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**Parliamentary Procedure:  
Robert's Rules & Alternatives**

South Carolina Municipal Attorneys Association  
Annual Meeting & CLE Seminar – December 4, 2025

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Senior Assistant General Counsel  
North Carolina League of Municipalities

**NCLM**  
NC LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES

WORKING AS ONE.  
ADVANCING ALL.

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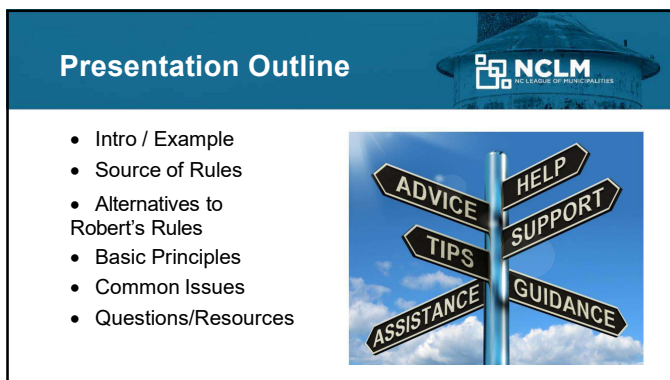
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**Presentation Outline**

- Intro / Example
- Source of Rules
- Alternatives to Robert's Rules
- Basic Principles
- Common Issues
- Questions/Resources




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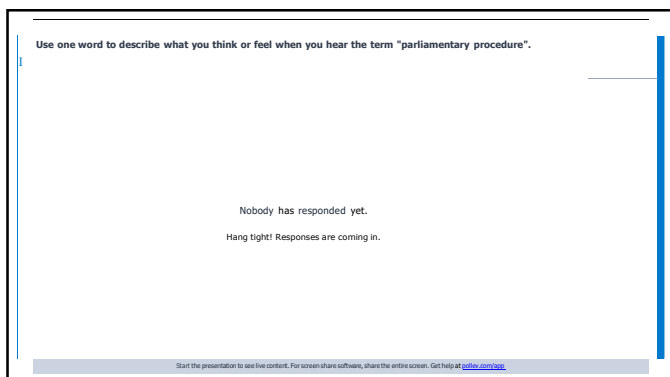
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Use one word to describe what you think or feel when you hear the term "parliamentary procedure".

Nobody has responded yet.  
Hang tight! Responses are coming in.

Start the presentation to see live content. For screen share software, share the entire screen. Get help at [info@nclm.org](mailto:info@nclm.org).

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**Rules of Procedure**

**With Rules**



**Without Rules**



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**“Real World”  
Example**



• Background

- A Village Board of Trustees (a city council) is considering a resolution to censure one of its own members in relation to a criminal conviction.
- The board member at issue is absent from the meeting. His criminal conviction relates to domestic matters, not public business.
- The chairman introduces a motion to adopt a resolution to censure and awaits a second...

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## “Real World” Example



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFeA-pM0o8Y>

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## DISCUSSION

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## What Is Parliamentary Procedure?



### • Parliamentary Procedure

- Generally accepted rules, precedents, and practices used in the governance of deliberative assemblies.
- Originated in British Parliament.
- Procedures are intended to help bodies work out satisfactory solutions to the greatest number of questions in the least amount of time.
- Rules can also help maintain decorum, ascertain the will of the majority, and facilitate orderly transaction of the business of a public body.

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## Source of Rules



- Statutes. See Section 5-7-250.
- Local rules
- [Robert's Rules of Order](#) (Robert's Rules)
- Other Alternatives to Robert's Rules
  - [Suggested Rules of Procedure for a City Council](#), UNC School of Gov't
  - [Cannon's Concise Guide to Rules of Order](#), Hugh Cannon
  - [Meeting Procedures, Parliamentary Law and Rules of Order for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#), James Lochrie
  - [Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure](#), NCSL

## Source of Rules (Section 5-7-250)



**SECTION 5-7-250.** Council meetings; rules and procedures for meetings; freedom of information; emergency ordinances.

a. The council, after public notice shall meet regularly at least once in every month at such times and places as the council may prescribe by rule. Special meetings may be held on the call of the mayor or of a majority of the members.

a. The council **shall determine its own rules and order of business** and shall provide for keeping minutes of its proceedings which shall be a public record.

b. **Procedures for meetings** of a municipal governing body shall not conflict with the provisions of the general laws of the state with regard to freedom of information.

