

## **Parliamentary Procedure for Non-Parliamentarians**

When conducting extension board meetings, the following basic rules of parliamentary procedure will permit meetings to run more smoothly; and the chair will preside with more confidence.

### **Motions**

- The chair may call for reports, make announcements, suggest items for consideration, etc. without a motion.
- For the board to take any official action, the item for action must be presented as a motion. Frequently, discussion will begin on an item of concern prior to a motion being made. If the chair senses that the issue raised is more than a casual comment, it may be necessary to ask for a motion so the matter can be properly considered. The motion then requires another person's "second" before it becomes an issue for official consideration. If there is not a "second", the chair shall announce that the "motion dies for lack of a second."
- The chair must assure that all sides are heard, that no one person dominates the discussion or becomes too repetitive, and that the vote is called for as soon as all points appear to have been made. Request the secretary to read the motion before asking for the vote; otherwise, there may be confusion on what the final vote may actually mean.
- A record of the votes on motions should be kept, with the votes recorded so those reading the minutes will know who voted for and against the motion. If everyone votes in favor of a motion, record that the motion carried unanimously. If the vote is mixed with some for the motion and some voting against, record the vote as motion carried with seven affirmative votes and two no votes with "Joe Smith" and "John Doe" voting no. Any abstaining votes should be recorded, noting the name of the member abstaining. Any abstaining vote is considered a "no" vote.

Source: [\*Handbook for County Extension Councils and District Governing Bodies\*](#)

### **Amendments**

- Amendments tend to cause confusion. The responsibility of the chair is to keep the items clear so members know exactly what is being discussed and what is being voted on.
- At any time during the discussion of a motion, a member may move to amend the motion by changing, deleting, adding, substituting, etc. If the motion to amend receives a second, it then becomes the item for debate. (Some members tend to go back and discuss the main motion, so the chair needs to keep the discussion focused on the amendment.)
- During the discussion, an amendment may also be amended. This may create a deeper confusion. The same rules of a second, discussion and vote are followed. However, an amendment of an amendment may not be further amended. It must be approved or defeated, after which the discussion reverts to the amendment in its original form or as amended.
- After the vote has been taken on an amendment, the results of the vote should be announced. The secretary then reads the original motion as it now stands (in its original form or as amended) and again opens the discussion.

- If things get confusing, it is best to stop and ask the secretary where the discussion or motions or amendments currently stand. If the secretary is also confused (as can happen), the chair has the obligation to make a decision and state at which point the process will start again.

For example, you may ask the person who made the original motion to please restate their motion, or to restate an amendment. Above all, do not get panicked into taking a vote on something when it is not perfectly clear what is being voted on or what the vote will mean. This is especially true if the issue is highly emotional or controversial.

## **Voting**

- Most issues are decided by a simple majority and can be voted on by voice, a show of hands, or standing (called a division of the house).
- See additional information under *Motions*.
- To force debate to stop and to vote on a motion requires a privileged motion which is stated as, “I move the previous question.” This privileged motion requires a 2/3 majority to be passed. If the motion to stop debate is passed, the motion or amendment that was being discussed must immediately come to a vote without further discussion. A request from the floor for “question” or “call the question” is not a motion and you may ignore the request. Such a statement, however, probably indicates that the members are getting frustrated so the chair may want to discourage further discussion and request a vote.

## **More Complex Issues**

- If someone on the board is well versed in parliamentary procedure, the chair may want to appoint him/her as parliamentarian. However, this does not relieve the chair from the responsibility of final decisions on points of order or procedure.
- Items such as “to table”, “to suspend the rules”, “to reconsider”, “division of the question”, “questions of privilege”, etc. are beyond the intent of this paper. The publication *The Meeting Will Come to Order: Simplified Guidelines for Parliamentary Procedure* is available in the extension office.

<http://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/4H440.pdf>