

You Have The Floor



UConn

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE,
HEALTH AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

EXTENSION

You Have the Floor

By Ronald F. Aronson
Retired Assistant Director
Cooperative Extension System

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
What's on the Agenda?	3
How to Make a Motion	4
How to Change a Motion	5
Nominating and Electing Officers	6
How to Give Reports	7
How Motions are Classified	8
Rules Governing Motions	9
Glossary of Common Terms	10-12

“What do you mean, I have the floor? What is good parliamentary procedure anyway?”

Parliamentary Procedure is a democratic process that insures you your rights in a meeting. It helps a group such as a 4-H Club conduct business with efficiency and harmony. It may seem complicated and formal, but it is based on common sense as well as courtesy.

To achieve these purposes, always consider the *four basic principles of parliamentary procedure*:

1. Only one subject may claim the attention of the meeting at one time.
2. Each motion is entitled to full and free debate.
3. Every member has rights equal to every other member.
4. The will of the majority must be carried out, and the rights of the minority must be preserved.

What's on the Agenda?

Every group should adopt a standard order of business (or agenda) for meetings. When no rule has been adopted, use the following order. Suggestions for wording of some items are included. You can suit this to your group's needs.

1. Call to Order:

"The meeting will come to order."

2. Reading and Approval of Minutes:

"The secretary will read the minutes of the last meeting." [Secretary reads minutes] "Are there any corrections to the minutes?" *If there are no corrections*, "There being no corrections, the minutes will stand approved as read." *If there are corrections*, "Are there any further corrections?" *When there are no further corrections*, "There being no further corrections, the minutes will stand approved as corrected."

3. Treasurer's Report

4. Committee Reports

5. Unfinished Business:

"Is there any unfinished business to come before the meeting?"

6. New Business:

"Is there any new business to come before the meeting?"

7. Program

8. Adjournment:

The chairperson may call for a motion to adjourn by asking, "Is there a motion to adjourn?" A motion for adjournment is not required. The chairperson may close the meeting by saying, "If there is no more business, the meeting is adjourned."

How to Make a Motion

- 1. Rise to address the presiding officer: Address him/her by title, as “Madam President” or “Mr. Chairman.”**
- 2. You are recognized by the presiding officer: He/she states your name or nods to you. Now you “have the floor.” You are the only member entitled to present or discuss a motion at this time.**
- 3. You propose a motion: Introduce the motion by saying, “I move that” followed by a statement of the proposal. This is the correct way to say it. You cannot discuss the motion until it has been seconded by someone else.**
- 4. Another member seconds the motion: Another member, without rising or addressing the chairperson, may say, “I second the motion.” Seconding a motion means that at least two people want to consider the motion. If no one seconds the motion, the chairperson may ask, “Is there a second to the motion?” If there is none, he/she must declare, “The motion is lost for want of a second.”**
- 5. The presiding officer states the motion: When the motion has been properly made and seconded, the chairperson repeats it to the group, or “states the motion.”**
- 6. The members discuss or debate the motion: After your motion has been stated by the chairperson, any member may discuss it. He/she must get the floor as you did when you first made your motion. Normally the first person who asks to speak is recognized. When several members wish to speak at the same time, these guiding principles should determine the decision of the chairperson:**
 - a. The chairperson should show preference to the one who made the motion.**
 - b. A member who has not spoken has first choice over one who has already spoken.**
 - c. If the chairperson knows the opinions of members discussing the measure, he/she should alternate between those favoring and those opposing it.**
 - d. The chairperson should recognize a member who seldom speaks in preference to one who often claims the attention of the assembly.**
- 7. The presiding officer takes the vote on the motion: When all members have finished discussing the motion, the chairperson “puts the motion to a vote.” He/she may, before taking the vote, ask, “Is there any further discussion?” If no one rises, the discussion is closed. The chairperson will take the vote by announcing, “All in favor of the motion [state the motion], say ‘Aye’.” Following response from the members, the chairperson says, “The opposed say ‘No’.” If the chairperson cannot tell from the volume of voices which way the majority has voted, he/she says, “The chair is in doubt. Those in favor of the motion please rise.” After counting, he/she says “Be seated. Those opposed, rise. Be seated.” Other methods are to call for a show of hands or a written ballot.**
- 8. The presiding officer announces the result of the vote: The chairperson states, “The motion is carried” or “The motion is lost.” As soon as the vote has been announced by the chairperson, another motion is in order.**

How to Change a Motion

When you want to change a motion that is on the floor, you say, “I move to amend the motion by [state your change].” There are three ways to change a motion.

