeting presider, move to amend by:

- Adding language
- Striking language
- Changing language

Propose changes to a motion beyond language changes.

Move to substitute motion for the original motion. If seconded, discussion continues on both motions and eventually a vote is taken on the preferred motion.

Propose additional study, investigation or research.

Move to refer to a committee or management. Referral should clearly identify the responsibilities and expectations of the committee or management.

Propose additional study of the proposal.

Move to postpone to a definite time or date.

Propose concluding discussion.

Move to limit debate to a set time period or to a designated number of speakers. Requires a 2/3rds vote.

Move to close the debate; also referred to as *calling the question*. Ends discussion and brings the question to a vote. Requires a 2/3rds vote.

Propose to postpone action on a motion until some later time.

Move to table the motion. The motion may be taken from the table after an item of business has been conducted. If the motion is not taken from the table by the end of the next meeting, the motion is considered dead. To kill a motion at the time it is tabled requires a 2/3rds vote. A majority is required to table a motion without killing the motion.

Raise question because discussion has strayed from agenda topics.

Call for *orders of the day* to refocus discussion to align with agenda and scheduled business.

Propose a short break.

Move to recess for a set period of time.

Propose ending the meeting.

Move to adjourn.

Raise question about the vote count.

Without being recognized by meeting presider, call for a *division of the house*. A roll call vote will then be taken to confirm accuracy of the vote count.

Seek clarification.

Without being recognized by meeting presider, call for *Point of Information* or *Point of Parliamentary Inquiry*. Meeting presider will ask for the question to be presented and attempt to clarify.

Propose changes to matter voted on earlier in the meeting.

Move to reconsider. Motion to reconsider must be made by person on winning side. If a majority agrees, the motion comes back to the floor as though the vote had not occurred.

Propose to change an action voted on at an earlier meeting.

Move to rescind. If previous written notice is given, a simple majority is required. If no notice is given, a 2/3rds vote is required.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

If a matter is considered relatively minor or opposition is not expected, a call for unanimous consent may be requested. If the request is made by others, the meeting presider repeats the request and then pauses for objections. If no objections are made, the motion passes.

INTERRUPTION

- **A speaker may be interrupted only by:**
 - *Point of Information* - requests information about business.
 - *Parliamentary Inquiry* - requests information about rules.
 - *Question of Privilege* - member cannot hear, safety reasons, comfort, etc.
 - *Point of Order* - identifies a breach of the rules.
 - *Appeal* - disagrees with the meeting presider on a ruling.
 - *Objection* - disagrees with call for unanimous consent.

**This guidance document incorporates and adapts material originally developed by Cornell University - Office of Assemblies, “[Roberts Rules of Order – Simplified].” Content has been revised for applicability to Virginia common interest community associations for educational purposes; substantive information remains unaltered. Cornell University is not affiliated with or responsible for this publication.*