

The background of the cover features a blue-tinted image of a pair of scales of justice and a wooden gavel resting on a wooden surface. The scales are positioned in the upper half, and the gavel is in the lower half, both slightly out of focus. A large, semi-transparent blue circle is overlaid on the left side of the image.

SUNY CAMPUS GOVERNANCE PROCEDURES

A Guide to SUNY Shared Governance,
Parliamentary Procedure, and Robert's Rules of
Order

Becoming and Being a SUNY Parliamentarian: A
Resource Guide for SUNY Campus
Parliamentarians

SUNY UFS Governance Committee
May 2025

SUNY CAMPUS GOVERNANCE PROCEDURES

**A GUIDE TO SUNY SHARED GOVERNANCE
PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE AND ROBERT'S
RULES OF ORDER**

**BECOMING AND BEING A SUNY PARLIAMENTARIAN:
A Resource Guide for SUNY Campus Parliamentarians**

**Appendix: Robert's Rules of Order Motion Chart,
General Principles, and FAQs**

**SUNY UFS GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
MAY 2025**

A Guide to SUNY Shared Governance Parliamentary Procedure and Robert’s Rules of Order

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Compiled from previous materials of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges
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Parliamentary Procedures and Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised

Overview

Parliamentary procedure is the established set of rules and customs that governs the meetings and operations of a deliberative body—a group that meets to decide on actions to be taken. The name comes from the English Parliament in which the basic content of the rules was developed over several centuries. Parliamentary procedure protects the right of the majority to decide, the right of the minority to be heard, and the rights of individual members & absentees.

Henry Martyn Robert (1837-1923), engineer and U.S. Army brigadier general, published the first edition of his *Robert’s Rules of Order* in 1876. This manual, currently known as *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, is now in its 12th edition (2020).

Why Is Parliamentary Procedure Important?

Parliamentary procedure is a time-tested method of conducting business at meetings

and public gatherings. It can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization. Today, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* is the basic handbook of operation for most clubs, organizations and other groups. So, it is important that everyone knows these basic rules! Wise institutional decision-making is one of the crucial functions of campus governance bodies, and Robert's Rules helps provide a structure for a kind of collective "peer review" of potential actions to be taken by such a body.

What Is the Purpose of Robert's Rules?

It provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language. The conduct of all business is controlled by the general will of the whole membership—the right of the deliberate majority to decide.

Complementary is the right of at least a strong minority to require the majority to be deliberate—to act according to its considered judgment after a full and fair "working through" of the issues involved.

Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the body. Under no circumstances should "undue strictness" be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

Ultimately, the body rules—they have the final say on everything! The fundamental right of deliberative assemblies requires all questions to be thoroughly discussed before taking action. So, make sure your voice is heard—silence implies consent!

Typical Order of Business

Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed order of business. Below is a typical example:

1. Call to order
2. Roll call of members present
3. Reading of minutes of last meeting
4. Officers' reports
5. Committee reports
6. Special orders such as important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting
7. Unfinished business (Old Business)
8. New business
9. Announcements
10. Adjournment

The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations! When presented to the body and the question is stated, debate begins and the proposed agenda can be amended and approved.

A deviation from the agenda requires a “Suspending the Rules” motion.

Using Robert’s Rules Effectively

Robert’s Rules is a set of rules for conduct at meetings, which allow everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion. But it will work only if you use it properly:

1. Allow motions that are in order.
2. Have members obtain the floor properly.
3. Speak clearly and concisely.
4. Obey the rules of debate.

And, most important, BE COURTEOUS!

Basic Rules of Parliamentary Procedure

1. The rights of the organization (as expressed in its constitution/bylaws and in Robert’s Rules) supersede the rights of individual members.
2. All members are equal, and their rights are equal.
3. A quorum must be present to conduct business. (A quorum is a majority of members unless otherwise specified in the constitution/bylaws.)
4. The majority rules (usually—see item 6 below).
5. Silence equals consent.
6. Two-thirds votes rule (to end debate, to limit or take away the rights of other members, or to change something already decided).
7. One question at a time and one speaker at a time. *It is “out of order” to discuss issues unrelated to the motion on the floor while a motion is being debated.*
8. Debatable motions must receive full debate, unless the body votes to limit debate.
9. Once a question is decided, it is “out of order” to bring up the same motion or one essentially like it at the same meeting.
10. Personal remarks in debate are always out of order.
11. The Chair is the arbiter of every procedural question. The Parliamentarian advises the Chair as to procedure but does not make rulings. All statements by the members of the body are addressed to the Chair, not to other members. The Chair recognizes all speakers and relinquishes his/her role only when appointing another person to act as Chair. Unrecognized speakers may be ruled “out of order.”