1. **Addition:** Add something to the motion.
2. **Subtraction:** Strike out something from the motion at hand.
3. **Substitute:** Combine the first two methods by striking out something and inserting something else. The substituted portion may be a word, a phrase, a clause, or an entirely new motion. But remember that an amendment must have direct bearing on the motion.
An amendment may be opposed to the actual intent of the original motion. However, if it related to the same subject matter, it is in order.

Types of Amendments:

Amendment of the First Rank: An amendment to a motion.

Amendment of the Second Rank: An amendment to the amendment. It must modify and relate directly to the amendment and NOT to the main motion. Otherwise, it is **OUT OF ORDER**. It is never in order to propose more than one amendment of each rank at one time. If you want to amend two separate and unrelated parts of a motion, you must propose two amendments of the first rank, but the first one must be voted upon before you propose the second. It is possible to have a motion, one amendment to the motion (amendment of the first rank), and one amendment to the amendment (amendment to the second rank) before the meeting at the same time.

Order of Voting:

Amendments are voted upon in order before the group can consider the main motion.

The amendment to the amendment (amendment to the second rank) is discussed and voted on.

After discussion, the vote is taken on the amendment to the motion (amendment to the first rank).

After discussion on the original motion, as *amended*, a vote is taken on it.

Nominating and Electing Officers

You can nominate a person for an office in your group by presenting his/her name to the meeting by saying, “I nominate _____ for the office of _____.”

Nominations from the floor:

Nominations do not require a second.

As a nomination is made, the chairperson repeats it and the secretary records it.

No member may nominate more than one candidate for each office.

If there are no further nominations, the chairperson declares the nominations closed.

A motion to close the nominations may be made and requires a two-thirds majority vote.

A motion to reopen nominations may be made if done before voting on candidates. It requires only a majority vote to carry.

Nominations by nominating committee:

A committee presents names of candidates. The names are treated as if they had been nominated from the floor.

Further nominations may be made from the floor.

Nominations by ballot:

Ballots are passed to the members and they write the name of one person for each office.

If a candidate receives a majority of nominations in this manner, it is in order for the chairperson to declare that candidate elected.

Voting on nominations:

After the nominations are closed, members vote upon the names by the method prescribed in the group’s constitution.

Unless some other time is specified in the bylaws, an officer assumes the duties of office as soon as he/she has been elected.

How to Give Reports

Reports are usually part of the order of a business meeting. These include the secretary's report, treasurer's report, and special or standing committee reports.

A secretary's report of a meeting should include the following: kind of meeting that was held, name of the organization, date, time and place of the meeting, important correspondence read at the meeting, summary of all committee reports, all motions and action taken, and a summary of any program or recreation. The most complete and accurate secretary's report is of little value if it is mumbled, misread or presented so everyone cannot hear and understand the report. It is the responsibility of each member to listen carefully to the report.

A treasurer's report should be as simple as possible, but must be complete and accurate. It should include:

Receipts:

Balance on hand at date of last meeting

Receipts since last meeting

Total receipts

Disbursements:

Items of expenditure—to whom paid and how much

Total disbursements

Present balance

A committee report should include a description of the activities of the committee since the last meeting.

For a special committee, it should give a summary of all the information that has been collected, and make a recommendation. The report should include the date, time and place of the committee meetings and whether the committee needs additional time to complete the work.

A standing committee report should explain briefly progress in their specific area since the last report.

How Motions are Classified

Main Motion:

Introduces a subject to a meeting. Only one main motion can be considered at a time. However, a main motion yields to all subsidiary, privileged, or incidental motions.

Subsidiary Motion:

Modifies or disposes of the main motion being considered. A subsidiary motion may postpone action on the main motion, amend it, refer it to committee, call for the previous question, or lay the main motion on the table. Subsidiary motions must be voted on before the main motion.

Incidental Motion:

Arises incidentally out of the business of the meeting. Some examples of incidental motions are point of order, appeal from the decision of the chair, division of the house, and request for parliamentary information.

Privileged Motion:

Takes precedence over all questions before the meeting. Your motion is privileged because it can temporarily set aside the main business before the group. You are making a privileged motion when you move to adjourn, to take a recess, and to call for the orders of the day.

Rules Governing Motions

	May interrupt a speaker	Requires a second	Debatable	Vote required
Main Motions				
General main motion	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
To take from the table	No	Yes	No	Majority
To reconsider	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
To adjourn (qualified)	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Subsidiary Motions				
To lay on the table	No	Yes	No	Majority
To call for the previous question	No	Yes	No	Two-thirds
To refer to a committee	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
To amend	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
Incidental Motions				
To withdraw a motion	No	No	No	Majority
To object to consideration	Yes	No	No	Two-thirds
To rise to a point of order	Yes	No	No	Chairperson rules
To rise to parliamentary inquiry	Yes	No	No	None
To appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
To call for a division of the house	Yes	No	No	Majority
Privileged Motions				
To take a recess	No	Yes	No	Majority
To adjourn (unqualified)	No	Yes	No	Majority
To call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	None

Glossary of Common Terms

Much like the space program, or the automobile industry, parliamentary practice has acquired some terms distinctly its own. A good parliamentarian must know these terms and how and where to use them. Here are definitions of some more commonly used terms:

Acclamation: a method of voting by choice—"aye" or "no."

