



MICHIGAN 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Michigan 4-H Advisory Groups

Parliamentary Procedure FAQ's Part 2

Parliamentary Procedure can produce a lot of questions from 4-H Members, Leaders, Committee Members and 4-H Staff. The first article Parliamentary Procedure Frequently Asked Questions answered a lot of those but also generated further questions that are addressed below.

What is “Call to Order?”

When the President is ready to officially start the meeting they will call the meeting to order. Once this occurs the meeting has officially begun and the rules of parliamentary procedure will be in place. The President is now in charge of the assembly and the proceedings until adjournment.

What is a quorum?

A quorum is a minimum number of people needed in attendance at a meeting in order for business to take place. The minimum number should be outlined in the group's by-laws. It is good practice to state the quorum as a number vs. a percentage or fraction. For example 6 members constitute quorum vs. 1/3 of the membership. Percentages can cause a lot of confusion where a set number is clearer.

What if a quorum isn't reached? Do we just all go home?

If a quorum isn't reached the group can change the meeting to a committee meeting in order to work through some of the items on the agenda. However, the group cannot make any motions. They would then take the report of the committee meeting to the next meeting of the whole to share the work they have done. The meeting of the whole can then make motions to move forward on decisions that the smaller committee has suggested. It is also a good idea to consider why quorum wasn't reached and try to address those issues at a future meeting. It may be necessary to change the meeting time, or require notification if members are unable to attend the meeting.

What is an ex-officio member?

This is a member that isn't voted into membership but is there because they serve a specific role. For example a Superintendent may serve on a committee because of their position and they do not need to be voted onto the committee. 4-H Staff members often serve in this capacity as well.

When can ex-officio members vote?

Ex-officio members are members and therefore should be treated the same as the rest of the membership and therefore they can vote. However, in 4-H staff members are often listed in the by-laws as ex-officio members without voting rights and so in that case they would not vote but may enter into debate on issues.

When is a motion necessary?

Motions need to be made when a committee or board is trying to move something forward. For example a group may discuss their yearly fundraising ideas but until someone makes a motion to move one of the fundraisers forward it is just discussion. A motion can make it clearer to meeting participants what is being considered, and leads to a yes-or-no vote. It requires the group to state their opinion on a particular issue. Even if the group seems to be in agreement on a rule change it is not a change until it is moved, seconded and approved.



MICHIGAN 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Michigan 4-H Advisory Groups

Can all reports be approved at once or should they be done separately?

It is good practice to approve reports one at a time vs. all at the same time. This allows for proper discussion on each report with appropriate questions and answers for each.

What is an Executive Committee and how can it be useful?

The Executive committee usually consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer and 4-H staff. If a group is to have an executive committee it should be stated in the bylaws and include who the members will be. These committees are useful in between meetings when an important issue arises and a decision needs to be reached before the regularly scheduled meeting.

Executive committees should be used in extenuating circumstances such as when time sensitive items have come forward. These committees will have to answer to the committee of the whole and their decisions could be reflected on poorly if they cannot show why they had to make a decision in between meetings.

Can someone abstain from a voting?

It is the duty of every member to vote on items as put before the board. However, since a member cannot be forced to vote they do have the option to abstain. Abstaining is seen the same as not voting at all and therefore the President shouldn't call for this option and it does not need to be recorded. If there is a potential conflict of interest, an individual may wish to have their abstention noted in the minutes. For example, if the group is voting on a caterer for an event and the business is owned by a member's uncle.

What does it mean when a President calls someone "Out of Order"?

When a member brings up business that is not presently being discussed or next in line on the agenda then they are out of order. In 4-H club meetings a member may get excited about an idea and bring it up in the middle of other discussion. The President should not call the member out of order to embarrass or demean the other member but carefully point out that there is a more appropriate spot on the agenda to discuss the idea. Groups are strongly encouraged to use a Parking Lot during their meetings to help with this situation.

What is a Parking Lot?

A Parking Lot is a place to write ideas or concerns that have come about during discussion on other items. For example a member may have an idea for the next meeting but they brought it up during the secretary's report of the previous meeting. Placing this item in the "Parking Lot" ensures that the group will not forget about the idea, helps the youth who presented the idea to not be completely shut down and allows the business at hand to continue. Placing large newsprint on the wall to the side of the President is a great way for the membership to see the ideas as they are placed there and will remind them to bring them back up at the appropriate time on the agenda.

What does it mean to rescind or withdrawal a motion?

Sometimes, when a motion has been made, the person who made the motion doesn't feel it was the correct motion after discussion has taken place. If a vote has not yet been taken and no amendments have been made to the original motion the individual that originally made the motion it often allowed to withdrawal it. However this is not the proper action, once a motion has been made and the President re-states the motion it is no longer owned by the member who made the motion. It is now owned by the membership and if they would like to make a change to the motion they must suggest an amendment. The motion must have a yes-or-no vote.



MICHIGAN 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Michigan 4-H Advisory Groups

When the President relinquishes his role to become part of the debate, when do they return to their presidential duties?

The President may voluntarily give up their role as President so that they can become part of the discussion. When doing this they need to pass the role to the next highest ranking officer that has not spoken about the topic or does not want to discuss it as they must remain impartial once they move into the Presidential role.

The President should only relinquish their role if they feel it is crucial to call attention to the point and doing so is more important than presiding over the matter.

The presiding officer who relinquished the chair then should not return to it until the matter has been disposed of, since he has shown himself to be a partisan as far as that particular matter is concerned. Indeed, unless a presiding officer is extremely sparing in leaving the chair to take part in debate, he may destroy members' confidence in the impartiality of his approach to the task of presiding. (Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised 11th Edition)

What happens when the President is not present at the meeting?

If the President is not present at the meeting or is late the Vice President or the next highest ranking officer starts the meeting and takes on the role as President. Once the President arrives the presiding officer can then turn the meeting over to them once the current item being discussed is finished. However, in 4-H club meetings it is often suggested that the presiding officer finishes the meeting and that the President who arrived late serves as a member. They will then resume their role at the next meeting.

Who should prepare the agenda?

The President will often prepare a suggested agenda. Many times 4-H Club Presidents will do this with the help of the 4-H Leader or committee Presidents may seek the help of 4-H staff. However, anyone from the membership can suggest agenda items and the membership should approve or accept the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

Can a group set a discussion time limit?

A member can move to place a time limit on a debate or even limit the amount of time each speaker has to speak on an issue. When a time limit is set on the length of the individual speeches it is suggested that the motion shouldn't limit the individuals to speak only once but allow more speeches per member. This motion must be approved by 2/3rds of the membership. If time limits were not set and the discussion is carrying on then utilizing "Call the Previous Question" is another option.

Michigan 4-H uses Roberts Rules of Order as guidelines for their committees and councils. For further questions on Parliamentary Procedure see http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/parliamentary_procedure_frequently_asked_questions or contact the Leadership/Civic Engagement team at 4-HLeadership@anr.msu.edu.



Michigan State University is an affirmative-action, equal opportunity employer. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.