### LOCAL RULES OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

A Motion Is:	You Say This	Second?	May be Amended?	Debatable?	When voted?
1. Adjourn the Meeting	"I move that we adjourn."	Yes/No	No	No	Majority
2. Receive the Minutes, Call a Date Certain	"I move that we receive and..."	Yes/No	No	No	Majority
3. Take a Brief Recess	"I move that we take a brief recess."	Yes/No	No	No	Majority
4. Suspend the Rules, Consider Matter out of Scheduled Order	"I move that we suspend the rules and consider..."	Yes/No	No	Yes	2/3 Vote
5. Divide a Complex Motion	"I move to divide the motion; please specify the wording of the divided motion."	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Majority
6. Bring Consideration to Order or From Order	"I move to bring consideration of the matter/ motion to order within 100 days of adjournment."	Yes/No	No	Yes	Majority
7. Suspend Order Consideration or Table Question	"I move that we table a motion until the next 100 days session reopens; call members' names to table the question."	Yes/No	No	Yes	Majority
8. Call Division or Call the Question	"I move that we vote on the previous question."	Yes/No	No	No/Yes	2/3 Vote/ Majority
9. Postpone to a Certain Time	"I move that we postpone this matter until..."	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Majority
10. Refer to Committee	"I move that we refer this matter to a committee."	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Majority
11. Amend a Motion	"I move that this motion be amended by..."	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Majority
12. Introduce Business (Main Motion)	"I move that..."	Yes/No	Yes	Yes	Majority
13. Amend Previous Action	"I move that we rescind the previously adopted motion..." (If properly presented...)"	Yes/No	No	Yes	Majority
14. Rescind Something Already Adopted or Declined	"I move that we rescind our action relative to..." (Must be done by majority of previous action)"	Yes/No	No	Yes	Majority

## Local Rules of Parliamentary Procedure

## 7 BASIC PRINCIPLES



1. The council's authority is **defined** by state law.
  2. The council must act as a **body**.
  3. A **quorum** is necessary for the council to act.
  4. Every member has an equal right to **participate**.
1. There must be an opportunity for **debate**.
  2. The council must act by **majority vote**.
  3. Meetings should be characterized by **fairness** and **good faith**.

Credit: UNC School of Government

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## THE AGENDA



- The council is **ultimately responsible** for its own meeting agendas
- Preparation of a **preliminary agenda** may be **delegated**
- How to **add an item** to the agenda?




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## Quorum



- Number of members who must be present to conduct business.
- Defined as "majority of membership"; more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of total seats




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- What if a member steps out of a meeting?




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## Majority Vote



- The number of votes needed for a motion to pass.
- Different types of majority:
  - Simple: a majority of those present at a meeting.
  - Positive: a majority of the total membership of the body, whether they are present or not.




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## Role of the Presiding Officer



- Presides and maintains order
- Recognizes speakers; rules on motions
- Directs discussion; enforces decorum
- Mayor Pro Tem can preside in absence
- Mayor may temporarily yield chair to join debate




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## MOTIONS



### • Everything Begins with a Motion

- A motion = formal proposal for board action
- Two types:
  - Main (Substantive) – introduces new business
  - Procedural – manages how business is handled
  - Multiple procedural motions may be pending (limited by priority)
- Seconds & Discussion
  - Local Rules should specify when required
  - Discussion may occur without a pending motion, but members should request the floor first

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## ROBERT'S RULES MOTIONS




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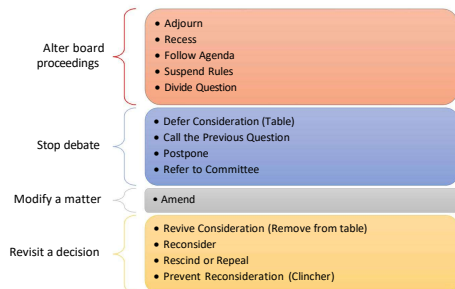
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## UNC SUGGESTED RULES PROCEDURAL MOTIONS




