



## East Central Illinois Capacity Building Program

February/March 2015 Governance Course:  
Robert's Rules of Order/Parliamentary Procedure

# Conducting Local Government Meetings: *How I learned not to worry and love parliamentary procedure*

David DeThorne  
Champaign County States Attorney Office

**Iroquois County**  
Feb. 18, 2015, 5:30 p.m.  
Iroquois County Board  
Room  
114 North 3rd Street  
Watseka, IL 60970

**Douglas County**  
Feb. 25, 2015, 5:30 p.m.  
Smith House,  
400 South Main Street,  
Tuscola, IL 61953

**Champaign County**  
March 5, 2015, 5:30 p.m.  
Village Hall Board Room  
333 South Tanner Street  
Rantoul, IL 61866

**Vermilion County**  
March 26, 2015, 6:00 p.m.  
Vermilion Advantage  
Conference Room  
15 N. Walnut St.  
Danville, IL

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Development, Inc.



Village of  
Rantoul

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## Conducting Local Government Meetings

or

*How I learned not to worry and love parliamentary procedure*

DAVID DETHORNE  
WINTER, 2015

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### Our agenda tonight

- Approach process chronologically- agenda then meeting
- Who's who? Quorums, chairpersons, parliamentarians and the public
- What's what? Motions and voting
- Odds & ends

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### Rules of procedure

- Please ask questions- I am here for you, not me
- BUT I reserve the right to ask you to hold your question if I plan on getting there
- Remember I am not your lawyer
  - *(I won't be the defendant if you get sued!)*

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Due  
process

Notice      Right to be  
                 heard

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Agenda

- Provides NOTICE to public
- Keeps meeting focused
  - No law establishing order of business
  - Got *RULES*?

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Agenda

- Where to post?
  - Principal office
  - Place of meeting
  - (Website if full-time staff)
- 48 hours before meeting (for final action!)
  - *Meaningful* notice
- Assign an individual responsible for posting

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## Agenda

- NOTICE: Informs as to purpose of meeting
  - set forth general subject matter that will be subject of final action at the **meeting**
  - Would a non-Board member understand what is to be discussed?
- *Keeps meeting focused*
  
- Does not bar discussion of issues not on agenda
  - Only prevents *ACTION*



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## Who's who

- ◆ Quorum
- ◆ Chairperson
- ◆ Parliamentarian
- ◆ Recorder
- ◆ Public
- ◆ Majority



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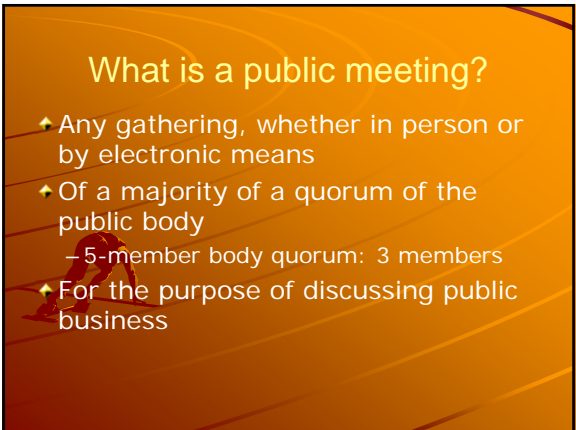
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## What is a public meeting?

- ◆ Any gathering, whether in person or by electronic means
- ◆ Of a majority of a quorum of the public body
  - 5-member body quorum: 3 members
- ◆ For the purpose of discussing public business



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## Quorum

Is *NECESSARY* to conduct business!  
SO....

*Make sure you have one before you do ANYTHING else*




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## What (okay, how many) is a quorum?

- ◆ Number of members needed to conduct business
- ◆ Generally majority of entire body
  - (Unless statute says otherwise)




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## DO THE MATH

Members	Quorum
22	12
21	11
10	6
7	4
5	3




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If you have a quorum  
and  
you are discussing public  
business...

