

DEATH BY POWERPOINT



Making Meetings Work

Local Government Leadership Institute
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Parksville

Presented by Don Schaffer
City of Victoria

or

Motion Sickness

and how to avoid it

What we will talk about

By the end of the hour we will have discussed:

- “the rules” and where they come from;
- Motions, their different disguises, and how to make them;
- The role of the chair;
- The role of ‘Rules of Order’; and
- The high road and how to take it

The rules

- Local governments are creatures of the province, according to the Constitution
- As such, we exist by enactment of the Provincial Government
- The Province lays out what we can and cannot do in two enactments:
 - The Community Charter for cities
 - The Local Government Act for regional districts

Community Charter

- Division 2 of Part 5 spells out the general rules:
 - Council can only act by resolution or bylaw
 - A majority of members present decides motions (except in special circumstances)
 - Each member present must vote (no abstaining!)
 - A tie defeats the motion
 - Quorum established in Charter

Community Charter (2)

- Each Council or Board *must* establish procedures by bylaw (hence the Procedure Bylaw)
 - How resolutions and bylaws must be passed
 - Provide for taking and certification of minutes
 - Provide for public notice of meetings
 - Establish rules for designating acting mayor
 - First Council meeting after a general election

Local Government Act

- Provisions of the LGA generally mirror those in the Charter
- Requirement to enact procedure bylaw is the same
- S.794 references the provisions of the Charter
- If basic rules are the same from town to district, it's easier for officials to move from meeting to meeting

Bylaws and resolutions

- S. 122 of the Charter provides that councils may act only by bylaw or resolution
- If an enactment says you must act by bylaw, you can act only by bylaw
- What's the difference?
- Generally, resolutions direct staff and bylaws regulate behaviour of public at large
- Not always that simple, but that's a start

Conduct and Debate

- Each of your procedure bylaws will have a section called 'Conduct and Debate' or 'Council Proceedings'
- Touches on important points
 - All questions and comments go through Chair
 - How to address fellow members and staff
 - Who gets to talk and when
 - Use of respectful language, consequences of not
 - What happens if you don't behave

Motions

- Motions are how the wishes of Council members get debated and decided
- Any number of terms used to describe and name them – primary, secondary, subsidiary, dilatory
- Primary motions are the ones that arise from recommendations
- Secondary motions generally amend primaries

Motions 2

- After a motion is made, deliberations are governed by the Procedure Bylaw
- May divide main motion to give consideration to different aspects of action
 - Motions to amend or to refer may be debated and amended
 - Motions to table, to refer or to call the previous question are not debateable
 - ‘Tabling’ motions for debate later in meeting

Motions 3

- Resolutions that have been adopted may be:
 - Reconsidered, subject to time limits
 - Rescinded, but motion can only come from member who voted in favor of original motion
- Charter also provides that Mayor has authority to place resolution on table for reconsideration

Role of the Chair

- The *Charter* designates the Mayor as the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation
- Among small number of special authorities is the position of presiding member at all meetings attended
- Chair ensures meeting follows the agenda, motions are in order and clear, and rules on questions of process

Making Meetings Work

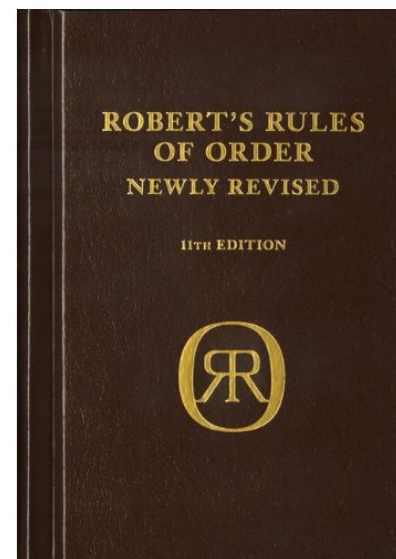
- Understanding how to make a motion is just the first step in productive and effective decision-making
- Constructing decision making is more about human relationships than process discussions or administrivia

The three keys

- Be thoughtful
- Be respectful
- Be prepared
- Have a quick trip through 12 suggestions on how to make the most of your meetings