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## Priority of Motions



- Motion to Adjourn
- Motion to Continue Meeting to a Date Certain
- Motion to Take a Brief Recess
- Motion to Divide a Complex Motion
- Motion to Remove from the Table
- Motion to Table the Question
- Motion to end debate (Call the question)
- Motion to postpone consideration of a motion to a certain time
- Motion to Refer to a Committee
- Motion to Reconsider
- Motion to Amend
- Main Motion

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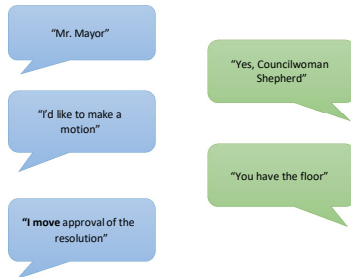
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## MAKING A MOTION




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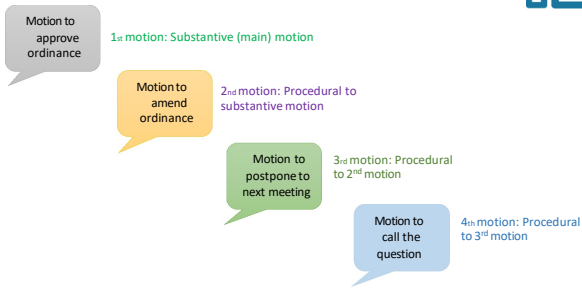
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## Considering Motions




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## Main Motion



- "Yes Councilperson you have the floor"
  - "I move to adopt the proposed motion..."
- "Does any one wish to be heard?"
  - "I support the motion because..."
- "I now call for a vote on the proposed motion."




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## Motion to Amend the Main Motion



- "I move that this motion be amended by..."
- "I move to amend the motion to amend by..."
- "I now call a vote on the motion to amend the proposed amendment"
- "I now call a vote on the proposed and amended motion"
- "I now call a vote on the main motion, as amended."




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## DEBATE



- The elected who makes the motions speaks first
- All members should have a similar opportunity to speak
- Extend courtesy to each other and the public in the debate




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### Motion Practice

"I move to **reconsider** the action just adopted by this Board..."

"I move to **refer this item to the ... Committee**"

"I move to **postpone consideration** of a motion to a certain time..."

"I move to **call the question**"

"I move to **end debate**"




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### Motion Practice

"I move to **defer consideration...**" (Table the Question)

"I move to **revive consideration...**" (Remove from the Table)

"I move to **divide the question...**"




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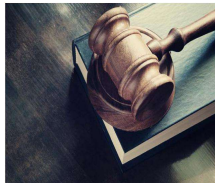
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### Motion Practice

"I move to take a **brief recess**"

"I move to **continue this meeting** until next Tuesday at 6:30 pm."

"I move to **adjourn**"




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## Motion Practice



Motion to Suspend the Rules

Motion to Rescind

Motion to Appeal a Procedural  
Ruling of the Mayor




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## Point of Order or Information



• **Point of Order:** A point of order is used when a member believes that the rules are being violated. The member raising a point of order may interrupt a speaker if the breach is urgent. The chair rules whether the point is "well taken" or "not well taken." It is not debatable and no second is required.

• **Point of Information:** A point of information is used to ask the chair or another member for factual clarification. It cannot be used to argue or debate. The member wishing to raise a point of information should wait until the current speaker yields the floor (unless urgent and allowed by chair). The chair will recognize the point of information and direct a response.

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## VOTING



• The chair should repeat the full motion after the conclusion of debate but before the vote.

• Recusals and abstentions should be properly observed and recorded in the minutes.

• A tie vote means the motion is defeated.

• Voting may occur by unanimous consent, voice vote, show of hands, or roll call. Remember that FOIA requires the minutes to contain "the substance of all matters proposed, discussed or decided and, at the request of any member, a record, by an individual member, of any votes taken."

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**Questions and Comments?**

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