YOU HAVE A **MEETING!**

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### Electronic attendance

- ◆ MUST have quorum physically present
- ◆ MUST be absent due to
  - Personal illness or disability
  - Employment purposes
  - Business of the public body
  - Family or other emergency
- ◆ MUST have rules in place  
Got *RULES?*

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### At the meeting

Making sausage

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## Follow your agenda

- Nothing can happen until a quorum is established
- NO required order of business by law
  - Public participation- when?
- Consent agenda
  - Recommend removing items from consent agenda followed IMMEDIATELY by vote on remainder

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## Consent agenda

- Recommend voting on consent agenda right after finding that nothing is to be removed
  - Member does not object to consent agenda
  - Meeting continues and member gets frustrated
  - Member then decides not to vote in favor of consent agenda, even though he did not ask for anything to be removed

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## Chairperson

- ◆ Determines if quorum present
- ◆ Introduces items for action
- ◆ Recognizes speakers
- ◆ Rules on motions
- ◆ Keeps discussion relevant to topic at hand
- ◆ Puts motions to vote/ announces results
- ◆ Remains impartial during debate
  - Vacate chair to debate

**Maintain order!**  
**Facilitate, don't dictate**

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## Parliamentarian

- ◆ Focus is procedure, not substance
  - DOES NOT RULE
  - DOES NOT RULE
  - DOES NOT RULE...
- ◆ Recommend going over agenda with Chair *prior* to meeting
- ◆ Recommend someone
  - Considered fair and impartial
  - Knowledgeable in procedure

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## Recorder

- ◆ Keeps the minutes
- ◆ Minutes include
  - Date, time and place of the meeting
  - Members present and absent
  - Summary of the discussion on all matters proposed, deliberated, or decided and
  - Record of all votes taken
- ◆ Verbatim record of closed sessions by audio or video recording

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## Public

- ◆ RIGHT TO BE HEARD: Any person shall be permitted to address body under rules established and adopted by the public body
  - Have RULES
- ◆ Recording subject to reasonable rules
  - Have RULES
- ◆ RIGHT TO BE HEARD: Meetings must be held at specified times and places convenient to the public

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Why parliamentary procedure?  
Robert's says-

- To enable body to arrive at the general will
- With regard to every member's opinion (RIGHT BE HEARD)
- On the maximum number of questions
- In the minimum amount of time
- Whether in total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion
  - Experience has shown that parliamentary procedure is less important when there is total harmony

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Principles:  
member rights- EQUAL rights

- To be heard (Sound familiar?)
- To know the pending motion and have it restated (Notice)
- To vote (And there it is again- to be heard)

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Principles:  
member obligations

- Refrain from personal remarks
- Wait for recognition from the chair
- Observe the rights of others
- Avoid speaking over others or interrupting
  - EXCEPT when permitted by rule

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## Motions

A motion is a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the assembly take a certain action.

How you get things done.

- ▶ Robert's Rules lists *eighty-six (86) different* motions!
  - Which we are not going to cover and
  - Which no body of local government I know actually uses

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## General process for motions

1. Movant recognized by chair ("obtain the floor")
2. *Movant makes motion*
3. *Second by another*
4. *Debate/ discussion*
5. *Vote*
6. Announce result of vote

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## Example #1: Basic motion

- Chair: The Chair recognizes Alice.
- Alice: I move that the Board direct Dave to make his training sessions more useful.
- Bob: Second.
- Chair: Alice has moved that the Board direct Dave to make his training sessions more useful.
- Debate or any discussion? Emma, do you have your hand up?
- Emma: Well, I am not sure the county can afford this.

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### Example #1 (continued)

- Chair: Mister Frank?
- Frank: I want to vote for this because my constituents have sent dozens of letters in support of more interesting training.
- (Pause)
- Chair: Are you ready for a vote?
- (Pause) Hearing nothing further, the question is whether to adopt the motion to direct Dave to make his training more useful.

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### Example #1 (continued)

- Those in favor, say, "Aye."
- (Numerous 'Ayes')
- Chair: All those opposed, say, "Nay."
- (Fewer 'Nays')
- Motion carries. The motion is adopted.

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### Things motions do

- Do something
- Change something before we do something
- Clarify
- Focus
- Delay
- Bring back
- Stop debate
- Protect rights

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*You don't need to remember*

- ▶ *Main- brings business to the Board*
- ▶ *Subsidiary- applied to another pending motion and affecting how that motion is handled*
- ▶ *Privileged- doesn't relate to pending business AND must be addressed immediately*
- ▶ *Incidental-procedural that arise out of other motions that must be considered first*
- ▶ *Motions that revisit issues already addressed*

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**But you should understand order of precedence**

- ▶ Some motions take priority over others
  - ▶ For example: motion to amend must be ruled on before vote on main motion, motion to limit or close debate must be ruled on to determine whether to continue debate
- ▶ Some motions are allowed to interrupt speaker
  - ▶ For example: to enforce rules, ask a question about rules, bring discussion back to relevance

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**Main motions**

- ▶ Are what it is all about- substantive issues
- ▶ Only one MAIN motion pending at a time
  - To avoid confusion

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## Amend

- ▶ REMEMBER
  - First vote WHETHER to amend
- ▶ THEN
  - Vote on main motion, either as amended or original depending on vote to amend
- ▶ Maximum of TWO at a time
  
- ▶ Motion to substitute similar- used to substitute language in larger chunks

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## Example #2: Amend

- Chair: The Chair recognizes Alice.
- Alice: I move that the Board direct Dave to make his training sessions more useful.
- Bob: Second.
- Chair: Alice has moved that the Board direct Dave to make his training sessions more useful.
- Debate or any discussion? Emma, do you have your hand up?
- Emma: I move to amend that motion to direct Dave to make his training sessions more fun.

