



THE ADVOCATE...

MARCH 2018

FEATURE ARTICLE: ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER (OVERVIEW) &
 MOTIONS

Welcome to THE ADVOCATE ... a newsletter dedicated to all Council Advocates but should also be shared with everyone in your Council and our jurisdiction. This month's newsletter and all previous issues are available on the State web site at www.kofc.ab.ca under Publications.

This month's Feature Article is a primer on Roberts Rules of Order and Motions. It was prepared by our Conferring Officer Dennis Pawlowski as a quick course to familiarize the reader on these two topics and how they relate. A special thank you and recognition to Brother Dennis for providing the material and permitting me to publish this as a feature article.

The FORUM returns next month.

ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER

Why use them?

- Robert's Rules of Order increase the efficiency of a meeting by keeping it "on track". Where the rules are applied: the agenda for the meeting (also known as "Orders of The Day") will be followed; only one issue will be dealt with at a time; and no unnecessary, collateral discussions should ensue. Following the rules results in the efficient transaction of council business and should shorten the length of a meeting.
- The rules ensure an appropriate balance between the speed of decision-making and the openness of discussion. Open discussions foster democratic decision-making and eliminate or reduce mistakes. They also make decisions easier to accept by those who disagree with them, as everyone at a meeting will be given an opportunity to participate and will know how and why decisions were made.
- Following the rules will ensure that everyone knows what is going on. Have you ever been to a meeting where a speaker begins chatting with another member concerning an issue that only the two of them are familiar with or that only concerns the two of them? If you have, then you will know how frustrating and distracting this can be. It, and other conduct like it, can make members feel like outsiders and will

almost certainly waste valuable time. Where “collateral chats” are necessary, they should take place before or after the meeting.

Guidelines based on the rules

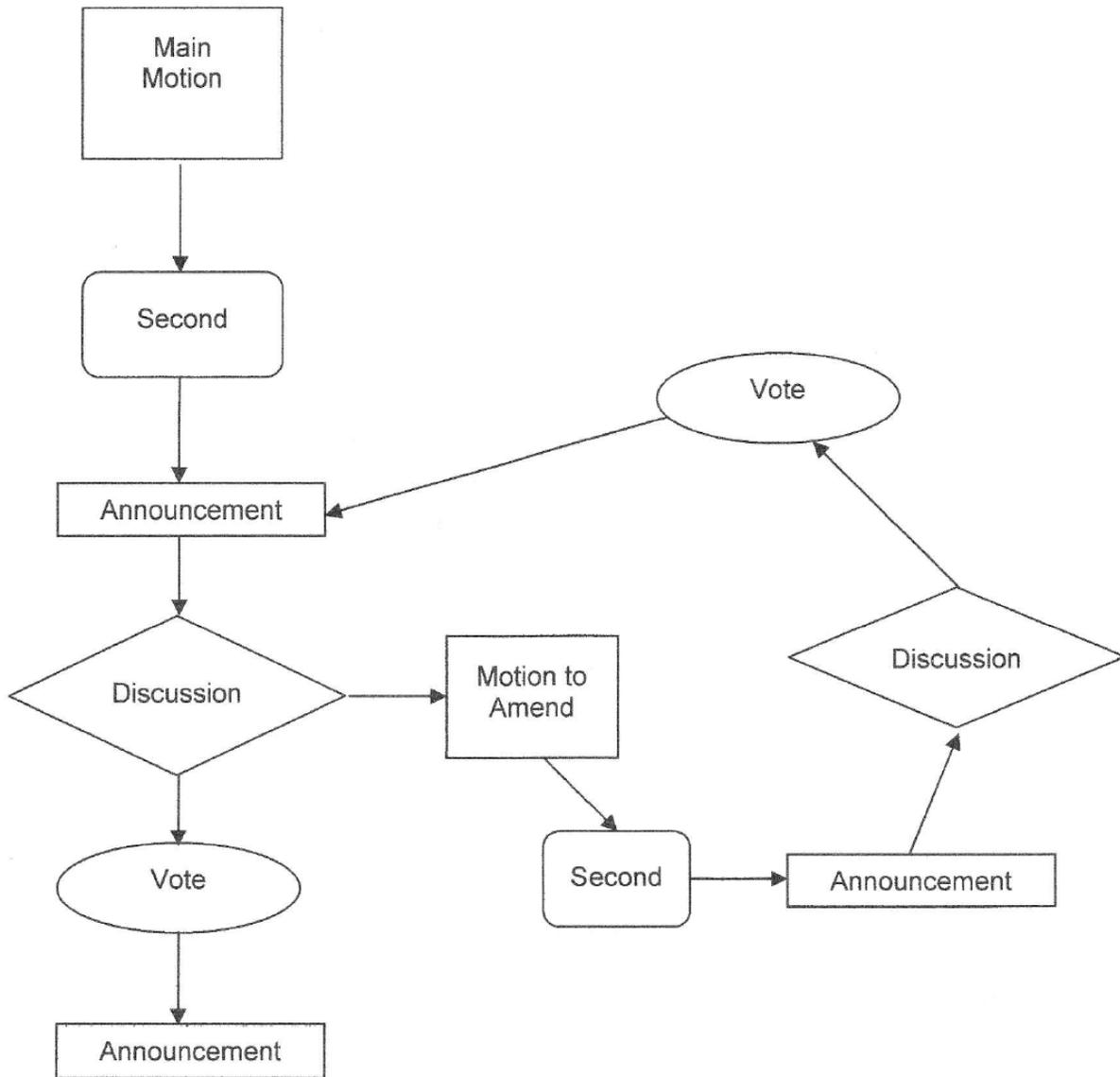
- Follow the Order of Business set out in Section 125 of the *Charter Constitution and Laws of the Knights of Columbus*, noting that some of the items in the Order of Business may be omitted at the Grand Knight’s (GK) discretion.
- Prepare an agenda and provide the members with copies of it prior to the meeting. Use the Order of Business but remove items that will not be dealt with and add specifics under “Unfinished Business” and “New Business”. The specifics under New Business should include “Other New Business” so that members may introduce new business and unplanned motions.
- After each report in the Order of Business, the Grand Knight should give members an opportunity to ask questions or correct errors. A member who wishes to do so should rise and be recognized by the GK before proceeding. All questions should be directed to the GK (just as questions are directed to the Speaker in Parliament). Once a question is asked, the member who asked it should sit and the member who gave the report should stand, be recognized by the GK and provide his answer. After all questions have been answered, the member who gave the report (or any other member) should make a motion to accept the report. Such a motion is not debatable. A vote on the motion may be taken as soon as the motion is seconded.
- Only one person may speak at any given time, and only after being recognized by the GK. The GK should put an immediate stop to collateral chats and should enforce the rule that prevents members from speaking until they have been recognized. As in Parliament, all speakers should address the chair (i.e. GK or Deputy GK, acting in his stead). No speaker should address any other member. This gives the chair greater procedural control over the meeting.
- The GK may yield the chair to the DGK for Service Program reports.
- Reports and the reading of communications are provided to inform members. They are not debatable and should not be used to make motions, other than motions to accept reports. If a member wishes to make a motion in response to the reading of a communication (e.g., a motion to make a donation in response to a letter requesting a donation), the motion should be made under “New Business”.
- The reading of a communication need not be verbatim. If a communication can be summarized without losing any important information, it should be summarized. If the precise content of a communication is important to a member, the member may ask that it be read verbatim, in which case it should be read verbatim.
- Where a motion is debatable, there should be no discussion on it until the motion is made, briefly explained and seconded. If no one seconds the motion, then the GK