Making and Voting on Motions

What Is A “Motion?”

The method used by members to express themselves is in the form of moving motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue.

Individual members can:

- Make/move motions,
- Second motions,

- Debate motions, and
- Vote on motions.

Types of Motions

1. **Main** motions: Proposals that certain actions be taken or opinions expressed by the organization. (Main motions require a second to be considered by the body except when they come from a committee.)

2. **Secondary** motions: Motions that can be made while a main motion is on the floor and before it has been decided.

a. **Subsidiary** motions: Motions that relate directly to the main motion being considered.

- Amend (insert, strike out, strike out and insert, or substitute)
- Commit (i.e. refer to committee)
- Postpone to a certain time
- Postpone indefinitely (to kill a motion)
- Limit debate (not debatable; requires two-thirds vote)
- Previous question (motion to vote on the main motion on the floor immediately - not debatable; requires two-thirds vote)
- Lay on the table (for temporary delays during a meeting)

b. **Privileged** motions: Motions that relate to an urgent need regarding the welfare of the group and not to the main motion under consideration.

- Question of privilege
- Recess (not debatable)
- Adjourn (not debatable)

c. **Incidental** motions: Procedural motions that deal with proper procedures, verifying votes, clarifying information, and the like.

- Division (to verify a vote, e.g. by raising hands or standing; does not require a second)
- Division of a question (motion to split a motion into a set of motions)
- Point of information (a request for information regarding facts bearing on a motion; does not require a second)
- Parliamentary inquiry (regarding proper procedures; does not require a second)
- Point of order (regarding the disregard of proper procedures; does not require a second)
- Appeal (to override a Chair's ruling on proper procedures)

Types of Votes

- Majority vote is more than half the votes cast.
- Two-thirds vote is two-thirds of the votes cast. (This has at least twice as many votes on the winning side than on the losing side.)
- Majority of the entire membership is more than half of the entire number of all eligible voters whether or not they are present at the meeting.
- Tie votes are lost votes. (Except for ballot votes, the Chair only votes *to break or*

to make a tie; the Parliamentarian does not vote, thus reserving this right to the Chair.)

Methods of Voting

1. Voice vote (aye or nay)
2. Standing vote or show of hands, uncounted (“division”)
3. Counted standing vote or show of hands
4. Roll call vote (especially for electronic meetings)
5. Ballot vote (*Note: meaning secret ballot – requires a majority vote of the body to implement unless required in the constitution/bylaws.*)
6. Unanimous consent/general consent/consent of the body (*Note: actions may be accomplished without a vote if there is no objection: e.g., calling the question (immediate voting). The chair asks if there are any objections; If anyone objects, a vote must be taken. Give the body sufficient time to object.*)

Becoming and Being a SUNY Parliamentarian: A Resource Guide for SUNY Campus Parliamentarians

Spring 2020, revised May 2025

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Section 1: Introduction

Welcome to UFS and FCCC Parliamentarians

Thank you for taking on a critical role in the functioning of faculty governance. This resource guide is designed for parliamentarians from the campuses of both the Faculty Council of Community Colleges (FCCC) and the SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS). The function of a parliamentarian is to ensure that governance activity adheres to “the rules.” Your effective performance in this role will enable the members of your organization to understand how to communicate respectfully, resolve differences of opinion, and take action to achieve the organization’s goals. To be the most helpful and effective parliamentarian possible requires thorough knowledge of the toolkit available to parliamentarians.

This resource guide has been developed by individuals who have served as governance leaders, parliamentarians, or both within SUNY. Through experience, we have found ways to anticipate and address the challenges you may face both in meetings and outside of them. Ideally, after reading through this guide, you will be better prepared to handle difficulties and to lay the groundwork for avoiding them in the future.

In addition to skills particular to a parliamentarian, you will also want to have a solid understanding of the standard parliamentary procedures as they apply to your organization. A chart of common motions and how they are handled may be found in the Appendix. To supplement your organization’s bylaws, the Appendix includes summaries that all members can find useful.

