



Board Meeting Procedure Challenges

BCASBO 2026 Spring Conference

Board Meeting Procedures



- 1) Board Policy
- 2) Robert's Rules - usually referred to in Board policy
- 3) School Act – mandate and authority, election of chair/vice chair, conflict of interest, quorum, passage of bylaws, in camera meetings, conduct

Principle Based Meeting Procedures



- Some rules are straightforward and not subject to interpretation. An example of this is establishing quorum.
- Other rules are principle based with application depending on the circumstances
- Many of the procedures in Robert's Rules are intended for large assemblies and not a Board with less than 10 members.

Flexibility within Robert's Rules



Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition:

- *“... any presiding officer will do well to bear in mind that no rules can take the place of tact and common sense on the part of the chair...” (page 427)*
- *“Procedure in small Boards. In a board meeting where there are not more than about a dozen members present, some of the formality that is necessary in a large assembly would hinder business.” (Page 464)*
- *“In ordinary meetings it is undesirable to raise points of order on minor irregularities of a purely technical character, if it is clear that no one's rights are being infringed upon and no real harm is being done to the proper transaction of business.” (page 236)*

Fundamental Principles (OFEEEDS)



- **Order** (one person speaks at a time; Chair or designated person keeps the speakers' lineup)
- **Focus** (focusing on the group's core mandate; staying on topic; establishing outcomes)
- **Efficiency** (on a per topic basis and on a per person basis)
- **Equality** (ensuring proper notice and equal opportunities to speak and share insights)
- **Decorum** (remaining civilized and respectful; focusing on issues, not personalities)
- **Safe environment** (making it possible to share unpopular but necessary points without fear)

Order



- One person speaks at a time only when recognized by the Chair
- Chair or designated person keeps the speakers' list
- debate on a proposal “*is permitted only in reference to a pending motion.*” (Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised 12th edition- page 30)
 - This applies to a pending amendment as well
- The level of formality depends on the culture of the Board and whether the matter under discussion is contentious.
 - Robert’s Rules provides for non-controversial decisions being made by Unanimous Consent (or General Consent).

Focus



- The Chair should ensure discussion focuses on the approved agenda and the business at hand
- The Chair should rule that a motion is out of order when:
 - It conflicts with the rules (legislation/regulation, contract, or Board policy)
 - It is clearly inconsistent with the mandate of the Board
 - It does not relate to the pending business (i.e. does not align with approved agenda)
 - It conflicts with a motion already adopted or is substantially the same as a motion already decided (without following proper process)
 - Another motion is pending
 - It is vague/unclear (cannot be actioned)
 - It violates basic parliamentary rules (ex. requires previous notice)

Efficiency



- In addition to maintaining focus, the Chair should ensure the duration of discussion is not excessive.
- If a board does not have rule addressing this matter, a member can speak no more than twice to motion and for not longer than 10 minutes each time. (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 12th edition- pages 367 - 368)
- Most Board's have policy addressing the number and duration of speeches (SD63 (Saanich) limits speeches to two minutes each time, unless the Chair determines the need to do otherwise).
- When should the Chair consistently enforce the rules limiting speeches?

Equality



- **Previous Notice of Motions (or Notice of Motion)** – previous notice is required before moving certain motions such as those that change or nullify previous motions. (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 12th edition- pages 112 - 114). Specific rules requiring notice of motion are often in Board policy as well.
 - This requirement is important for ensuring equality as members are provided the opportunity to prepare for the debate of a significant matter
- Managing the speaker list and duration of speeches is important for preventing one or a few members from dominating. First time speakers should be given priority over second time speakers.
- The decision to close debate is made by the group, collectively, and not unilaterally by the Chair or one member. While a Chair may seek agreement to close debate, if it is not unanimously agreed to, a 2/3 majority vote is required to close debate on a motion under Robert's Rules of Order. (See Previous Question in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 12th edition - pages 187 - 198).

Decorum and Maintaining a Safe Environment



- Decorum - remaining civilized and respectful; focusing on issues, not personalities. (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 12th edition- pages 371 - 373)
- Safe environment - making it possible to share unpopular but necessary points without fear.
- Board Policy – Meeting Procedures and Trustee Code of Conduct
- School Act Provisions
 - 70(1) - The chair or other member presiding at a meeting of the board may expel from the meeting a person, other than a trustee, who the presiding member considers guilty of improper conduct.
 - 70(2) - A majority of the trustees present at a meeting of the board may expel a trustee from the meeting for improper conduct.

Finding the Right Balance



- Meeting procedures should be appropriate for a small Board. Avoid excessive formality and cumbersome procedures intended for large assemblies such as “Committee of the Whole”
- Use a principle-based approach when applying the rules, but very important that the rules are applied **consistently** for all members.
- **POINT OF ORDER!** – do not focus on the interpretation of a stand-alone provision in Robert’s Rules. The focus should be on whether the decision-making process was fair and if anyone’s rights have been violated.

The Decision Maker is the Board



- The objective of effective meeting procedures is to further the work of the Board by creating equality amongst decision makers to efficiently conduct business.
 - This will at times require the Chair to adjust the approach in order to prevent one or a few decision makers from dominating the meeting.
- Once a decision is made, it is no longer a majority decision. It is a collective decision, and the minority is duty bound to accept it as a legitimate collective decision and move on. If there is a need to revisit the decision later, individuals should do this within established processes.

Other Considerations



- **Minutes** - Verbatim minutes should be avoided, unless required for legal reasons. Instead, decisions-only minutes or anecdotal minutes should be taken (capturing key points, with minimal or no attribution of comments to persons).

What should be In Camera?

- School Act 69(2) *“If, in the opinion of the board, the public interest so requires, persons other than trustees may be excluded from a meeting”*
- Personal information and information that may harm the financial interests of the Board should be in camera. Does it pass the FIPPA test?

Discussion Questions



What are common challenges when supporting your Chair to run effective meetings? What are potential strategies to address these challenges?