

**Nothing could possibly go wrong  
at your meeting tonight...**



**Think again!!!**



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**If you haven't felt this way at a  
meeting...**



**Eventually you will**



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**Effective Meeting Management and  
Parliamentary Procedure**

**Today we will talk about:**

- Fundamentals of Robert's Rules of Order
- Agenda preparation
- Tips on meeting minutes
- Handling public input sessions
- Six steps in making motions
- Handling amendments to those motions
- The 10 most used motions
- Anything else you want to talk about



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### Governmental Bodies in Conflict

The three most common reasons why councils are in conflict:

1. Council members not “staying on their page”
2. Forgetting that individual council members have no authority
3. Ineffective and chaotic meetings



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### The reasons may vary but many times...

We have met the enemy and he is us!!



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### Basic Principles of Robert’s Rules of Order

- One thing at a time, one person at a time, one time per meeting
  - Discussions must be germane to the pending question
  - No interruptions
  - All decisions of the chair may be appealed
  - Simple majority rules ... usually
  - Everyone is equal (including the chair unless authority is given)
  - Right to know what will be discussed
- The Bottom Line**  
The sole purpose of a meeting is to determine the collective will of the majority in a fair and efficient manner



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**How formal should your meetings be?**

Some informality is acceptable  
but not much!



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**Common procedural mistakes**

1. The chairman dominating the body
2. Improper handling of motions
3. Forget to manage the pace of the meeting
4. Discussion on multiple issues at same time
5. Poor agenda planning
6. Allowing surprises
7. Allow member to speak without recognition
8. Allowing discussions without a pending motion
9. Allowing too much informality
10. Allowing negatively worded motions



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**What is the status of the hearing?**

**What is the status of the main motion?**

**6 of 7 voting (3 "yes" and 3 "no")**

**What would a "no" vote mean?**

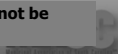
**What does a "yes" vote mean?**

**Main Motion**

**I move that we not accept the recommendation of the City Manager**

**City Manager Recommends**

**I recommend that a hearing not be granted to employee Smith**



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### Procedural tools to make your job easier

- Some limits on debate are good
- Chair may make motions and vote .. cautiously
- Motions to close debate should be allowed
- Parliamentary Inquiry
- Keep discussions prior to a motion to a minimum
- Liberal use of “unanimous consent”
- Consent agendas
- Controversy requires a high level of formality



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### It All Starts Here ...

#### *Setting the Agenda*



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### The agenda is a map

A map to follow throughout the meeting

- Is meant to:
  - Inform members, staff and the public of issues to be discussed
  - Is meant to be “limiting” in nature
  - Should not be added to the night of the meeting
- Developed by the presiding officer & senior staff
- Belongs to the members – not the Chair



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### The agenda...

- Consent agendas
- Be careful of agenda items called “general comments by members” or “public comments”
- Be careful about indicating “action” items versus “information” items
- Adding items to the agenda within 24-hour of meeting is prohibited! Add final actions to the agenda at the meeting only under rare, emergency circumstances – SC Code 30-4-80(A)



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### A Word About Minutes

- Minutes are legally binding once approved
- Minutes record actions not words of individuals
- Approval indicates the minutes accurately reflect actions of the council
- Must be available within reasonable time
- The “I didn’t mean it” request from a council member
- Draft Minutes are a public record



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### What to include in Minutes

- date, time and place of meeting
- members present & absent
- a record of all votes taken with vote indicated
- each member’s vote when requested
- summary of comments but not a transcript
- other information requested by a member
- minutes are a record of what was done, not what was said



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### What to leave out of Minutes

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- opinion or interpretation of secretary
- judgmental or flowery language
- motions that are withdrawn
- name of person seconding the motion
- language of reports (use attachments)
- transcript-style writing



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### Public participation during council meetings

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- There is a public attendance law ... not a public participation law. In most cases, council determines if there will be public participation.
- Have sign-up procedure and other “rules”
- Consider limiting comments to agenda items
- Time limit – stick to it
- Comments limited to issues – not individuals
- Don’t debate the public during the meeting
- Establish follow-up procedures



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### A few time-savers

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- State your motion prior to discussion
- Without objection, we will ...
- The Chair making a motion can save time...  
*but do so cautiously*
- Are you ready to vote?
- Your comments are out of order at this time
- What is the pleasure of the group
- Postponing consideration can save time



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## Adopting Motions

Let's see how to handle the adoption of motions ...

with a few s  
along the way



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## All actions begin with a motion



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## Adopting a Motion

- Step 1 A member makes a motion
- Step 2 A member seconds
- Step 3 Chair states the question
- Step 4 The members debate
- Step 5 The members vote
- Step 6 The chair announces the vote and "next steps"



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### Step 1 – Making Motions

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- Motions in writing to avoid confusion
- Member must be recognized by chair
- When motion poorly worded, chair has the option to assist in clarifying
- Chairs CAN make motions - cautiously
- Get a motion on the floor quickly



