



PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Parliamentary procedures are the generally accepted rules that govern how school boards and other deliberative bodies accomplish goals and reach decisions in a fair and orderly manner.

These rules are intended to provide a basic structure to meetings that allows board members the opportunity to express their views, engage in meaningful discussions, and contribute to the decision-making process.



SOURCES OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Boards of education may decide, through policy, which rules of procedure or order to adopt so long as they are not inconsistent with applicable law. Board policy may provide in detail the procedural rules followed in meetings or may adopt by reference a pre-existing standard to guide how the board conducts its business. The vast majority of North Carolina school boards have adopted **Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised** (hereinafter "Robert's Rules") as their procedural guide. Others have adopted the UNC School of Government's **Suggested Rules of Procedure for Small Local Government Boards** by A. Fleming Bell, II (hereinafter "SOG Suggested Rules"). Boards may also adopt a procedural source generally while also providing specific exceptions for individual issues, such as whether the board chair votes on matters before the board.

QUORUM

One of the underlying principles of parliamentary procedure relates to the value of fairness. For this reason, a quorum of the board must be present to conduct official business at a regular or special meeting. The North Carolina Supreme Court has held that a majority of the whole membership of the board is necessary to constitute a quorum. *Edwards v. Yancey County Bd. Of Educ.*, 235 N.C. 345 (1952). Once a quorum is established, the general parliamentary rule appears to be that a quorum must be maintained throughout the meeting for the board to transact business. For example, Robert's Rules provides that any business transacted in the absence of a quorum is considered null and void.

As with any policy, the board should consult the board attorney as to whether to adopt a particular policy regarding a quorum requirement.



STANDARD ORDER OF BUSINESS

The order of business is the sequence in which the board takes up business during a meeting. Following an established order of business provides boards with a roadmap that assists in maintaining order throughout a meeting's progression. Boards may provide for their own standard order of business through policy; however, general parliamentary law establishes the following sequence after the existence of a quorum has been determined and the chair has called the meeting to order:

1 Reading and Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the previous meeting are read aloud or copies are provided, and members can propose corrections or modifications. Once approved, the minutes become an official record of the meeting.	2 Reports of Officers, Boards, and Standing Committees: Officers, board members, and committee chairs present their reports, providing updates on their respective areas of responsibility. The superintendent and other administrators would also present any relevant information during this time.
3 Reports of Special Committees: Any special committees or task forces present their reports, if applicable, outlining their progress, findings, or recommendations.	4 Unfinished Business: Matters that were previously discussed but remain unresolved or require further action are considered during this part of the agenda.
5 New Business: Any new topics or items that need to be addressed are introduced and discussed by board members.	6 Adjournment: The board chair officially ends the meeting, indicating that all business has been conducted.

Please note that while parliamentary procedure does not include public comment periods in its standard order of business, N.C. General Statute 115C-51 requires local boards of education to provide at least one period for public comment per month at a regular meeting of the board.

MOTIONS

"Robert's Rules" provides a comprehensive framework for conducting meetings and making decisions through a variety of motions. These motions have a defined precedence that determines their order of consideration. Below are some of the motions that are most commonly used in school board meetings, arranged in order of precedence. However, questions regarding which motions are in order for a particular school board should be addressed to the board attorney.

Privileged Motions:

These motions take precedence over all others and are used for urgent or important matters that require immediate attention. They do not relate to the pending business, should be allowed to interrupt the consideration of anything else without debate, and fit into an order of precedence.

Examples include:

- Adjourn – Proposes to end the meeting.
- Recess – Suggests a temporary suspension of the meeting.
- Question of Privilege – Used to make an urgent request relating to the rights, privileges, or welfare of the board or of individual members (e.g., adjusting the volume of a board member's microphone to allow said member to be heard).



MOTIONS CONTINUED

Subsidiary Motions:

These motions are used to modify, delay, or dispose of a main motion. They take precedence in the order listed below:

Lay on the Table – Proposes to temporarily set aside a pending motion but is not to be used to postpone the motion to another time or to kill the motion.

Previous Question – Requests that the board stop debate and take a vote on the pending motion or motions.

Postpone to a Certain Time – Used to delay action or a decision until a later time. However, the postponement may not be beyond the next meeting and is not to be used to postpone something to a time that would, in effect, kill the underlying motion.

Commit or Refer – Used to send a pending question to a committee for further study and/or recommendation.

Amend – Proposes a modification to a pending main motion before it is voted on and adopted in its final form. A motion may be amended in the following ways: (1) by inserting words or a paragraph; (2) by striking out words or a paragraph; or (3) by striking out and inserting words or a paragraph.

Postpone Indefinitely – The motion to postpone indefinitely is generally used for “killing” a main motion for the duration of the meeting. This motion provides a way for the board to avoid taking a position on the main motion.

MOTIONS CONTINUED

MAIN MOTION:

A main motion is the lowest ranking motion and introduces a new item of business before the board. It can only be made when no other motion is pending. Whether a main motion requires a second by another member of the board depends on the particular rules adopted by the board.

INCIDENTAL MOTIONS:

These motions arise out of another question (i.e., motion) that is or has just been pending. They deal with actions of the board in relation to pending business. They have no order of precedence, but instead arise incidentally and are decided immediately before business can proceed.

Point of Order – Raised by a board member to claim that a specific rule is being violated and to demand that the rule be enforced by the chair.

Point of Information – Used to raise a non-parliamentary question about the business at hand.

Appeal – Used to reverse or question a decision of the chair related to parliamentary procedure.

BRING-BACK MOTIONS:

The purpose of this group of motions is to allow reconsideration of actions taken by the board or on behalf of the board. They have no order of precedence.

- **Take from the Table** – Used to place an item of business that was temporarily laid aside back before the board. A motion can be taken from the table only during the same meeting at which the motion was laid on the table or before the conclusion of the next regularly scheduled meeting. Otherwise, the tabled motion “falls off the table.”
- **Rescind** – Used to cancel an entire main motion that was previously adopted by the board. The motion is then before the board as if never acted upon. A motion to rescind may not be used to make changes that are non-reversible (i.e., where an action has been taken because of the prior vote).
- **Reconsider** – Allows the board to bring an item back for further consideration. Until a properly made motion to reconsider is resolved, no action may be undertaken under the original motion. It can only be made on the same day as the adoption of the original motion and typically may only be made by a member who voted on the prevailing side of the original motion.