ETHICS WEEK 2021
REAPPROACHING ETHICAL VALUES
PARLIAMENTARY EFFICIENCY

or

YOU Can Make Your Meetings Shorter

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“Documents of Authority”/ “Rules of a Society”

(Arranged in order of authoritative hierarchy:)

- applicable primary law (e.g., statutes/regulations)
- the organization’s charter or articles of incorporation
- by-laws or a constitution
- special rules of order
- standing rules of order
- a parliamentary manual adopted as the body’s parl. authority
  - (or, in the authority’s absence or silence, common parliamentary law/general parliamentary law)
- custom
A good chair will anticipate when an action is not controversial and therefore does not merit any extra parliamentary maneuver beyond

“Without objection . . .”
Seconds

• Deliberative bodies should avoid hyperformality over seconds.
• Don’t identify or record members who second a motion.
  • (For one thing, motive may be ambiguous.)
• If at least two members show interest in calling up a motion (such as when it’s moved by a committee or by at least two individuals), you don’t need to worry about the formal “second”—you’ve got your second implicitly.
• Absence of a second is not a fatal misstep.
  • For example, if a vote is taken on a motion, it’s already too late to raise a point of order (and, in any case, such a point of order should fail because a second is already implied by multiple members having voted).
Speaking without Recognition

- Seconds
- “I doubt the vote” (i.e., “Division!”)
- Points of order, privilege
- Appeals
- Objection to general consent/unanimous consent
- Hold an item off of consent agenda
No affirmative abstentions

Hypercourteous repetition

“It’s Moved by Committeemember Archer, Committeemember Baker, Committeemember Charles, Vice-Chairperson Douglass . . . ”

You don’t need a motion to adjourn

If at the end of the agenda, Chair should just ask for U.C.

You don’t need a “call to order” as an express “item # 1” in the agenda.

There may be several calls to order during a meeting (following recesses, disruptions, etc.), and they are all equally important.

RONR, DCMR quotations re hypertechnicality
Advance Notice

--D.C. public bodies are required to include their agenda in their meeting notices. D.C. Official Code § 2–576(5) (section 406(5) of the Open Meetings Act (“Each meeting notice shall include the date, time, location, and planned agenda to be covered at the meeting.”)); accord 3 D.C.M.R. § 10409.2.

--And that may be a good idea for your private body (charity, association, union…) too.

--Wise to pre-release full text of resolutions
   (resolution = a formal motion, printed, often with “whereas”-style preamble)
Holding a *virtual* meeting (Zoom, WebEx, etc.): How do we adjust our procedures?

A *remote* meeting is just a meeting. It’s still perfectly legitimate, . . . if otherwise lawful:

properly noticed, roll-call votes (3 D.C.M.R. § 10409.7(d)), *etc.*

--even in “normal” (non-pandemic) times

. . . so don’t waste time on hyperlegalism.

--*E.g.*, you don’t need to, *e.g.*, pass a standing order or by-law allowing yourselves to meet virtually, let alone state on the record some provision to justify your meeting.
“So…what are some other parliamentary maneuvers we DO have to follow?”

For some examples (this list is not exhaustive):

Any procedure that’s prescribed by legislation, regulation (or other supervening authority such as an umbrella body’s rules)—like, possibly your method of electing directors or officers.

Minutes should use a consistent level of formality/detail. They don’t have to transcribe every point of debate, but they should be predictable in form no matter how complex/simple, or divisive/unanimous the adoption of, a motion was.

Let everybody have a chance to speak in debate before going around a second time.

Treasurer’s reports often need regular/annual auditing, and this probably can’t (and shouldn’t be waived). Specific law might vary depending on your jurisdiction and any umbrella organization.
...and, “movant’s privilege”

RONR: No “movant’s privilege,” no unilateral “friendly amendments”

—RONR (12th ed.) § 12:91, p. 150
Acknowledgments/Incidental Sources:

I consulted:


• Blog, Bethany Prykucki, *No Need To Record that “Second,”* MICH. STATE UNIV. EXTENSION (Sept. 19, 2017), available at canr.msu.edu/news/no_need_to_record_that_second

• Thanks to every one of my OOG colleagues for their supportive and active participation in preparing for this day.
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