We hope that our suggestions will enable you to think about your role in new ways and to build appreciation of and expertise in parliamentary work within your organization.

Question 1: *Why do organizations need parliamentarians?*

Governance bodies are representative democratic institutions, and one of the major functions of the rules is to ensure that the will of the body is best expressed, following full and free discussion. The parliamentarian serves as the impartial advisor to the presiding officer, who in the heat of debate may lose sight of the central goal of the work – collective decision-making. The parliamentarian’s job is to make sure this does not happen. And that is the beauty of this service; it keeps us honest and aimed at the highest goals of academic discourse.

As indicated in the introductory portions of the standard guide to parliamentary procedure, *Robert’s Rules of Order*, parliamentary procedures are intended to offer all members of a governance body (1) clarity about procedures and (2) equal opportunities for participation. When standardized procedures are not used or are not known by all, a small group of members can exert control over the process of governance, with possible harmful effects on decision-making.

Thus, there are good reasons to incorporate standard parliamentary practices into any governance organization. These include instructing new members in standard parliamentary procedure, offering resources that list types of meeting actions and how

they should be handled by the presiding officer (offered as an appendix to this guide), and the presence of a parliamentarian at meetings.

Your role as parliamentarian is to assist the organization's members to be efficient, focused, and outcome-oriented through the use of those standardized procedures. Certain conventions, when conveyed by you to the organization's leader and then followed (either very strictly or in a more relaxed manner), promote respectful communication in the resolution of differences and the translation of plans into actions. This can help all to come away from meetings feeling that they have been heard and that their time has been well spent.

The parliamentarian is a resource to enable the leader to focus on the content of the meeting. The parliamentarian can keep track of the details of running a meeting (e.g., if the time spent on a topic is extending beyond what is planned, if a motion needs to be seconded, if a vote needs to be taken on a motion) and quietly communicate (speak, write a note, or send a direct message) to the presiding officer. This allows the presiding officer to focus on content not process.

Although parliamentary procedure may seem labor-intensive to learn, it can enable members to conduct business efficiently and fairly. This is possible in part because the published documents outlining *Robert's Rules of Order* offer detailed analysis of almost every governance challenge that an organization might face. Routines are examined, as are unusual circumstances.

There is an additional benefit to learning parliamentary procedure. When an individual joins a new governance organization, they are able quickly to understand the expectations and norms if parliamentary procedure is used.

Section 2: What You Need to Know

Question 2: *What is the role of a parliamentarian?*

Operational Definition: A parliamentarian is an expert in the formal rules and procedures of their deliberative body. The parliamentarian not only advises the chair of the governance body, but also serves all members of that body on matters of parliamentary procedure.

It is important for the parliamentarian to be thoroughly familiar with the governance body's by-laws and/or constitution, as well as conversant with *Robert's Rules of Order* (which is typically the parliamentary authority for SUNY faculty governance). Remember, ***the rules of order in the governance body's constitution and bylaws always take precedence when they differ from the rules in Robert's.***

Additional responsibilities: In addition to advising the presiding officer and members of the governance body during a meeting and providing formal parliamentary opinions about questions on procedure, the parliamentarian has several other duties:

- Attend all governance body and executive committee meetings and other committee meetings as necessary or as requested by the presiding officer.

- Have available a current copy of the governance body's constitution and bylaws and stay well-versed in *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- Keep track of motions to assist the chair and secretary during meetings.
- Be a resource for/help interpret results of elections.
- Train members of the governance body on parliamentary procedure.
- Advise members of the governance body on the best way to achieve their goals within the rules.
- Potentially serve as a resource to other campus organizations.

Question 3: *How is the Parliamentarian appointed?*

The parliamentarian is generally appointed by the presiding officer in consultation with the governance body's executive committee. Ideally, the process as well as term of office are specified in the governing documents of the governance body.

The presiding officer and the parliamentarian should have a good working relationship. If the presiding officer does not appoint the parliamentarian, they should at least have a veto on who will serve in that role.

The best choice of parliamentarian is a past or present member of the governance body who is familiar with its bylaws and willing to serve. If no such individual is available, there are national organizations (e.g., the National Association of Parliamentarians, <http://www.parliamentarians.org>) that can provide lists of certified parliamentarians available to be hired for meetings. If this latter approach is used, as it is in rare instances, the parliamentarian may not be fully familiar with the governance body's governing documents. A member of the body's bylaws or governance committee or a suitable officer would need to be prepared to assist.