The top 12

1. Don't get married to 'the rules'
 - It's easy to focus on going by the book
 - The book is usually this book:
 - The edition shown is the super-deluxe version in soft leather with a silk bookmark
 - It's just like a Bible – but it's not *the* Bible. That's your procedure bylaw



Take it from the expert



Eli Mina, a registered professional parliamentarian, makes a living working with organizations on making meetings run better

- He will not be shy about telling you that meetings can be hijacked by members insisting on strict adherence to rules

The top 12

2. When you make a motion, make a *clear* motion

- One of the biggest mistakes people make at meetings is having a discussion about an issue and then having a member say, ‘I move that’
- Guaranteed, your recording secretary will be sitting with deer-headlight eyes thinking, ‘move *what*’?
- Always make it clear what you want done

The top 12

3. Write down your motion

- If it's written down, you can always bring the discussion back to the point
- If discussion wanders people sometimes lose track of the motion – you will make a real contribution if you can rescue the debate
- Plus, your clerk and recording secretary will love you, especially if the motion arises from debate, or is a complicated multi-part motion

The top 12

4. Amend the motion carefully

- Always bear in mind the law of unintended consequences
- Don't use an amendment to negative the main motion – it's better to defeat a motion than try to amend with a contrary direction
- Friendly amendments? No such thing . . . An amendment is an amendment, and it's helpful for your colleagues to just make an amending motion

The top 12

5. If your motion arises from debate:

- Let debate on the issue finish before trying to make the motion that arises from the discussion
- Let the issue be decided before you make your motion, either passed or defeated
- Might be an idea to move to have staff report on your issue than force a decision that might result in something illegal or unwise to take place

The top 12

6. Bring ideas forward in a notice of motion

- Notice of motion puts your idea into play without forcing a decision without due consideration
- Bring your idea forward, let your colleagues see it and ask questions about it before requesting they make a decision
- Don't be afraid to ask your CAO or clerk for help in drafting the motion

The top 12

7. Don't 'weaponize' your motion

- It's considered bad form to try to halt debate that's not going your way with a tabling motion
- Same with referring to another meeting, or postponing debate unless there's a good reason
- You will lose the respect of your colleagues and it will take a lot of effort to get it back

The top 12

8. Conserve your political capital

- Not every member of Council has to speak to every issue that comes forward
- If your council is like most, there will always be concerns about meetings taking too long
- Sometimes it's because there's too much work
- Sometimes it's because everyone has to weigh in
- It's sometimes better to reserve comments on issues and make insightful comments

The top 12

9. Read your agenda package

- Please don't be 'that guy' – the one that shows up at the meeting, opens the agenda envelope and starts to read
- Everything on the agenda package is important to someone
- Making an informed decision requires preparation, and that's what your constituents expected when they voted for you

The top 12

10. Don't succumb to pressure tactics

- Can't guarantee much, but bet the farm that you will be hit up for money from dozens of good causes, all of which deserve support
- They will make presentations and ask for money or staff
- Refer those requests to staff for consideration, if only to make sure that the money is there to spend

The top 12

10. Public hearings call for special care

- Governed by strict rules about notice, fairness and timeliness
- Council's role is to hear from both proponents and opponents and then decide on issue
- Not the right time to enter into debate with either side
- Not the right time to apply pressure to modify proposal

The top 12

11. Take the high road

- The view is better from up there
- Letting go of personal insults that might get tossed your way by the public or your colleagues will earn you respect
- Focusing on issues rather than personalities is the best way to make a decision
- If you wrestle with a pig you'll both get dirty, but the pig will enjoy himself

The top 12

12. Remember why you ran for Council

- You wanted to serve your community
- It's not about you or your personal agenda, it's about the community and its residents
- A respectful and thoughtful approach will defuse unnecessary conflict
- People need to be heard, so you have to listen

So, to conclude:

1. Be respectful
2. Be thoughtful
3. Be prepared

Like any human endeavour, successful councils operate primarily on trust - be trustworthy



DEMOCRACY

It's a lot more like this than you think...