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## Example #2 (continued)

- Chair: Is there a second to the motion to amend the original motion so it directs Dave to make his training more fun?
- Frank: Second.
- Chair: Discussion? Hearing none, let's vote on the motion to amend.
- (Vote taken
  - If ayes have it, return to main motion as amended
  - If nays have it, return to main motion as originally presented)

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## Get information

- ▶ Point of information- request to the Chair to provide information relevant to the issue at hand
- ▶ Parliamentary inquiry- ask a question about the procedure (like, "What, exactly, is the pending motion?")
- ▶ (Refer to committee- for further action, information)

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## Focus

- ▶ Call for the orders of the day- bring Board back to agenda  
UNDERUTILIZED?
- ▶ Division of a question- divides a motion that contains multiple provisions that could each stand alone
- ▶ Division of the assembly- requires a standing vote/ show of hands
  - No second, no debate, no vote to accept motion

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## Example #3: Orders of the day

- George: I think that Dave should be given a huge raise. When you think about-
- Helena: (Interrupts) Mister Chair, I call for the orders of the day. The agenda has the Board discussing Dave's training, not his pay.
- Chair: The orders of the day are called for. Let's stick with the pending motion about Dave's training.
  - OR

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### Example #3: Changing agenda midstream

- Chair: It appears to me that the members would like to continue to discuss Dave's wages instead of the training. Since doing so deviates from the agenda, it will take a two-thirds vote to continue to discuss his wages. The question is, "Will the Board stick to the agenda, specifically addressing the motion about Dave's training?" An 'aye' vote will keep us on training, and a 'nay' will keep us on the new issue.

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### Delay

- ▶ Lay on the table- temporarily set aside
- ▶ Postpone to certain time- put off to specific time
- ▶ Postpone indefinitely- kill motion
  - Recommend asking intent of motion to avoid mistakes

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### Example #4: Delay

- Ned: I move to table the motion so we can all get up and stretch our legs before we move on to the next item.
- Olivia: I move to postpone the motion until the first full meeting after the Fourth of July holiday.
- Paul: I move to postpone the motion indefinitely because my constituents don't want this Board to deal with that issue.

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## Bring back

- ▶ Reconsider- same meeting
- ▶ Rescind (or amend) something previously adopted- later meeting
  - Only if action still practically reversible; i.e., action already begun, other parties have done their part, as in contract
  - Robert's limits movants to those who voted in favor so loser can't keep bringing it up
- ▶ Take from the table- tabled motions

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## Stop debate

- ▶ Limit or extend limits of debate- limit or reduce time for debate
  - Limiting rights- 2/3 majority!
- ▶ Call the previous question- ends debate
  - Limiting rights- 2/3 majority!
- ▶ Objection to consideration of the question- keeps issue from the Board for the remainder of the meeting
  - Limiting rights- 2/3 majority!

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## Example #5

- Chair: The motion has been made to call the question, which would end debate and discussion. This motion requires a 2/3 majority to end debate and proceed to vote on the main motion.
- (Vote taken
  - If 2/3 vote to end debate, proceed to main motion
  - If 2/3 majority not reached, debate continues)

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## Protect rights

- ▶ Question of privilege
  - Such as to go into closed session
- ▶ Suspend the rules
  - 2/3 majority!
- ▶ Point of order- ask chair to enforce rules
- ▶ Appeal- appeal to the Board as a whole a ruling made by the Chair

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## Example #6?: Appeal

- Quincy: I appeal from the decision of the chair to require a 2/3 majority to end debate.
- (Second)
- Chair: The motion has been made to appeal the decision of the chair ruling a 2/3 vote is required to end debate. The reason I made that ruling is that I learned in my training that was the rule.