Question 4: *What should every parliamentarian know?*

Core Resources:

The fundamental sources are the current version of your governance body's constitution and/or bylaws, standing rules, and other local governing documents and *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (current edition, which is the 12th edition as of this writing), commonly abbreviated *RONR*. The same publisher offers *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised In Brief* (current edition as of this writing is the 3rd from September 2020), which is less extensive but easier to use in most situations. Both versions of *RONR* are only available in hard copy. A parliamentarian in the SUNY system should have read (and have saved in electronic format) the current *Policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees*.

Although every SUNY campus is represented in the University Faculty Senate or the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, faculty governance on each campus is not a subset of the system-level bodies and is therefore not subject to their bylaws. However, these umbrella organizations do have useful resources to offer, such as the UFS *Governance Handbook* (available from the UFS website) and FCCC *Guide to Parliamentary Procedure* (part one above). Faculty governance must adhere to the Public Officers Law of the State of New York

(<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/PBO>), which may put limitations on procedure.

A parliamentarian should also be familiar with the minutes of the governance body's previous meetings, particularly the most recent one. For a new parliamentarian, going back through the previous year's minutes and reviewing motions will help to provide a feel of what is "precedent" within your governance body.

Skills to Cultivate:

A. Becoming bi-lingual — learning to speak "Robert's" and to translate "parliamentarian speak" into English. This will enable you to know the terminology needed to make use of the index of *Robert's Rules of Order*, which is essential because the volume is long and complex, and the current edition is not available electronically.

B. Knowing where to quickly find out how to handle different types of motions and procedures (e.g., when is a two-thirds/supermajority vote needed, whether motions are debatable or amendable, when a body can go into executive session, etc.) during a meeting. Keep a chart that contains this information (see Appendix) with you during meetings.

C. Communicating effectively with the presiding officer regarding process issues prior to, during, and following a meeting. This goes most smoothly if the presiding officer is also familiar with the constitution/bylaws of the organization and parliamentary procedure. See Question 6 and Question 10 for more on this topic.

D. Maintaining the orderly process during meetings even when participants may become agitated over the substance of the meetings. Being aware of the current political landscape and possible "minefields" can alert you to when this might happen.

E. Developing one's own style of educating and providing information to the presiding officer, executive committee, and members of the unit/governance body. Keep in mind the boundaries described under Question 5.

F. Acknowledging mistakes made by yourself and others and rectifying them effectively and diplomatically. Addressing these promptly can forestall worse problems later.

G. Using your modesty, humility, sense of humor, and sense of perspective to assist others to govern wisely and/or have effective, productive meetings.

Question 5: *What boundaries should govern the input of the parliamentarian?*

The parliamentarian should not seek the floor; your input should be offered directly and discreetly to the chair. The role of the parliamentarian is to advise the presiding officer and members of the governance body. In a meeting, only the chair can/should address the body unprompted. All comments, statements, and questions should be directed to the presiding officer, not to other members of the governance body.

A parliamentarian must be impartial, dealing only with the rules of order, to retain the

confidence of those on all sides of a question. Your job is only to ensure that those rules are followed. Though you may possess an opinion about the topic under discussion, you may not express it during a meeting.

Should a member of the governance body raise a concern or a “point of order,” this should be addressed to the chair. The chair will then look to you for an opinion regarding the legitimacy of the specific “point” that was raised. You should not offer your opinion prior to that point. The chair has the final decision as to whether there has been a violation of the rules of order. The chair should make a determination and announce it clearly as soon as possible. The governance body can make a motion to overturn that decision.

You should have a rationale based on the rules for order as stated in the governance body’s constitution, bylaws, or *Robert’s Rules of Order* for every opinion you offer. You should be prepared to cite those documents if necessary. If you need time to research a question during a meeting, ask for it: it is better to recess the meeting for a short time than to provide an unfounded or incorrect answer.

The parliamentarian should not speak directly to the body, unless asked to do so by the chair. The parliamentarian may ask for time before the end of a meeting to further explain or clarify a ruling. This should be done after advance approval by the presiding officer. Such a strategy can better inform members of the body, so that they become increasingly knowledgeable about the parliamentary process.

Section 3: Strategy and Practice

Question 6: *How should the parliamentarian provide advice to the chair before and during meetings?*

Before meetings

The chair and parliamentarian should meet to review the agenda for an upcoming meeting and identify contentious items, which should be discussed so that you can be prepared. Together, and/or with the Executive Committee, strategize solutions to potential logistical problems in advance, such as time constraints on debate.

