


## How to Avoid Chaos at Meetings October 25, 2017

*Karen Goldman, MMC  
CML Municipal Clerk Advisor Program*

The contents of this presentation reflect the view of the presenter, not of CML.



## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- Chair responsibilities
- Board member responsibilities
- Meeting agendas
- Meeting minutes
- Effective meeting practices

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## CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Distribute agenda in advance of meeting
- Maintain control of meeting
  - Follow *Robert's Rules of Order* or other parliamentary procedures
  - Keep members on track
  - Follow pre-determined time limits
  - Summarize discussion and any follow up steps
  - Maintain meeting etiquette
  - Thank members for participation


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## BOARD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Be prepared
- Arrive on time
- Keep an open mind
- Listen to other members' opinions
- Participate; avoid distractions
- Avoid:
  - Dominating the discussion
  - Conflict situations
  - Side conversations


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## MEETING AGENDAS

- Limit agenda items to 3-5 substantive topics
- Don't overload agenda with presentations and reports; err in favor of group discussion
- Distribute agendas 3-5 days prior to meeting
- Track action items


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## MEETING MINUTES

- Summarize discussion; do not create verbatim minutes
- Identify how each board member voted on action items
- Utilize a consistent format
- Include any follow up action(s) required

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## EFFECTIVE MEETING PRACTICES

- Schedule meeting at reasonable and available time
- Start and end on time
- Utilize parliamentary procedures to move meeting along
- Determine procedures for public comment
- Avoid unnecessary meetings

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## ROBERT'S RULE - MAIN MOTION

- The **main motion**, the most common of motion in parliamentary procedure, introduces a new item of business.
  - All other motions take precedence, i.e., have a higher ranking than the main motion and are considered first.
  - It is the first motion made and the last motion to be voted on.
  - It requires a second and is debatable.
  - It requires a majority vote and can be reconsidered.

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## ROBERT'S RULE - SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

- A **subsidiary motion** is one applied to other motions to help members dispose of main motions. It is important to note that they never stand alone. The most common subsidiary motions include:
  - **Amend:** (needs 2<sup>nd</sup>, majority, debatable) allows a motion to become more specific when it is unclear or broad. This is the most common of subsidiary motions. An amendment must be *germane*, that is, it must have bearing on the subject of the motion being amended.
  - **Postpone to a Certain Time:** (needs 2<sup>nd</sup>, majority, debatable) ("continue to a date certain") allows the assembly to postpone consideration of a question to a future time or date. It can be amended to change the date and/or the time.

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## ROBERT'S RULE - SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

- **Postpone Indefinitely:** (needs 2<sup>nd</sup>, majority, debatable) is used if the governing body declines to take a position on the main question. Its adoption kills the main motion.
- **Lay on the Table:** (needs 2<sup>nd</sup>, majority, not debatable) is used when members wish to set aside a motion without specifying a time to resume debate on the issue
  - Commonly the motion to lay on the table is used when another matter of pressing importance has arisen.
  - It is often ruled out of order if its intent is to "kill" debate, is often confused with "postpone indefinitely" and "postpone to a certain time" and is also mistakenly known as a motion "to table".
  - A question that has been laid on the table may be removed from the table with a motion to *take from the table* through a majority vote.

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## ROBERT'S RULE - RESTORATIVE MOTION

- **Reconsider:** (needs 2<sup>nd</sup>, majority vote, debatable) allows a group to reconsider the vote on a motion. The effect of the motion is to suspend the action the original motion would have required.
  - It may only be made by someone who voted on the prevailing (winning) side of the motion.
  - There is a time limit on any motion to reconsider, generally during the same or next meeting.
  - If the motion to reconsider is successful, then a vote on the original motion is taken as if it is the first time the motion was considered.
  - The motion cannot be amended nor can the motion to reconsider be itself reconsidered.

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