

Roberts Rules For Virtual Council Meetings

Robert's Rules of Order is a procedural process to follow that helps keep a meeting moving forward, focused, and helps ensure fairness.

Here's a basic introduction to Robert's Rules of Order.

Chairs maintain timing of the meeting

The Chair's job is to make sure that the meeting is following the timelines set in the agenda and looks out for the need for motions or problem solving.

Staying on topic is everyone's responsibility

Keeping the conversation linked to the agenda topics will help the Chair and facilitators to guide the group's progress

Key statements to remember

There are strategies you can use in this process:

"Point of privilege": When a person says, "point of privilege," they do as a polite way to interrupt the current speaker. This is used when something is happening that is causing problems or distracting people (someone's mute button is turned off, problems are occurring hearing the speaker, etc.)

"Point of information": A speaker can be interrupted when someone raises a "point of information." It can be used when someone is confused and need some assistance understanding the speaker

"I move that we table this topic": This is a phrase that is offered in order to halt a current discussion for the time being until a later period of time. A "second" is needed for this motion to be tabled and a majority vote is needed to pass.

Agenda topics

Topics for discussion must be listed on the agenda. If a topic of interest is not listed on the agenda, that topic needs to be built into the next meeting if it is decided to be important.

The Chair calls the meeting to order before any decisions are made.

The meeting minutes from the prior meeting are reviewed approved at the beginning of the meeting with a motion and second needed before majority vote. A "second" is needed to approve the meeting minutes and a majority vote is needed to pass.

The Chair reviews the meeting agenda. The Chair can change agenda items but must do so before topics are addressed out of order of the agenda. A vote is not required for updating the agenda.

Making motions

Motions are decisions that needs a majority of council members and that will be documented in the minutes. A motion is a call for discussion of, and ultimately a vote on, a proposal. Some items don't require a vote. The rhythm of making a motion includes:

- A motion is made
- A second is provided by someone
- Time is set aside for discussion so that people can ask questions
- The vote is called

If someone makes a motion but the group decides it needs to be edited....

- "I move to amend the motion in the following way...."
- Any changes to the original motion need to be seconded by a member
- Discussion is encouraged again
- The chair restates the final edited motion
- The Council votes on the final motion

Discussion is important because the council does not want to make multiple motions to edit a motion. This decreases the number of motions for editing a proposal.

Two types of online voting

Formal Motion: If the motion is a formal action, roll call will be made and everyone's vote will be recorded. Formal motions require a majority of people attending. A quorum (more than half of council members in attendance) must be in place for the vote to count. People are asked to say "agree," "disagree," or "abstain"

Informal Motion: Some decisions do not require a roll call because it isn't as important. An example is a motion to end the meeting. When an informal motion is made the responses can vary (e.g., thumbs up, agree, disagree, thumbs down).