A helpful strategy is to ask the chair, well before the meeting, “Is there anything you are concerned about for the upcoming meeting?” This offers time for potential problems — logistical, procedural, or personality-related — to be identified and discussed.

Virtual meetings require particular advance planning, especially for communication with the chair during the meeting. Simply being online with the body does not provide you with a discreet way to gain the chair’s attention, and private communication can be difficult. If you and the chair are not in the same room (the best option), sometimes raising your virtual hand is the only way to attract the chair’s notice. A parliamentarian’s raised hand should take precedence over all other raised hands.

During in-person meetings

You should be seated next to or near the presiding officer so you can easily be consulted should a situation concerning the rules of order arise. Consultation with the presiding officer should be done inconspicuously. Some parliamentarians prefer to pass notes to the presiding officer, while others prefer to make brief comments.

The parliamentarian can help the chair call speakers in the order in which they seek recognition. As the chair notes raised hands, the chair may ask the parliamentarian to write down names in order. The parliamentarian may need to remind the chair that only members of the body have the right to speak during discussion. To allow a non-member to speak, the chair must seek the approval of the body. The body's assent may often easily be obtained by saying, "Unless there is any objection..." and pausing briefly.

If you notice a breach in the rules of order, you should signal the presiding officer. The presiding officer should then consult with you discreetly and make a decision as to whether a breach has occurred.

Question 7: *What should a parliamentarian consider when providing advice to members of the organization outside formal meetings?*

A good parliamentarian's work does not begin with the call to order and end with the passage of a motion to adjourn at a meeting. The parliamentarian is a resource for the entire organization at all times. They should offer their services to committee chairs and members of the organization in general. Are the motions that committees plan to propose well-stated and properly formatted? Members may wish to know what kinds of amendments can be accepted within the scope of forthcoming motions.

Over time, a good parliamentarian will be recognized by the organization for being knowledgeable and fair. As a result, they will receive requests for parliamentary advice from other individuals inside and outside of the organization. Sometimes, questions will require more detailed knowledge and will require some research.

Question 8: *What is the best way for the parliamentarian to work with the organization's Bylaws/Governance Committee or Officer?*

The bylaws of the organization take precedence over anything *Robert's Rules of Order* may suggest. Accordingly, thorough knowledge of the current bylaws can be more of a prized skill for the parliamentarian than his/her facility with *Robert's Rules*.

It is most helpful for individuals who become parliamentarians for their organization to have served on that organization's bylaws committee. As a result, the parliamentarian has an appreciation for the interpretation of these bylaws and the extent to which the organization is actually following them. Your bylaws may be followed more or less strictly, but if current practice actually violates your bylaws, the committee should take action to change either practice or the bylaws themselves.

The ability to advise on how to present bylaws changes to the organization as a whole makes the parliamentarian an important resource to the bylaws committee. While the individual serving as the parliamentarian may be a regular member of the committee (thus with voting privileges), it is recommended that the parliamentarian serve as an *ex*

officio member of the committee without voting privileges, in keeping with the role of an unbiased resource.

A strong working relationship between bylaws leadership and the parliamentarian is critical. Questions about issues that involve understanding or amending the bylaws are often directed to the chair of the bylaws committee. While this chair should also be an expert in the bylaws, having a parliamentarian who can give a historically interpretive and/or a procedural perspective on the issue is helpful to formulate a position for the response that both support.

Section 4: The Bigger Picture

Question 9: *Where can a parliamentarian find help?*

One of the benefits of being part of SUNY is having access to parliamentarians at other comparable SUNY institutions (i.e., members of FCCC or UFS), as well as the individual serving as the parliamentarian of the FCCC or the UFS. The Members tab of the sunyufs.us website has a list of parliamentarians with their contact information for this purpose. If the problem you are facing has to do with your institution's bylaws or with elections, these individuals would be excellent resources for you to consult. Bylaws and procedures at comparable SUNY institutions may offer solutions or perspectives on problems you face.

