

# **A Brief Summary of Roberts Rules of Order (Parliamentary Procedures)**

Robert's Rule of Order provide common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole commission on the same footing and speaking the same language. The conduct of all business is controlled by the general will of the whole membership – the right of the majority to decide. Complementary is the right of the minority to require the majority to be deliberate – to act according to its considered judgment after a full and fair “working through” of the issues involved.

## **How Are Motions Presented?**

### **1. Obtaining the floor**

- a. Wait until the Chair recognizes you.

### **2. Make Your Motion**

- a. Speak in a clear and concise manner, making certain that you are speaking into the microphone and that the microphone is on (by pressing the green button).
- b. Always state a motion affirmatively. Say, “I move that we...” rather than “I move that we do not...”.
- c. Motions can be made utilizing the required actions listed in the staff report. Typically, a draft resolution is included as an attachment in the staff report based on the staff recommendation (for approval or denial of an application), and includes required legal findings.
- d. Since Commission actions on a project (other than continuance or referral to the DRB) must be supported by an adopted resolution, if the action you wish to move is not supported by the draft resolution provided by staff, the motion should be to continue the item (usually to the next meeting date) with direction to staff to prepare a draft resolution supporting the desired action. Rationale for the decision should be provided to staff to assist in preparing the necessary legal findings.
- e. The motion may include desired revisions to the draft resolution, such as changes to proposed findings to more accurately reflect the Commission's decision or changes/additions to proposed conditions of approval.

### **3. Wait for Someone to Second Your Motion**

- a. Another Commissioner will second your motion or the Chair will call for a second.
- b. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.

### **4. The Chair States Your Motion**

- a. The Chair will say, “it has been moved and seconded that we...”, thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.

- b. The membership then either debates your motion, or may move directly to a vote if there is no one wishing to discuss the motion.
- c. Once your motion is presented to the membership by the Chair, it cannot be changed without the consent of the maker and seconder.

**5. Debate**

- a. This is the time for the membership to speak in favor or opposition to the motion, including the maker and seconder of the motion.
- b. All comments and debate should be directed to the Chair, and not to individual Commission members.
- c. It is highly advisable that members of the Commission describe to applicants and other members of the audience the rationale for their position. This may include responses to issues raised by the public.

**6. Amending the Motion**

- a. If there is a desire by any Commissioner to modify the proposed motion, that Commissioner should indicate to the Chair a desire to offer an amended motion. The amendment may suggest revisions, such as additional or modified conditions of approval, revised findings, etc., but should not constitute an entirely different direction (e.g., an amendment to deny an application when the initial motion was for approval).
- b. Once an amendment is offered, the Chair must seek approval of the proposed amendment from both the original maker and seconder of the motion.
- c. If the amendment is supported by both the original maker and seconder of the motion, it becomes the operative motion before the Commission.
- d. If the amendment is not supported by both the original maker and seconder of the motion, it is lost.

**7. Putting the Question to the Membership**

- a. When debate has finished, the Chair asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
- b. The Chair asks those in favor to say, "aye", and those opposed to say "no".
- c. Any member may request an exact count, in which case the Chair or recording secretary will commence with a roll call, in which each member sequentially answers "yes" or "no" as his/her name is called.
- d. A tie vote results in no action. For applications in which the Planning Commission is the final decision-maker, additional motions are necessary until a majority decision is achieved (this could include a motion for continuance until an odd number of Commissioners is present, or for revisions to the project that a majority could then support). For applications in which the City Council is the final decision-maker, a split recommendation may go forward to the Council.