

FAQs: Running a Meeting

for Library Boards

Many nonprofits and government boards use Robert's Rules of Order when conducting meetings. But what exactly are they? Simply put, Robert's Rules of Order is the most popularly accepted manual of parliamentary procedure. It has a history since 1876 of bringing order to meetings so that boards can accomplish work in an efficient and predictable manner.

DO ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER OUTRANK EVERYTHING?

No. In the chain of command, Colorado and local laws come first, followed by your board's bylaws. After all laws have been observed, then comes Robert's Rules of Order. The reason for this is certain statutes trump what's in the parliamentary manual, like Colorado meeting notice requirements and the definition of a quorum.

WHAT IS A CONSENT AGENDA?

A consent agenda saves time by allowing members of a board to vote for multiple motions at once. It is typically used for things like approving the meeting agenda, minutes from the last meeting or staff appointments. If a board member wants to discuss anything on the consent agenda, the item will be removed and discussed under New or Unfinished business.



WHAT IS THE ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS?

Minutes
Reports of Officers/Committees
Special Committee Reports

Special Orders
Unfinished Business
New Business



WHAT ARE THE BASIC STEPS FOR VOTING?

A MOTION IS MADE.



THE MOTION IS SECONDED.



THE MOTION IS DISCUSSED.



THE BOARD PRESIDENT STATES THE QUESTION, REPEATING THE EXACT WORDING OF THE MOTION TO BE VOTED ON.

Notes:

- Motions should always be made in the positive, e.g. "I move to reject..." instead of "I move that we don't accept..."
- Seconding a motion doesn't mean agreeing with it.

DOES THE BOARD HAVE TO VOTE TO ACCEPT REPORTS?

No. Unless a report includes a recommendation for action from the board, it is considered a statement of fact and does not need to be formally accepted. Many consider voting to accept the financial report a best practice.

WHEN CAN, AND SHOULD, OUR BOARD GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION?

The board may have closed discussions for certain authorized topics, including property transactions, specialized details of security arrangements or investigations, conferences with an attorney to receive advice on specific legal questions, negotiation strategies, personnel matters, et al. It's important to note that, when in executive session, only the authorized topic may be discussed. Actions also cannot be made in closed session, i.e. the board must close the executive session and reopen the public meeting prior to adopting any policies, resolutions, etc. For the full Guide to Colorado's Open Records and Open Meetings Laws, visit coloradofoic.org/open-government-guide.

DO WE HAVE TO ALLOW PUBLIC COMMENTS?

The Colorado open meetings law does not address whether the public should be given an opportunity to comment on issues during meetings of a public body. Any rules that exist, including time limits for speakers and when public comments sit on the agenda, will exist in a library board's bylaws.

MORE QUESTIONS? CONTACT YOUR [COLLEAGUE ON CALL CONSULTANT](#) FOR PERSONALIZED GUIDANCE, AND CHECK OUT "ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER NEWLY REVISED IN BRIEF".