

605 – Suggestions for Conducting the Monthly Business Meeting

FROM ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

HAVE A COPY OF THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS AND THE RULES FOR ORDER HANDY FOR QUICK REFERENCE.

When in the chair, have beside you your Constitution, By-laws, and Rules of Order, which should be studied until you are perfectly familiar with them. You cannot tell the moment you may need this knowledge. If a member asks what motion to make in order to attain a certain object, you should be able to tell him at once. You should memorize the list of ordinary motions arranged in their order of precedence, and should be able to refer to the Table of Rules so quickly that there would be no delay in deciding all points contained in it.

PREPARE IN ADVANCE FOR THE MEETING

You should know all the business to come regularly before the meeting, and call for it in its regular order. Have with you a list of members of all committees, to guide you in nominating new committees.

KEEP THE MEETING MOVING ALONG TO PREVENT "DAWDLING and Rabbit Trailing"

As soon as a motion is made and seconded, distinctly announce what question is before the assembly; so, when a vote is taken, announce the result and also what question, if any is then pending. Never wait for mere routine motions to be seconded, when you know no one objects to them.

HANDLE IMPROPER MOTIONS POLITELY BUT FIRMLY. KNOW THE RULES. HELP

THE MEMBER IN ERROR

If a member ignorantly makes an improper motion, politely suggest a proper one.

If it is moved simply "to postpone the question" without stating a time, do not rule it out of order, but ask the mover if he wishes "to postpone the question indefinitely" (which kills it), or "to lay it on the table" (which enables it to be taken up at any other time); then state the

question in accordance with the motion he intended to make. So, if after a report had been presented and read, a member moves: "Mr. Chairman I move the report be received", the chairman would clarify it with "Mr. W., isn't it your intention to move that the report on "..., just read, be adopted or accepted?" The report has already been received. No vote should be taken on receiving a report, which merely brings it before the assembly and allows it to be read, unless someone objects to its reception.

BE IMPARTIAL - BE FAIR

The chairman of a committee usually has the most to say in reference to questions before the committee; but the chairman of an ordinary deliberative assembly, especially a large one, should, of all the members, have the least to say upon the merits of pending questions.

BE FAIR ACCORD EQUAL TREATMENT TO ALL MEMBERS. PROTECT THE ORDERLY PROGRESS OF THE MEETING BY MAINTAINING YOUR CALM.

Never interrupt members while speaking, simply because you know more about the matter than they do; never get excited; never be unjust to the most troublesome member, nor take advantage of his ignorance of parliamentary law, even though a temporary good is accomplished thereby.

KNOW ALL ABOUT PARLIAMENTARY LAW ... BUT DO NOT TRY TO SHOW OFF YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

NEVER BE TOO TECHNICAL, NOR BE MORE STRICT THAN IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR THE GOOD OF THE MEETING.

Use your judgement; the assembly may be of such a nature through its ignorance of parliamentary usages and peaceful disposition, that a strict enforcement of the rules, instead of assisting, would greatly hinder business; but in large assemblies, where there is much work to be done, and especially where there is liability to trouble, the only safe course is to require a strict observance of the rules. (Reviewed 2024)