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### Step 2 – Seconding Motions

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- Only implies a member wishes to hear discussion
- If no second - what then?
- Some items do not require a second
- No need for recognition for seconds
- Misunderstandings about seconding



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### Step 3 – Chair States The Motion

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- Formally places motion before members
- Transfers ownership to the full group
- Chair restates the motion during debate
- Chair reminds group if straying from question
- After this step, the group must do “something” with the motion



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### Step 4 – Members Debate

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- Maker of motion speaks first
- Limit debate on immediate pending question
- Require recognition prior to speak
- Members who have not yet spoken recognized before other members given a second chance to speak



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### Step 5 – Members Vote

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- Repeat motion before voting
- Common types of voting
  - ✓ General consent
  - ✓ Voice voting
  - ✓ Show of hands
  - ✓ Roll call
- Tie vote is a lost vote



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### A word about abstentions...

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- No one is required to vote
- Sometimes members are prohibited to vote – conflict of interest under Ethics Act – which is a recusal
- An abstention is not a “no” vote
- An abstention is not a “yes” vote; however, sometimes an abstention “counts” as a “yes” vote
- A majority of those present and voting versus majority present and eligible to vote



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### **Step 6 – Announcing Result**

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- Announce outcome of vote - give number of those in favor, those opposed, and, if you wish, those who abstain
- Announce any appropriate “next steps”



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### ***Amending Motions can lead to chaos***

***A “must learn” skill  
for everyone***



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### **A Common Pitfall ... Handling of Amendments**

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- Three types of amendments .. delete (or strike), insert, or strike and insert
- Main motion limited to an amendment and an amendment to an amendment
- Amendments limited to immediately pending motion and must be germane
- Friendly Amendments – its sort of of like clarifying assistance from the Chair



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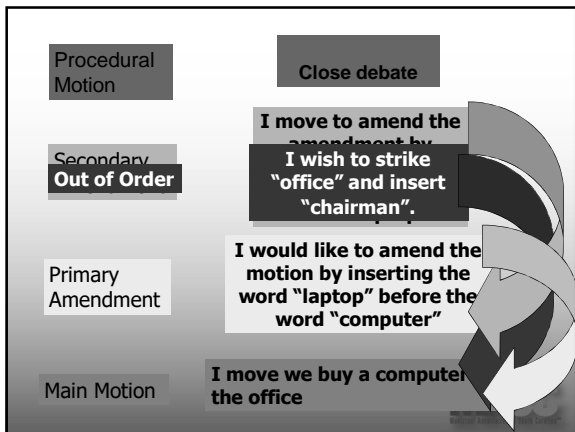
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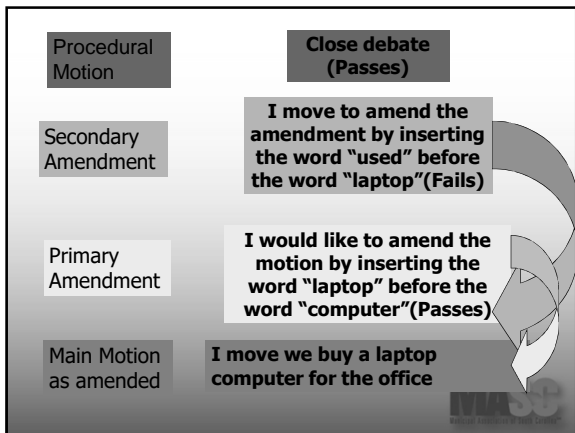
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### "Must-Know" Motions

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1. Adjourn
2. Recess
3. Lay on the table
4. Close Debate
5. Limit or extend debate
6. Postpone to a certain time
7. Refer to Committee
8. Secondary amendment
9. Primary amendment
10. Main motion



**MASS**

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### Simplified Chart of Parliamentary Motions

Motion	Debatable	Amendable	Vote
Adjournment	no	no	majority
Recess	no	yes	majority
Lay on the table	no	no	majority
Close debate	no	no	2/3
Limit/Close Debate	no	yes	2/3
Postpone definitely	yes	yes	majority
Refer to committee	yes	yes	majority
Amend amendment	yes	no	majority
Amend main motion	yes	yes	majority
Main motion	yes	yes	majority




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### Simplified Chart of Procedural Motions

Motion	Debatable	Amendable	Vote
Point of order	no	no	none
Inquiry	no	no	none
Object to consideration	no	no	2/3
Roll call	no	no	none
Appeal decision of chair	yes	no	majority
Divide question	no	yes	majority
Suspend rules	no	no	2/3




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### Recommended Reading




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**Resources**

**Municipal Association of South Carolina**  
www.masc.sc  
Keywords: "parliamentary procedures"

*Presentation prepared with the assistance of  
Dr. Paul Krohne*



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**Any Questions?**



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