must move to the next item on the agenda. If the motion is seconded, then the GK should ask if anyone wishes to discuss the motion. He should NEVER call for vote on a debateable motion without giving members the opportunity to discuss it. Usually, the GK will give the member who made the motion the first opportunity to speak on the motion. Thereafter, the GK should try to alternate between speakers who are opposed to the motion and those who support it. No member should be allowed to speak a second time until all others have been given an opportunity to speak. Once everyone who wishes to speak has done so, the GK should call for a vote.

- There is a procedure for amending a motion (see the “Procedure for Amending a Main Motion” flowchart below). When a member makes a motion to amend one that is already under discussion (the “main motion”), discussion on the main motion stops and the motion to amend it is dealt with, using the procedure outlined above. If the motion to amend is passed, then GK must announce the main motion, as amended, following which discussions on the amended motion may proceed. If the motion to amend is defeated, then the GK must re-announce the original motion, following which discussions on it may resume.
- A member who makes a motion may voluntarily amend or withdraw it. While such a motion is not debatable, it must be seconded and voted on.

The motions discussed above are the most common but there are other motions that facilitate fairness, comfort and democratic decision-making. The accompanying “Chart of Motions and Order of Precedence” (located at the end of the ***MOTIONS*** section) summarizes the procedures for these motions, most of which are explained in the next section ... ***MOTIONS***.

PROCEDURE FOR AMENDING A MAIN MOTION



MOTIONS...

Summary of motions and procedures

- **Privileged Motions**

These motions give members the opportunity to control the general conduct of a meeting and address issues of personal comfort. They include:

- **Motion to adjourn** – This motion may be used to end a meeting that has run longer than reasonably expected.
- **Motion to recess** (e.g. motion to take a break for washroom other purposes).
- **Rising to a question of privilege** – used to deal with issues of safety or comfort (e.g., “Worthy Grand Knight, it is extremely hot in this chamber. Could the air conditioner be turned on?”)
- **Call for Order of The Day** - to address deviations from the agenda (e.g. “Worthy Grand Knight, we seem to be straying from our discussion of the last item on the agenda. Could we please return to it”).

