

# Parliamentary Procedure

## *A Quick Reference Guide for Conservation District Officials*

Parliamentary Procedure is a safeguard that protects individuals and groups in their exercise of free speech, free assembly and free to unite in groups and organizations. Its purpose is to promote efficient meetings so business can be transacted in an orderly manner. The rules of Parliamentary Procedure come from actual court decisions regarding the proper way to conduct business.

Because the process can be somewhat daunting, NACD has produced a condensed quick reference for your use in local district meetings. These same rules apply for region and national meetings. While this ready reference does not go in depth into every rule needed to run effective, successful meetings, it does provide a few basics to get you started or refresh your memory. Please check references at the end of the brochure for additional resources.

### Basic Principles

- Only one topic or motion should be addressed at a time, and proceedings must be carried out in the correct order.
- Once presented for consideration, the topic is entitled to full and free discussion.
- All members are equal.
- Majority rules, but minority rights must be recognized.
- Secret ballot is a right.

### Steps in Making a Board Decision

1. **Motion**—a motion is a request that something be done or that something is the opinion or wish of the District. Only one motion should be placed before the Board at a time, at which point it is debatable and amendable.
2. **Second**—someone from the District Board must “second” the motion, or agree to the motion so it can be discussed by the full Board.
3. **Discussion**—the motion “on the floor” is discussed by all members to address its pros and cons.
4. **Re-state the motion**—the Chair re-states the motion before the Board votes on it.
5. **Vote**—votes by voice (aye/no) by show of hands; by standing; by secret ballot; or by roll call vote are all acceptable ways to carry out a vote.

## Basic Terms and Definitions



**Abstain**—to give up one’s vote when a vote has been called.

**Amend a motion**—to add, insert, or substitute words, strike or delete words, or substitute an entire motion for original.

**Call the question**—to attempt to stop debate of a motion; an immediate stop to debate requires two-thirds vote.

**Chair**—the person who presides over the meeting, controls discussion, and recognizes speakers. The Chair has absolute control of the meeting. He or she cannot express opinion of the proceedings but may clarify parliamentary procedure.

**Friendly amendment**—a shortcut that bypasses discussion/vote procedures for amendments and immediately enacts amendments.

**Motion**—all business begins with a motion, which needs to be stated carefully and clearly. For a motion to proceed, it needs a second. Once it is seconded, it can be followed by discussion and, finally, a vote.

**Second**—to voice agreement to a motion so it can be discussed.

**Quorum**—the number of voters required by the District to transact business. When a simple majority of voting members is in attendance—one over half of the total number of Board members—a quorum is achieved. Note that while a quorum is not needed to hold a meeting, motions cannot be voted on or action taken without a quorum of members present.

### Additional Resources

*Robert’s Rules of Order* by Henry M. Robert

*Robert’s Rules of Order On-line* (<http://www.rulesonline.com/>)

*Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* by Alice Sturgis