

December 30, 2019



Parliamentary knowledge: Making motions

Members all have three fundamental rights in an organized society.

They are the right to make motions, to speak in debate and to vote. But there is a proper way to make and process motions.

Here is a quick guide to making a motion.

1. Gain recognition from the chair (or whoever is presiding). Once granted recognition say, "I move to _____".

The chair may tell you that your motion is out of order, and give a reason. If you are not certain of the wording of your motion you can ask for assistance. It is best practice to write your motion down (your hard-working secretary will thank you!) Do not go into arguments or explanations of your motion yet!

2. The motion must be seconded. The chair may or may not ask for a second. Members do not need to be recognized to offer a second nor do seconds need to be included in the minutes.

- at this point the maker of the motion can still change their motion or even withdraw it!

3. At this point the chair will State the Motion. The motion now belongs to the body. It cannot be changed or disposed of without their consent. The chair will say, "It has been moved and seconded that _____".

4. Debate! The maker of the motion has the right to speak first. Gently remind the chair of this fact if they forget. The chair will attempt to alternate pro and con arguments, and may even ask that members line up on opposing sides if a matter is particularly contentious. In the case of the in-process bylaws revisions, each member may speak for one minute, twice for each item to be decided and overall debate on one particular item may only last ten minutes unless extended by a 2/3 majority.

- This is when amendments may be offered.

- Debate may end in two ways, either by no speakers wishing to be recognized or by Calling the Question.

- To Call the Question you must be recognized by the chair. Once recognized you simply state that you "Call the Question". There is no debate and no amendments permitted. If 2/3 of the body votes in favor then debate on that question ends, and the chair moves to step 5. If the motion fails then debate resumes.

5. Once debate ends the chair will Put the Question, they will say, "The question is on the adoption of the motion that ____". The chair may explain what the outcomes of a Yay/No vote will be if necessary. They will then ask, "All those in favor say Aye.".... "All those opposed say No." If the chair is in doubt of the results, they may ask for a rising or counted vote.

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6. The chair then announces the results of the vote by saying, "The Ayes/Nos have it and the motion to ____ is adopted/lost."

Very seldom are motions handled this formally. I personally prefer to err on the side of informality if the members will be happier with the results. Also, in order to process motions like that you need members who are informed as well.

Now, you may be thinking to yourself that this is not exactly the procedure we followed in November when we started our review of the proposed bylaws revision. And you are right! For one thing motions coming from a committee do not need a second. Also, if a motion/item is expected to be non-contentious the chair may ask to adopt a proposal Without Objection. If a member objects then the motion is handled as any other.

Hopefully this is helpful to members and will expedite the process at our January CC and special CC meetings!

Happy New Years from your Rules Chair,
Keri Capen

