

Robert Rules!

**Understanding
and
Implementing
Parliamentary
Procedure**

**NJSBA Field
Services**



New Jersey School Boards Association

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What is Parliamentary Procedure?



"Look, the herd instinct has gotten us this far — why do we need parliamentary procedure now?"

- Set of proven “rules” used to move business along during a meeting.
- Guidelines – not laws.

System that allows an organization to conduct business in a fair and democratic manner.



History Lesson

Henry Martyn Robert

First Edition of
Robert's Rules
1876

Currently 11th Edition



Why Use Parliamentary Procedure?



Why Use Parliamentary Procedure?

- Provide structure to the meeting
- Keep order
- Everyone has the opportunity to participate in discussion
- Observe the rule of the majority
- Protect the rights of the minority



5 Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

1. Discuss one subject at a time.
2. Allows for free and full discussion of each item presented.
3. Every board member has equal rights.
4. Carries out the rule of the majority and respects the rights of the minority.
5. Merges the personality and desires of individuals into the larger unit of the organization.



Key to Effective Use



- Parliamentary procedure is based on motions.
- The key to parliamentary procedure is learning and understanding these motions.
- Don't become overwhelmed by the list of motions – concentrate on those that will be used on a regular basis.



Begin at the Beginning

Quorum – the number of members that must be present to hold a legal meeting.

In NJ, that is a majority of the full membership of the board.



"Well, let's get started now we've got a quorum."



What Can You Do Without a Quorum?

- Set the time for another meeting
- End the meeting if it was already in progress
- Take a short break (recess)
- Meet as a committee for information and discussion only, taking no action



Importance of the Agenda

- Formal listing of business to be conducted at a meeting. Lists topics in order to be discussed.
- Usually developed by the President, Superintendent, and Business Administrator and distributed to the members in advance.
- Should be approved by the membership at the beginning of the meeting.(Best Practice)
- To change the order requires suspension of the rules – 2/3 vote.

AGENDA



Motions

A motion is a formal way to bring an idea, proposal or plan of action before a group.

**Main
Motions**

**Subsidiary
Motions**

**Privileged
Motions**

**Incidental
Motions**

**Bring Back
Motions**



Main Motions

Introduces a principal subject.

- ❑ Only one main motion may be considered at a time.
- ❑ Must be disposed of before another can be considered.
- ❑ The way to start a motion is to say ... “I move ...”
- ❑ Main motions require a second and they are debatable and amendable.
- ❑ A majority vote is required to pass a main motion.



Steps to Process a Motion

- Member addresses and is **recognized** by chair – gives them the floor.
- Member makes the **motion**, “ I move..”
- Motion is **seconded** (if required)
- **Chair restates** the motion – now Board business
- Board discusses/**debates** motion
- Chair repeats motion and **calls the question.**
- **Vote** is taken and result announced.



Using the Lingo

Bd Member #1

“I move the district implement the standards-based reports cards for the 2017-2018 school year.”

Bd Member #2

“I second the motion.”