- **Main Motions**

These include the motions discussed in the guidelines provided in the previous section under ***ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER*** plus the following:

- **Motion to refer to a committee** – where a member believes that an issue under discussion requires greater investigation or study, he may move that it be referred to a specified committee (or the Council’s Officers). The motion to refer may include a date for a report by the committee and/or for the return of the issue at the next or another specified meeting.
- **Postpone to a definite time** – where consideration of an issue is taking too much time, a member may move that it be postponed to the next or another specified meeting, for further discussion.
- **Postpone indefinitely** – used to postpone an issue, without a fixed date for its return. This is sometimes used as a tactic to get rid of an unwelcome motion but the tactic will only succeed if the postponement is supported by a vote of more than 50% of the members in attendance.
- **Limit or extend debate** – used to set a timeframe or time limit for discussion of an issue – e.g. “Worthy Grand Knight, I move that the discussion on this motion be limited to 10 minutes”.
- **Call the question** – Where a member believes that a discussion has dragged on for too long, he may “call the question” (i.e. ask that an immediate vote be taken

on the issue being discussed). If the member is supported by a vote of two-thirds of the members present, then the issue must be put to an immediate vote.

- **Lay on the table** – suspends action on an issue until another motion is made to return the suspended issue from the table. The motion to return the suspended issue is called “a **motion to take from the table**”.

- **Incidental Motions**

These include:

- **Rising to a point of order** – Allows a member to raise a procedural issue (e.g. “Worthy Grand Knight, shouldn’t this motion be seconded before you call for a discussion on it?”).
- **Suspend a Rule** – Can be used to suspend any rule in extraordinary circumstances but requires a vote of two-thirds of the members present.

What Members Should Know

All of the members of a council should be familiar with the types of motions explained above. Robert’s Rules are designed to foster democratic decision-making and ensure the fair and respectful conduct of meetings. However, the Rules will not work if only a small, select number of members know and understand them. Every member should know how he may address issues of fairness, safety and comfort. For this reason, this document with its accompanying “Procedure for Amending a Main Motion” flowchart (shown above) and the “Chart of Motions and Order of Precedence” (illustrated below) should be made available to all council members.

A GK should have even greater familiarity with these materials. As the chair of a council meeting, the GK must be able to recognize a motion by its type and know:

- if a member is entitled to make the motion when someone else has the floor (e.g. rising on a question of privilege);
- whether or not the motion is one that must be seconded;
- whether or not the motion is debateable; and
- what percentage of vote is required to dispose of the motion, if a vote is required.

He must be prepared to rule on these and other issues – and control meetings to ensure that they are conducted in a fair and efficient manner. For this reason, he may wish to bring this document to all meetings and use them as an immediate reference, if and when a reference is required. The “Chart of Motions and Order of Precedence” (illustrated below) should be particularly helpful.

CHART OF MOTIONS AND ORDER OF PRECEDENCE				
TYPES OF MOTIONS	Allowed when another has the Floor?	Requires a Second?	Is Debatable?	Vote or Other Action Required to Achieve.
Privileged Motions to:				
Fix a specific time to adjourn	NO	YES	NO	Majority
Adjourn	NO	YES	NO	Majority
Recess	NO	YES	NO	Majority
Rise to a Question of Privilege	YES	NO	NO	Chair Rules
Call for Order of the Day	YES	NO	NO	None
Main Motion	NO	YES	YES	Majority
Subsidiary Motions to:				
Amend	NO	YES	YES	Majority
Refer to a committee	NO	YES	YES	Majority
Postpone to a definite time	NO	YES	YES	Majority
Postpone indefinitely	NO	YES	YES	Majority
Limit or extend debate	NO	YES	NO	Two-thirds
Call the Question	NO	YES	NO	Two-thirds
Lay on the Table	NO	YES	NO	Majority
Incidental Motions to:				
Withdraw a Motion (by Maker)	YES	YES	NO	Majority
Rise to a Point of Order	YES	NO	NO	Chair Rules
Appeal a decision of the Chair	YES	YES	Depends*	Majority
Suspend the Rules	NO	YES	NO	Two-thirds
Motions to Bring a Question Back to the Council				
To take from the Table	NO	YES	NO	Majority
To rescind previous motion	NO	YES	YES	Majority with previous notice given

* Decisions of the Chair cannot be debated if they relate to the priority of business or decorum.

For further information on these two topics refer to Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 11th Edition.

The information presented on Roberts Rules of Order and Motions relates to Council meetings conducted by the Grand Knight of the Council as the "Chair" but in essence may be used in any meeting environment.

Your feedback is invaluable. If anyone has any questions or comments drop me a line. Also, if there is a topic you wish covered in future newsletters just send a note to SA2017@kofc.ab.ca

Thank you ...and God Bless.

Vivat Jesus
Sir Knight John Onyskiw
State Advocate