

Formal meeting procedure

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Introduction

Being Chairman of a meeting is a position that calls for the use of a number of skills if the meeting is to be smooth running and successful. The Chairman is simultaneously required to be the host, introducer of speakers, umpire of disputes, delegator of tasks, guide and leader of discussions, coordinator of the various elements of the meeting, encourager of the diffident and tactful controller of the boisterous.

Meetings must be run to a time table with strict starting and finishing times, so getting it started on time is your first priority. Make sure you receive a copy of the Agenda several days before the meeting and are thoroughly familiar with the program. Get all speakers to advise you of their topic and, in turn, make sure they know for how long they are speaking and when their warning bells will be. There should be no surprises. Start easing people towards their chairs a couple of minutes early so the meeting can start right on time.

Once you are under way remember that although it might be the members' meeting, it is your job to make sure that it runs smoothly. If certain members persist in being rowdy assert your authority and you will find that the meeting will invariably support you. Never be afraid to ask for "on the spot" advice from experienced members or the coach of the meeting.

General Business is the time when the Chairman is likely to be under the greatest pressure, so become familiar with Rostrum publications such as "Take the Chair" and "Toward Better Meetings" both of which explain the rules of debate and offer advice on how to apply them. The art of chairmanship is to handle the motions presented to you so that the will of the meeting is achieved smoothly and everyone who wishes to contribute is allowed to do so.

It is your duty to ensure that all rostered speakers have the full and undivided attention of the audience and are made to feel most welcome. Introduce them according to the formula below and always lead the applause.

Finally, when you have reached the end of the meeting, farewelled the visitors and thanked the coaches, you will be able to look forward to your next time in the chair when you will be able to apply all the lessons you have learned tonight.

How to Introduce a Speaker

"To speak for _____ minutes, with a warning bell at _____ minutes, to the topic _____ will you please welcome Speaker _____ Then lead the applause.

Always keep the speaker's name until last otherwise the applause will drown out the rest of what you have to say.

Motions and how to handle them

As Chairman you will be required to deal with two kinds of motions. SUBSTANTIVE MOTIONS and FORMAL or PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

A substantive motion

This is a formal proposal put before the meeting for the purpose of eliciting a decision. It is worded by the mover to achieve its purpose in each case, but the Chairman must ensure that the wording conforms to predetermined requirements before accepting the motion.

Once accepted by the chairman and seconded, a substantive motion becomes the property of the meeting and can only be altered by a formal vote to amend it.

Formal or procedural motions

These are working motions that help the processing of substantive motions through the meeting. They have fixed wording and are subject to strict conditions about who can move them and when.

Priorities

A CALL FOR A QUORUM has priority over all other business.

A POINT OF ORDER has priority over a Procedural Motion

A PROCEDURAL MOTION has priority over a Substantive Motion.

Call for a quorum

Takes priority over all other business and can be raised at any time during the meeting.

What to do

Order a count of voting members present, then give your ruling. No vote required.

(A quorum at Club 6 is 10 voting members)

Point of order

Must state that the Rules of Meeting Procedure ("Standing Orders") are not being followed. Has priority over all other business except a Call for a Quorum.

What to do

Ask mover to explain PO, then give your ruling and implement it if necessary. No vote is required. Never ignore a point of order, but make sure it is really a PO.

Dissent from the chairman's ruling

Can be moved by anyone present, but must be moved immediately after the ruling has been given.

What to do

Ask mover to explain reasons for dissent. Explain your ruling. Call for a seconder. If none, suggest vote will be lost. If seconded, allow brief debate followed by vote.

IF CARRIED : Reverse ruling IF LOST: Continue as before.

A substantive motion

Requirements

- Must begin "Mr Chairman, I move _____"

- Must be clearly and unambiguously worded (Never accept a motion you don't understand)
- Must propose a specific course of action.
- The action proposed must be within the jurisdiction of the Club
- Must be handed to the Secretary in writing.
- Decide if you will accept.
- Allow mover to explain
- Call for Seconder. If none, motion lapses. If seconded, seconder must speak or reserve the right.
- Call for speaker against motion. If none, put motion.
- Alternate speakers. For and against. (No one can Speak twice)
- At the end of the debate the mover has 'A Right of Reply "but no new material.
- Have the motion read and take vote. Both 'For" and "Against" (If votes are equal, the motion is lost)

An amendment

Once a substantive motion has been accepted by the Chairman and seconded, it becomes the "property of the meeting" and can only be altered by a formal amendment.

An amendment is a change to the detail of a motion. It must never negate the motion. Anyone can move an amendment, except the mover and seconder of the original motion, but everyone can speak to the amendment. The mover of an amendment has no right of reply.

How to handle an amendment

- Decide if you will accept.
- Allow mover to explain.
- Call for seconder. If none amendment lapses. If seconded, seconder must speak
- Call for speaker against. If none, put amendment.
- Otherwise as in normal debate. Make sure discussion is focussed on the amendment and not on the original motion, and remember the mover of an amendment has no 'right of reply"
- Put amendment to vote, after explaining its effect on the motion.
- After vote resume discussion on motion – amended or not.

Procedural motions

Are used to facilitate the business of the meeting. When dealing with them it is important to remember that, as presented, they are only motions and have no validity until a vote has been taken.

A Procedural Motion cannot be moved or seconded by anyone who has moved, seconded or spoken to the substantive motion or amendment which is " the Question before the Chair ", so when confronted with a Procedural Motion, ask yourself is this person eligible to move this motion ?

There are many Procedural Motions , the following are some of the most frequently used in a Rostrum meeting.(Refer " Toward Better Meetings " for more detail)

"That the question be put"

Can be moved at any time during a debate, but not by anyone who has moved, seconded or spoken to the motion.

What to do

No seconder required and no debate permitted. Put vote immediately.

IF CARRIED : Put vote on substantive motion , after giving mover " Right of Reply"

IF LOST : Proceed with debate.

"That the speaker no longer be hear"

Can be moved at any time by anybody who has not spoken to the motion.

What to do

If you think motion is reasonable, call for a seconder. If none, motion lapses.

If seconded, allow brief debate and put vote.

IF CARRIED: Speaker can take no further part in "Question before the Chair"

IF LOST: Debate continues.

"That the motion lie on the table"

Can be moved at any time by anyone who has not taken part in the debate, but not interrupting speaker.

What to do

No seconder required and no debate permitted. Put vote immediately.

IF CARRIED: Debate ceases and motion "Lies on Table" until raised by a subsequent motion (Club 6 has a "local rule" that any motion not raised within two weeks, will lapse)

IF LOST : Debate continues.

"That the motion be raised from the table"

Cannot be moved by anyone who has moved, seconded or spoken to the substantive motion.

What to do

No seconder required and no debate permitted. Put vote immediately.

IF CARRIED: Debate on original motion continues from exactly where it was suspended,

i.e. No one who has spoken previously can speak again.

IF LOST: Motion remains on table.

"Standing orders be suspended"

DEFINITION: The Rules of Debate, the Agenda, and any "local" rules concerning the conduct of the meeting are loosely referred to as "Standing Orders." When this motion is carried these rules

are temporarily suspended and the meeting is dissolved into an open discussion. Decisions made during this period are not binding on the Club. If moved before the debate has begun, can be moved by anyone. If not, rules apply.

What to do

Call for seconder. If seconded, put vote. No debate.

IF CARRIED: Meeting is dissolved into an "open discussion"

IF LOST: Standing Orders continue to apply.

"Standing orders by resumed"

Can be moved by anyone and must be carried before the meeting can revert to normal procedure.

What to do

Handle as for previous motion.