

Order of Business

Based on *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th Edition)*

Part of any meeting should be a systematic plan for the orderly conduct of business. The sequence in which business is taken up during a meeting is known as the "Order of Business." The Order of Business is a blueprint for the meeting and typically has the following components:

○ OPENING THE MEETING

The presiding officer should not call the meeting to order until a quorum is present (or if it appears impossible to get a quorum, the meeting can be called to order and the Chair should immediately announce there is no quorum). A quorum is the number of members entitled to vote who must be present in order for business to be legally transacted. Quorum tends to be defined in the governing documents.

Once a quorum is present, the presiding officer calls the meeting to order by stating, "The meeting will come to order."

○ APPROVAL OF MINUTES

In meetings when minutes are to be approved, the minutes should be distributed to all members so that they do not have to be read aloud. Corrections and approval are most often done by unanimous consent. The presiding officer can ask, "Is there any objection to approving the minutes as read [or distributed]." If there is no objection, the minutes are approved.

○ REPORTS OF OFFICERS, BOARDS, AND STANDING COMMITTEES

The first substantive item of business in meetings is typically hearing from the officers and established boards and committees. The logic in this order of arrangement is to give priority to the items of business from the leadership. Typically, the presiding officer learns in advance who needs to report and only calls on those officers, boards, and committees that have reports.

Reports are generally for information only. In such instances, no motion is necessary following the reports unless there are recommendations to be implemented. A motion "to adopt" or "to accept" a report is seldom wise except when the report is to be issued or published in the name of the organization. On the other hand, it is common that the reporting member end by making a motion if there is a specific recommendation for action.

For example, the Facilities Committee may have studied the buildings and grounds. In her report, the committee chairman might thank the members of the committee for their hard work and explain in detail the committee's position and reasoning. At the end of her report, the committee chair would close by saying something to the effect of, "On behalf of the committee, I move that Building X be renovated at a cost not to exceed \$50,000.00."

○ **REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Unlike standing committees established in the governing documents, special committees do not have continual existence. Instead, special committees exist solely for the purpose of a specific project. For example, a special committee might be created to plan a specific function or event. Special committees typically go out of existence upon their final report.

○ **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Unfinished business refers to matters carried over from a previous meeting. This category of business is sometime incorrectly referred to as “old business.” “Old business” is a misnomer in that unfinished business is not simply items that have been discussed previously. Instead, unfinished business items typically fall into one of several specific categories. For organizations that meet at least four times a year, unfinished business may include: (1) any matter that was pending when the previous meeting adjourned; (2) any matters on the previous meeting’s agenda that were not reached; or (3) matters that were postponed to the present meeting.

The presiding officer should know if there are any items to be considered under unfinished business. As a result, the presiding officer should not ask, “Is there any unfinished business?” Instead, the presiding officer should simply state the question on the first item of business. If there is no unfinished business, the presiding officer should skip this category of business.

○ **NEW BUSINESS**

Much of the work in a meeting is accomplished during the heading of new business. In this category of business, members can introduce any new item of for consideration (unless there are notice requirements that must be considered). In some instances, the presiding officer may be unaware of what items of business will arise under new business.

The presiding officer introduces the heading of new business by asking, “Is there any new business?” Any member can then introduce new items of business by making a motion and obtaining a second. Following the consideration of each item, the chair repeatedly asks, “Is there any further new business?” This process continues until there are no additional business items.

○ **CLOSING THE MEETING**

In most assemblies the presiding officer can adjourn the meeting without waiting for a motion to adjourn. If all items of business have been considered, the presiding officer can ask, “Is there any further business?” If there is no response, the presiding officer simply states, “Since there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned.”

If custom or tradition requires that a motion to adjourn be made, the presiding officer can ask, “Is there a motion to adjourn?” Once the motion is made and seconded, the presiding officer can ask, “Is there any objection to adjourning the meeting? Hearing no objection, the meeting is adjourned.”