If you have a question related to *Robert's Rules* or an interpretation of parliamentary procedure, consider posting a question to the "Robert's Rules of Order Forum." The dialogue that ensues when a question is posted can be less than perfectly clear and sometimes is contradictory. However, individuals who respond are extremely well versed with regard to *Robert's Rules*. Input gained through responses can be very helpful. <https://robertsrules.forumflash.com>

You and your presiding officer (and executive committee) may find yourself in a circumstance when an outside expert opinion is needed. If so, and if your budget permits, you may choose to seek out a "professional registered parliamentarian." A resource list is available at <https://www.parliamentarians.org/prp-search/>.

Question 10: *What are some approaches to training members in parliamentary procedure?*

Officer training: Officers should be familiar with the structure of your faculty governance as defined in your bylaws. Those officers who might be called on to lead meetings (vice chair, secretary) should be familiar with the basic table of motions, the sequence of agenda items.

Committee chair training: This is important because committee chairs will be running their own meetings. Even though committee meetings are usually less formal about rules (as explicitly expected in RONR), an awareness of underlying parliamentary procedure can make committee meetings more productive.

New member training: It's best not to get into exotic motions with members who are unfamiliar with meeting structure. Focus on those practices and motions which come up most commonly in meetings of your body. Include concrete scenarios, rather than abstract descriptions of motions, to make your instruction much more comprehensible and memorable.

Continuing member training: Since most people have busy schedules, you should consider polling potential attendees about when best to schedule training. Don't assume that continuing members are familiar with the basic documents and procedures. A review is often in order.

Guidance documents: Many guides are available on the web, but they are written from the perspective of a wide array of contexts (home owners associations, government entities, national organizations, etc.). Be attentive to the length of guides; they usually will not be used as an ongoing reference, but will be read as a substitute for synchronous training.

Cheat sheets: Quick references for available types of motions, such as the Appendix or the gray pages in RONR, can be handy during a meeting. However, they typically do not include sufficient detail for novice users to understand the different motions in detail. Such cheat sheets are therefore best paired with introductory training.

Commentary during meetings: You may be tempted to explain rulings in reaction to unusual circumstances, but be very cautious about when you yield to this temptation. Doing so could interfere with the completion of business, especially if it generates discussion. Elaborating on such rulings is usually better left to written communication after the meeting. In any case, such explanations should only occur with the consent of the chair, who is responsible for actually making the ruling. You should strongly consider having the communication coming from the chair, perhaps ghost written by yourself.

Question 11: *What are best practices for succession planning?*

One weakness many organizations face is over-reliance on a few highly dedicated individuals. Succession planning is not always at the forefront, but it is critical for the health of the body. In addition to the seated parliamentarian, who serves at the pleasure of the chair of the body, there need to be others who are familiar with parliamentary duties and can step in if needed and step up in future.

In some cases, a replacement might be needed on an interim basis, either for a temporary absence or in advance of the eventual transition from current to future parliamentarian. Periodic training is a good way to reach out to the campus community to gauge interest in this area of service and provide a program to develop future parliamentarians. In the world of parliamentary service, having a plan B or plan C is in order. When holding and passing the parliamentary torch, do everything possible so that the transition process from one parliamentarian to the next will be undertaken with attention and care. In this way, the governance organization can continue seamlessly to accomplish its mission.

Section 5: Summary

To sum up, there are dual arenas of knowledge with which the ideal parliamentarian has to be familiar: (1) the bylaws of the organization and (2) policies and procedures described in *Robert's Rules of Order*. The parliamentarian serves as a trusted advisor, which requires sensitivity to difficult topics, understanding of interpersonal complexities, excellent communication skills, and the ability to provide counsel effectively.

Appendix: Robert's Rules of Order Motions Chart, General Principles, and FAQs

Robert's Rules Motions Chart

§ indicates the section from Robert's Rules, 12th ed.

PART 1 – PRIVILEGED, SUBSIDIARY, AND MAIN MOTIONS

These motions are listed in order of precedence. A motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

§	PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE
21	Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
20	Take break	I move to recess for...	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
19	Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
18	Make the body follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
17	Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
16	Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
15	Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
14	Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion until...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
13	Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
12	Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
11	Kill main motion	I move to postpone the motion indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
10	Bring business before body	I move that [or "to"]...	No	Yes *	Yes	Yes	Majority

* Matters brought to a body by a committee of the body **do not** require a second. All other matters do.

PART 2 – INCIDENTAL MOTIONS

No order of precedence. These motions arise incidentally and are decided immediately.

