



## PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE FOR SCHOOL COUNCILS

School councils are similar to other small boards because they work best when discussions are informal and not constrained by the need to adhere rigidly to formal procedures. Most school councils will work in a casual, unceremonious manner. However, several sections of the law refer to quorums and votes [O.C.G.A. 20-2-86 (c),(d),(f),(h),(j)(3) and (m)]. When taking action on items on the agenda, the school council should have clearly outlined procedures for handling motions and taking votes. These procedures must conform to the requirements specified in law and should conform to standards that are incorporated into a parliamentary guide such as *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. This summary will focus on legal requirements mandated for school councils and suggested parliamentary procedure that school councils may follow in taking official action during meetings.

### Meetings

A quorum must be present in order to conduct official business. Quorum means a majority of members. If the school council is comprised of seven members, a quorum is four members.

1. *Majority* – More than half of the school council members present representing a quorum. Except as noted below, every motion is to be determined by a majority vote of members present, representing a quorum. For example, if the school council has eleven members and six are present, a quorum exists. If two members vote “yes” on a motion, two members vote “no,” and two members abstain, the motion fails. The majority of members present (more than half) did not vote “yes” for the motion. Abstentions often can have the same effect as a vote against the motion. The adoption of bylaws or changes in the bylaws requires two-thirds affirmative votes [O.C.G.A. 20-2-86 (h)]. A majority vote of the school council is necessary to withdraw a school council member’s membership status due to inactivity as specified in the bylaws [O.C.G.A. 20-2-86 (c)].
2. *Unanimous Consent* - Rather than voting on every issue, the chairperson can ask for “unanimous consent” on items that do not seem to be controversial. This can be done by saying, “Is there any objection to .....?” If there is no objection, the action can be taken.

### Motions

A motion is a proposal by a council member that the council take certain action.

#### Main Motion

Any council member, including the chairperson, may make a main motion to introduce a subject for action. A long motion should be written and given to the chairperson. The council member who makes the motion is not required to vote in favor of it.

#### Second a Motion

Any council member may second a motion except the individual who made the motion. A second merely implies that the motion should come before the school council for discussion. The school council member who seconded a motion is not required to vote in favor of it. If a motion does not receive a second, it fails and no vote is taken. Once a main motion has been seconded, the presiding officer *states the question* (reads the motion) and indicates that it is open to debate.



### Debating a Motion

Customarily, the person who makes the motion speaks first. School council members should confine their remarks to the pending question. The chairperson may participate in the debate. When the chairperson determines that debate is ending he/she can ask, "Is there any objection to calling the question?" If there is no objection, proceed to a vote on the motion. If there is objection, the chairperson should take a vote on whether or not to end debate.

### Subsidiary Motions

Subsidiary motions are used to address or dispose of the main motion. All of these subsidiary motions require a second.

- *Amend* – Used to change the wording of the main motion. Debatable; requires majority vote.
- *Refer* – Used to refer a motion to a committee for study or revisions. Debatable; requires majority vote.
- *Postpone* – Used to delay consideration of a motion until a stated future time. Debatable; requires majority vote.
- *Lay on the Table* – Used to delay consideration of a motion until the majority decides to "take it from the table". Not debatable; requires majority vote.
- *Move the Previous Question* – Used to end debate on a motion. Not debatable; requires 2/3 vote.
- *Postpone Indefinitely* – Used to drop the main motion and avoid a vote on it. Debatable; requires majority vote.

### Incidental Motions

Incidental motions are used to address concerns and questions related to procedure.

- *Point of Order* – Used by a member to call attention to a breach of the rules. The effect is to require the chair to make a ruling on the question. If the member is dissatisfied with the result, the ruling may be appealed. An appeal motion requires a second, is debatable, and requires a majority vote.
- *Parliamentary Inquiry* – Used to request the chair's opinion on parliamentary procedure.
- *Point of Information* – Used to inquire about facts related to the business at hand.

### Voting on the motion

When the debate appears to be closing, the chair can ask "Are you ready for the question?" If no one desires further debate, the chair *puts the question* to a vote after restating the motion. The voice vote or show of hands may be used. The chairperson may participate in the vote, and members may choose to abstain from voting. Proxy voting and secret ballots are not allowed. The chairperson states the results of the vote.

If the school council is voting to go into executive session, the secretary must record the names of those school council members voting to go into executive session and the motion stating the reason that the school council is going into executive session. A majority vote is required.

Voting to adopt or amend bylaws of the council requires an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the council members.

For more detailed information on parliamentary procedure, find the website for *Robert's Rules of Order* at [www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com).