Adjourn: close the meeting or session (privilege motion). A motion to adjourn becomes a main motion and is debatable if any words or qualifications are added to the simple form of "I move we adjourn."

Amend: to change a motion by means of another motion. This proposed change is called an amendment (subsidiary motion).

Appeal from decision of the chair: if any member disagrees with a decision of the chairperson, he/she may ask for a vote of the assembly on the decision. This is in order, even though another member has the floor. The member rises saying, "I appeal from the decision of the chair." If the appeal is seconded, the chairperson asks, "Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?" The motion cannot be amended (incidental motion).

Ballot: a method of voting in writing.

Chairperson: the person who presides at the meeting.

Chair: sometimes called "chairperson" or "president." Remarks by members are always addressed to "the chair."

Convene: to meet, or call to order.

Debate: the discussion of a motion.

Discussion: debating or talking about a motion or question. It must always follow the accepted rules of order.

Division of the house: if any member of the assembly is dissatisfied with the result of the vote as announced by the chairperson, he/she may call for a "decision of the house" or just "division." The chairperson then appoints "tellers" to count those standing in favor of the motion. Announcing the number, the chairperson says, "those opposed will rise." They are also counted by the tellers, and the chairperson announces the result.

Floor: the privilege of speaking before the assembly. When one is recognized by the chairperson, he/she “obtains the floor,” and is granted an opportunity to speak.

Lay on the table: to postpone consideration to a more convenient time. It is not debatable, and cannot be amended (subsidiary motion).

Majority: over half of the votes cast.

Motion: the name applied to the procedure of getting a matter before the group.

New business: matters which have not been formally discussed before.

Objection to consideration of a question: to avoid consideration of a question this is irrelevant or otherwise improper. Such an objection may be made to any principal motion, but only when it is first introduced and before it is debated. It can be made when another member has the floor, and does not require a second. It cannot be debated nor amended. The chairperson may decide the point, or may put the question, “Will the assembly consider it?” If decided in the negative by a two-thirds vote, the matter is dismissed (incidental motion).

Obtain the floor: securing the right to speak, either to make or discuss a motion.

Orders of the day: the order in which the group has decided to take up certain matters of business. If the agenda is not followed, you may “call for the orders of the day.” The chairperson must rule on your request.

Parliamentary inquiry: investigation or checking the rules to determine the proper course of procedure.

Point of order: to correct disorder in the proceedings or in the deportment of members, any member may rise or stand and say, “I rise to a point of order.” The member then states the point, and the chairperson rules on your point. It does not require a second and cannot be debated, except that the chairperson may ask for opinions of others before giving his decision. It cannot be amended (incidental motion).

Previous question: to “move the previous question” is an attempt to bring a motion before the group to a vote without further debate. It cannot be debated and cannot be amended. It requires a two-thirds vote for adoption (subsidiary motion).

Quorum: a sufficient number of members present at a meeting to transact business. This number is usually a majority unless otherwise specified in the constitution.

Recess: this motion allows the group to interrupt business for a short time. It is not debatable, but may be amended as to length of time to recess (privileged motion).

Reconsider: to move “to reconsider” is a way to vote again on a motion. It must be made by someone who voted on the majority side of the question. It cannot be amended. If carried, the original question is again before the assembly (main motion).

Refer to committee: this motion is often called to “commit” or “refer.” The usual form of the motion is to “refer the matter to a committee,” and to name the method for selecting the committee. Such a motion is debatable and may be amended by altering the committee or giving it more specific instructions (subsidiary motion).

Special committee: a committee chosen for some particular purpose. When the job is done, the special committee is usually discontinued automatically.

Standing committee: a committee appointed for a long period of time, often a year.

Unanimous ballot: when one person is nominated for a particular office and no one objects, the secretary casts a unanimous ballot. Usually the chairperson instructs the secretary to “cast a unanimous ballot” for the candidate. If anyone objects, the ballot must be done in the usual way.

Unfinished business: motions that have not yet been decided and have been left over from preceding meetings.

Withdraw a motion: a motion may be withdrawn by the person who made it, if the person who seconded it and the chairperson consent. This action must be taken before a vote has been taken. It is not debatable, cannot be amended, but must be reconsidered before decision or amendment (incidental motion).

Updated December 2014