

## Claremont McKenna College

### SUMMARY OF PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES

Parliamentary procedures are designed to provide a known order of business, to protect the rights of minorities on issues, and to promote effective participation and deliberation. The following list of parliamentary motions is a brief synopsis of these procedures. Many of them are unlikely to be used often in CMC's faculty meetings, but they may occasionally be helpful. For complete information, see *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (11th edition, Da Capo Press, 2011), which also covers other points. The CMC Faculty Bylaws and Rules of Order, both of which appear in the *Faculty Handbook*, cover such additional items as voting rights, voting procedures, and reports in Faculty Meetings.

Under parliamentary procedures, a meeting proceeds according to an agenda and all business is transacted by means of motions. Motions are divided into five categories, the first three of which generally follow a strict order of priority with the more privileged motion superseding or interrupting the less privileged. The five categories are: (1) Main Motions, which are the least privileged and are basic calls for action; (2) Subsidiary Motions, which either modify main motions or speed, delay, or stop their passage; (3) Privileged Motions, which do not relate to the question at hand, but generally order the business of a meeting or bring the meeting to an end; (4) Incidental Motions, which are concerned with or regulate the manner in which pending business is conducted; and (5) Renewal Motions, which call for revisiting an issue. Although omitted from the examples below, all motions should be addressed to the person chairing the meeting: "Mr. [or Madam] Dean, I move . . ."

In many instances, when a motion or desired action either is routine or faces no significant opposition, business may be facilitated by the procedure of *unanimous* or *general consent*. If a member requests action by unanimous consent, the Chair asks if there is opposition. Or if the Chair senses general agreement, the Chair on his or her own initiative may request approval by unanimous consent. In either case, if no objection is raised, the Chair so states and the desired action is taken. If there is objection (*even from only one member*), the Chair follows the usual procedure governing the requested action.

With some exceptions, *Robert's* provides that the procedures summarized below also apply in committees. **Note:** *An important exception is that in committees motions do not require seconds.*

#### 1. MAIN MOTIONS (least privileged; yield to most other motions)

*Main Motion:* Needs a second; is debatable; is amendable; usually requires a majority vote (but in a few instances requires a larger vote). Wording: "I move that . . ." A main motion introduces a subject to the meeting and is the proper means of conducting the

business of the meeting. The person making the motion has the right to speak first on it. Only one main motion may be considered at a time. The Chair or secretary must record the motion and the Chair must restate it precisely to the group. *For an important rule governing voting on main motions at CMC faculty meetings, see section 6 below, on the “Self-Denying Ordinance.”*

## 2. SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS (*ascending* order of privilege, lowest to highest)

*Postpone Indefinitely*: Needs a second; debatable, as to both the motion itself and the main motion; not amendable; requires a majority vote. Wording: “I move to postpone action on the motion indefinitely.” This motion is intended to kill a main motion without actually having to vote on the main motion itself. However, an affirmative decision to postpone indefinitely may be reconsidered.

*Amend (Primary Amendment)*: Needs a second; debatable, but only as to the amendment itself, not the main motion; amendable; requires a majority vote. Wording: “I move to amend the motion by striking out the words . . . [*or* by adding the words . . . , *or* by substituting the following paragraph . . .].” This is a method for modifying a main motion. Amendments may take the form of adding, subtracting, or substituting words or paragraphs. (A *substitute motion* is a form of amendment, subject to the *same* rules as other amendments.) An amendment must clearly relate to the motion it modifies. An amendment to a main motion is called a first degree or primary amendment. Only one primary amendment may be considered at a time.

*Amend an Amendment (Secondary Amendment)*: Needs a second; debatable, but only as to the secondary amendment itself; *not* amendable; requires a majority vote. Wording: same as amendment. This is a second degree or secondary amendment, which means it is not an effort to modify a main motion but to modify a primary amendment. A secondary amendment must be voted on before the primary amendment that it seeks to amend is voted upon. (Once the secondary amendment is either passed or rejected, the primary amendment is open to further secondary amendments and must itself still be voted on.) Only one secondary amendment may be considered at a time. To avoid complication, tertiary amendments are not allowed.