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## Example #6?: (continued)

- Chair: We will now vote on the motion to appeal from the decision of the chair. Shall the ruling be sustained? Those in favor of sustaining the chair's decision should vote, meaning that I was correct, should vote "aye."
  - If tie vote, decision of chair stands

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## Closed session

- ▶ Can go closed even if not on agenda
  - You can talk about *anything*
- ▶ Motion to close must be in open session
- ▶ Exception to close must be stated
  - ▶ Write it on the agenda
- ▶ *Special procedure for litigation that is probable or imminent*
  - *Must state basis in closed session minutes*
- Final action must be taken in open session

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## Straw polls

- ▶ Are legally permitted
  - ▶ Robert's does not permit them
- ▶ ... But are also legally meaningless
- ▶ But could still make life difficult
  - ▶ Vote on money offer to finalize union contract in closed, but vote against accepting same amount in open session after union accepts

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## Tips on Motions

- Know what the motion is
  - Chair should restate
- Write it down
  - What is the motion again?
- Single subject (But tactically...)
- Avoid negatives
  - Double and triple negatives confuse voters
- If you are confused, ASK

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## Voting

Majority of members then holding office

Majority of a QUORUM




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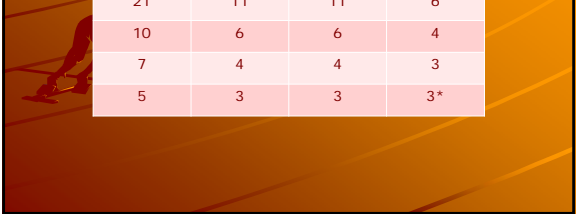
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## Majority of WHAT?

Members	Quorum is present	Members holding office	Majority of a quorum
22	12	12	7
21	11	11	6
10	6	6	4
7	4	4	3
5	3	3	3*




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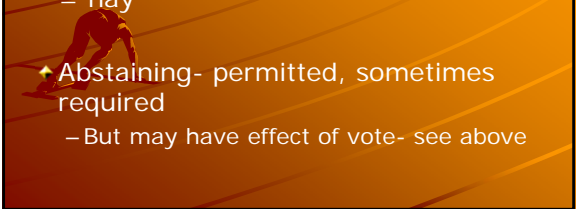
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## Is there a majority?

- ◆ Concurrence: pass, present, or abstain = concurrence with majority
- ◆ Affirmative: pass, present or abstain = nay
- ◆ Abstaining- permitted, sometimes required
  - But may have effect of vote- see above




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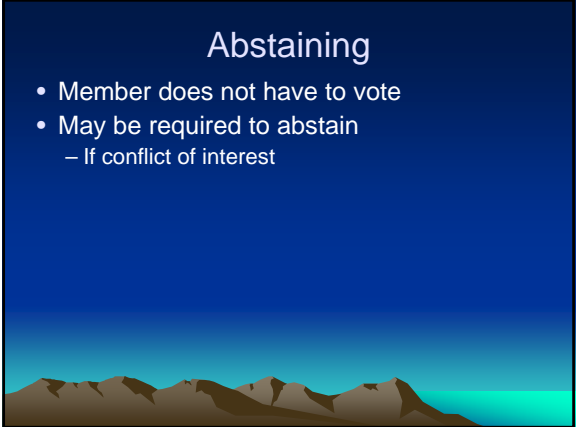
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### Abstaining

- Member does not have to vote
- May be required to abstain
  - If conflict of interest



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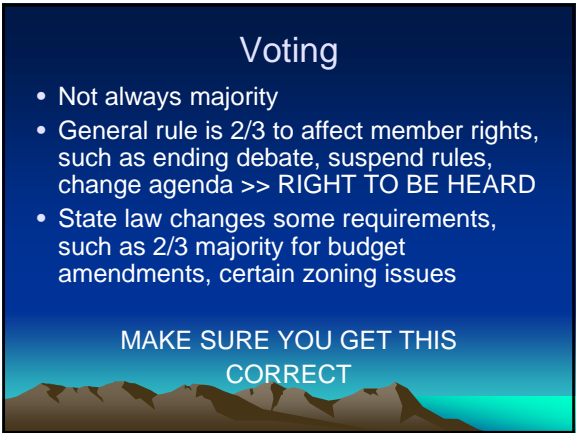
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### Voting

- Not always majority
- General rule is 2/3 to affect member rights, such as ending debate, suspend rules, change agenda >> RIGHT TO BE HEARD
- State law changes some requirements, such as 2/3 majority for budget amendments, certain zoning issues

MAKE SURE YOU GET THIS CORRECT



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### Your rules- Address:

- Agenda
- Public participation
- Procedure in conducting meeting
- Attendance by other than physical means



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