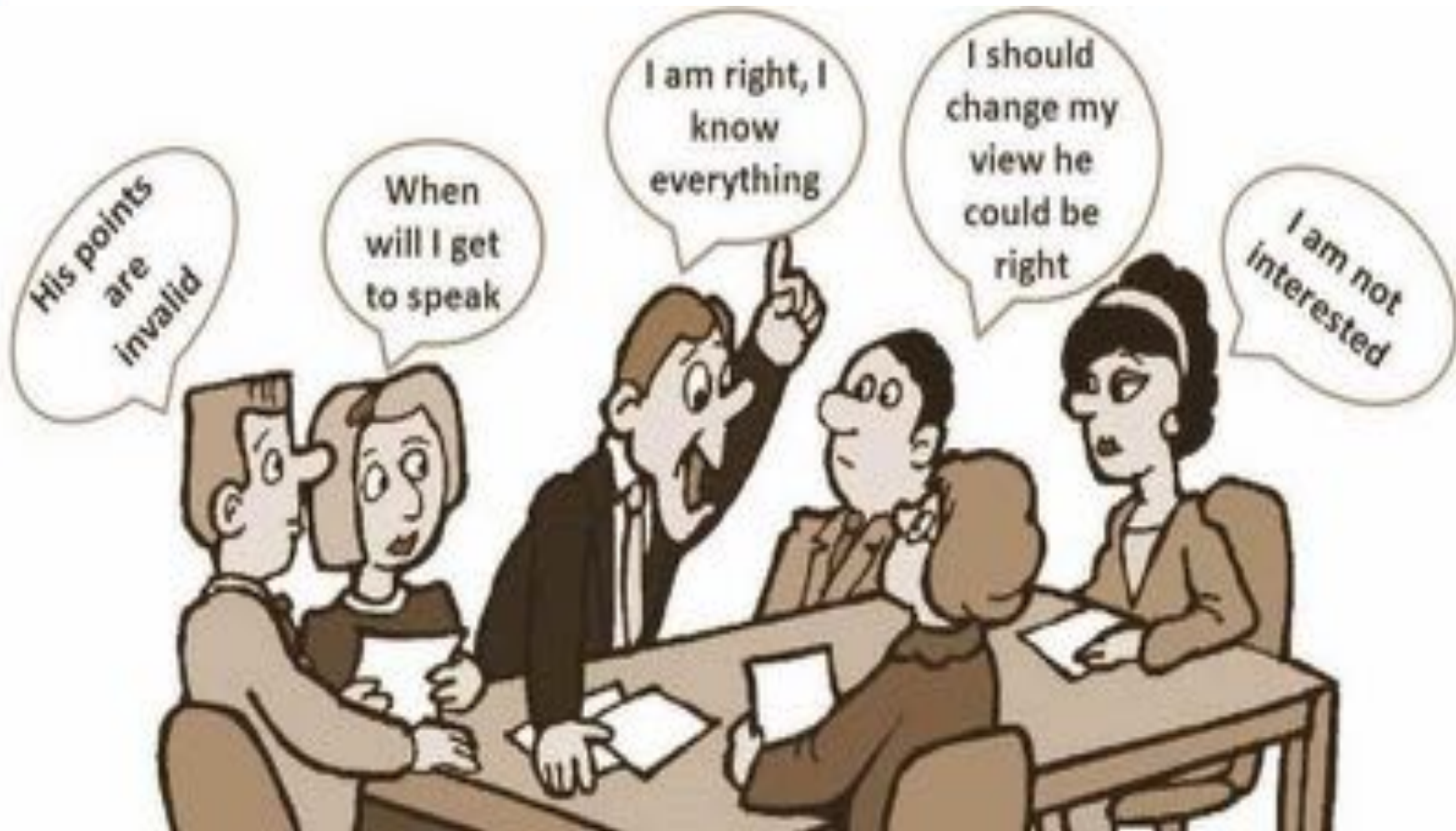


Bd President

“The motion to implement standards-based report cards for the 2017-18 has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion?”



Debating a Motion



Debating a Motion

- President recognizes each speaker and gives all members chance to speak.
- Debate should be confined to the question being considered.
- Avoid using members' names during debate.
- During debate, all remarks should be addressed to the President, not to other board members.

Board Civility Allows for Productive Debates



Amending a Motion

Main motion can be altered by:

- Adding a word or phrase
- Removing part of the motion but not changing the intent
- Substitution – removing part of the motion and inserting a word or phrase

Subsidiary Motion

Motion to amend is not a main motion – there is only one main motion on the floor at a time.

AMENDMENT



Using the Lingo

Bd Member #1 I move that we amend the main motion to read: the district will implement the standards-based report cards for the ~~2017-2018~~ **2018-2019** school year.

Bd Member #2 “I second the motion”.

Bd. Pres. The motion to amend the main motion to read...has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor? Any opposed. Hearing none the motion carries.



A Word of Caution

The vote taken was on the Amendment only.

We will now need to vote on the main amended motion.

Amendments are voted on in inverse order.



Other Subsidiary Motions

(These help the Board in dealing with the main motion.)

- **Lay on the table** sets aside a motion to take care of something more urgent. Not meant to delay its consideration.
- **Postpone definitely** To delay action on a pending motion until the next meeting.
- **Refer to a committee** for more information or investigation
- **Call the question** stops debate on the main motion and calls for a vote.