§	PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE	COMMENT
23	Enforce rules	Point of Order	Yes	No	No	No	None	
24	Vote on chair's ruling	I appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	Varies	No	Majority	
25	Suspend rules	I move to suspend the rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	
26	Avoid main motion altogether	I object to consideration of the question	Yes	No	No	No	2/3	Only before debate
27	Divide motion	I move to divide the question	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	
29	Demand a counted vote	I call for a division of the body	Yes	No	No	No	None	
33	Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	Yes if urgent	No	No	No	None	
33	Request for information	Point of information	Yes if urgent	No	No	No	None	

PART 3 – MOTIONS THAT BRING A QUESTION BEFORE THE BODY AGAIN

No order of precedence.

Introduce only when nothing else is pending.

§	PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT ?	2ND?	DEBATE ?	AMEND ?	VOTE	COMMENT
34	Take matter from table	I move to take from the table ...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	Only on same day
35	Cancel or modify previous action	I move to rescind... OR I move to amend the previously adopted motion...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3 or Majority with notice	
37	Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider...	No	Yes	Varies	No	Majority	Only on same day, only by person on prevailing side of original vote

Robert’s Rules General Principles:

- In order to speak, you should be recognized by the chairperson.
 - Stand up and address the chairperson or raise your hand to be recognized.
 - If the chairperson calls on you, you may speak.
 - You should not seek recognition when someone else is speaking.
 - After being recognized by the chairperson, state your name and department.
- Address comments to the chairperson.
- Speak clearly and concisely.
- State motions affirmatively (“I move that we...” not, “I move that we do not...”).
- Wait until your motion has been seconded and stated to the membership by the Chair before speaking in favor of your motion.
- If there is no second, the motion is “lost.” The membership will not consider it.
- Once the motion has been presented to the membership, it cannot be changed by you or anyone without the consent of the membership.

Robert’s Rules FAQs:

How do I change the wording of the motion we are discussing?

- Seek recognition from the chair.
- Move to amend the motion and state the change.
- Requires a second, is debatable, & requires a simple majority to pass.

How do I end the discussion so we can vote?

- Seek recognition from the chair.
- “I move the previous question” or “I call the question.”
- Requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a 2/3 majority to pass.

I want the chairperson to enforce the rules about time limits and the number of times people are allowed to speak (these rules are made by the chair unless they are in your by-laws). How do I do that?

- This motion can be when someone is speaking.
- State “point of order.”
- The current speaker sits down, and you state the rule being violated.
- No second, no vote, & chair decides, but the group may appeal the decision and overturn it with a majority vote.

I think discussion should continue but don’t want it to go on all day. How can I achieve this end?

- Seek recognition by the chair.
- Move to limit debate - be specific about when you want it to end (e.g., at a particular time, after everyone who hasn’t spoken yet has a chance to, etc.).
- Requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a 2/3 majority to pass.

What should be done if motion needs more attention, investigation, or discussion than we can give it today?

- Seek recognition by the chair.
- Move to refer the motion to a specific committee.
- Be specific as to when and how you want the committee to report on the matter.
- Requires a second, is debatable, and requires a simple majority to pass.

I made a motion and now I regret it. What can I do?

- Seek recognition by the chair.
- Ask “permission to withdraw” the motion.
- Chair asks if there are any objections.
- If none, the motion is immediately withdrawn.
- If there is an objection, the request to withdraw becomes a motion which must be seconded, is not debatable, and requires a simple majority to pass.

How do I ask the maker of the motion or someone who has already spoken a question?

- Make a “point of information.”

- Ask chair if they will allow a question, then direct question through the chair to the person.
- Do not address the person directly.
- Can be made at any time, as long as no one is speaking.
- The chair has the right to decide whether or not to allow the question.

I have no idea what is going on. How can I request clarification?

- Make a “parliamentary inquiry.”
- Ask the chair to explain what is going on.
- Can be made at any time as long as no one is speaking.

Sources

- Robert, Henry M. *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. 12th ed. New York: PublicAffairs, Hachette Book Group, 2020.
- Robert, Henry M., et al. *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised, In Brief*. 2nd ed. New York: PublicAffairs, Hachette Book Group, 2020.
- Zimmerman, Doris P. *Robert’s Rules in Plain English: A Readable, Authoritative, Easy-To-Use Guide to Running Meetings*. 2nd ed. New York: Collins Reference, 2005.

The following websites may also be useful:

- <http://robertsrules.com/>
- <http://robertsrules.org/>

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