

Parliamentarian Report

November 2, 2024

By Jeanne Audiss

Roberts Rules of Order: Basic Rules

- **Only one subject may be before a group at one time.** Each item to be considered is proposed as a motion which usually requires a "second" before being put to a vote. Once a motion is made and seconded, the chair places the question before the organization by restating the motion.
- **"Negative" motions are generally not permitted.** To dispose of a business item, the motion should be phrased as a positive action to take, and then, if the group desires not to take this action, the motion should be voted down. The exception to this rule is when a governing body is asked to take action on a request and wishes to create a record as to why the denial is justified.
- **Only one person may speak at any given time.** When a motion is on the floor, an order of speaking is prescribed by Robert's Rules, allowing the mover of a motion to speak first, so that the group understands the basic premise of the motion. The mover is also the last to speak, so that the group has an opportunity to consider rebuttals to any arguments opposing the motion.
- **All members have equal rights.** Each speaker must be recognized by the moderator prior to speaking. Each speaker should make clear his or her intent by stating, "I wish to speak for/against the motion" prior to stating arguments.
- **Each item presented for consideration is entitled to a full and free debate.** Each person speaks once, until everyone else has had an opportunity to speak.
- **The rights of the minority must be protected, but the will of the majority must prevail.** Persons who don't share the point of view of the majority have a right to have their ideas presented for consideration, but ultimately the majority will determine what the council will or will not do. Use parliamentary procedure as a tool, not a bludgeon.