Incidental Motions

Deal with questions of procedure for handling a motion but not the motion itself

- Not debatable

➤ Point of Order

Identifies a breach of rules

➤ Withdraw Motion

If was seconded, need approval from that member.



➤ Point of Information



Using the Lingo

Bd Member: Point of Order

Bd President: Yes, your point?

Bd Member: I wanted to clarify, we are voting on the amendment only.

Bd President: That is correct. The vote is for the amendment to the main motion.



Using the Lingo

Bd Member 1: I move to withdraw the amended motion of implementing the standards-based report cards for the 2018 -2019 school year.

Bd President: Board Member 2, since you seconded the original motion, are you in agreement? Yes. Are there any objections? Hearing none, the motion carries.



Privileged Motions

Do not relate to the main motion but take precedence over the motion. Pertain mostly to the rights of the Board or Board members. Not debatable.

- Call for the orders of the day
(Return to order in the agenda)
- Recess
- Adjourn
- Question of privilege (e.g. can't hear)



Using the Lingo

During the debate of the main motion to implement the standards-based report cards...

Bd Member: Question of privilege

Bd President: Your question.

Bd Member: I am unable to hear the other side of the table due to the noise from the fan.

This motion does not need a second, there is no debate and no vote. The chair decides.



Bring Back Motions

- **Take from the table** places an item that was temporarily laid aside back before the Board at the same or next meeting. Not debatable.
- **Rescind** is a motion to repeal a previously adopted motion (at different meeting) entirely.
- A motion to **Reconsider** a previously decided motion. Must occur at the same meeting. Member offering the motion must have voted on the prevailing side.



Voting Methods

- **Voice vote**
- **Rising**
- **Roll call**
- **Ballot**
(secret ballots not permitted)

Tie vote shall cause a motion to be defeated.



Voting Requirements

Various board actions have minimum requirements

- Recorded roll call of majority of full membership
- Recorded roll call of 2/3 of full membership
- Majority of full membership
- 2/3 of full membership
- 3/4 of members present
- Majority of members present



A Word About Abstentions

Abstentions are not considered a vote.

May be due to:

- Member conflicts
- Not enough knowledge to make decision

Do not count as a Yes or a No vote.

Members should not abstain to avoid a tough vote.



Voting

Did it pass?

The board votes on the main motion of implementing Standards Based Report Cards for the 2018-2019 school year.

4 YES

4 NO

1 Abstention

Did it Pass?

The board votes to hire Jesse Adams as their new Facilities Director.

4 Yes

2 No votes

3 abstentions due to conflicts.



Elections

Nominations:

- Does not require a second.
- Member can only nominate one candidate, including himself, for each office.
- Member can be nominated for more than one office.

Voting:

- Vote on the candidates in the order they were nominated.
- First candidate to receive a majority wins.
- Check bylaws for local procedures.



Minutes

Official document of board proceedings:
A record, not a recording

- Prior to adoption mark as “*draft*”
- Records what was *done* (motions, votes, committee reports)-- **not** what was *said* (no personal comments).
- Public comments – topic and overview.



Approving the Minutes

Q: If a Board member was absent from the meeting in question, is s/he obligated to abstain from approving the minutes?

A: ?????



Approving the Minutes

A: No!

Members of the Board (i.e, the Board itself) are obligated to approve its meeting minutes, unless there are corrections.

A vote of “yes” demonstrates confidence in—

- The veracity of the Board Secretary
- The fact that a meeting of the Board took place
- The correctness of the process used to prepare the minutes



How to Approve the Minutes

1. Minutes are distributed in advance of the meeting.
2. Chair states that the minutes have been distributed, and asks if there are any corrections.
3. If any corrections are brought forth, they are noted in the minutes.
4. The chair states, “The minutes are approved as written (or corrected).”

No objections, only corrections!



Test Your Knowledge

Yes or No?

- As president you can change the order of the agenda to facilitate the work of the meeting.
- Jane nominates herself for president. There is no second. Is Jane a candidate?
- Tabling and postponing a motion are the same.
- Can John make a motion to “rescind” a 5-4 vote that was just taken 15 minutes earlier?
- Jane “calls for the question.” This automatically ends debate.
- John wants the minutes amended to include his remarks on testing.



Final Thoughts