**Note:** A so-called “**friendly amendment**” is simply an amendment to improve a motion consistent with its purpose. Such an amendment is *not* a separate category under “subsidiary motions.” A “friendly amendment” falls under the rules for either primary or secondary amendments, depending on which it is, even if the maker of the motion to be amended accepts the proposed change. *For expedited handling of a “friendly amendment,” a unanimous consent request may be appropriate.*

*Refer (or Commit) to Committee or Recommit to Committee*: Needs a second; debatable, but only on the propriety of referring to committee (or to a specific committee) and not on the issue itself; amendable; requires a majority vote. Wording: “I move to refer the

question to the committee.” This motion is intended to gain more time for further study of an issue. The issue may be recalled at any time from committee by a 2/3 vote. (A motion to move into Committee of the Whole that is made while an issue is under consideration is a variety of the motion to Refer to Committee. A motion to move into Committee of the Whole that is made when no other motion is pending is treated as a main motion.)

*Postpone to a Definite Time:* Needs a second; debatable, but only on the propriety of postponing the issue and not on the issue itself; amendable as to the specific time; requires a majority vote. Wording: “I move to postpone consideration of the question until X time [or until our next meeting].” Delays consideration of an issue until later in the same meeting or until the next regular meeting, but no later.

*Limit, or Extend Limits of Debate:* Needs a second; not debatable; amendable as to the limits or extension; requires a 2/3 vote. Wording: “I move that debate on the question be limited to X minutes [or extended for X minutes].” Sets a specific time for ending debate or allows more time than originally scheduled. May also be used to limit the time of each member’s speech or the number of speakers allowed to address the meeting. (On extending the time of adjournment specifically in a CMC faculty meeting, see below under Motion to Adjourn.)

*Previous Question:* Needs a second; not debatable; not amendable; requires 2/3 vote. Wording: “I call for the previous question.” If passed, it brings the issue under consideration to an immediate vote without further debate or delay, except for an optional motion on the method of voting (secret paper ballot or mail ballot in place of the default voice vote or show of hands).

*Lay on the Table:* Needs a second; not debatable; not amendable; requires majority vote. Wording: “I move to lay the question on the table.” The purpose of this motion is *not* to kill a pending motion, but only to shelve it temporarily in order to take up more urgent business. The Chair may ask the mover to state her or his reason for the motion. Motions may be taken from the table by majority vote (see below under section 5).

### **3. PRIVILEGED MOTIONS** (*ascending* order of privilege, lowest to highest)

*Call for Orders of the Day:* No second; not debatable; not amendable; enforced at the call of a single member, unless the orders of the day are set aside by a 2/3 vote. Wording: “I call for the orders of the day.” This is a method of returning to the proper order of business for the meeting if it is not being followed.

*Raise a Question of Privilege:* No second; not debatable; not amendable. Wording: “I rise to a question of privilege, which is . . . .” If a member believes that her or his character has been questioned, or she or he cannot hear because of a disturbance, or it is too dark, etc., she or he may raise a question of privilege. If the problem can be immediately remedied, the Chair so orders. If the motion raises an issue that requires

deliberation, the motion needs a second and becomes a debatable and amendable motion requiring majority vote.

*Recess:* Needs a second; not debatable if made when another question is pending; amendable, but only on the length of the recess; requires a majority vote. (At other times it is treated as a main motion). Wording: “I move to recess for X minutes.” This motion is privileged only if another question is pending. Its purpose is to request a short break in the proceedings.

*Adjourn:* Needs a second; not debatable; not amendable; requires a majority vote. Wording: “I move to adjourn [*or to adjourn at . . .*].” Ends the meeting. Out of order if a time for adjournment has already been set *and* business is still pending. A motion to set a subsequent time for adjournment is a distinct motion that is not privileged, but is treated as a main motion. Business pending at adjournment becomes the first order of business at the next meeting, following such required items as the approval of minutes. Announcements of pending business or other important matters are permitted after a motion to adjourn has been made or after adjournment has been voted.

**Note:** The CMC Faculty’s Rules of Order additionally provide that the agenda for each meeting shall state a deadline for adjournment. *This deadline may only be extended by a majority vote taken at least one-half hour prior to the specified time.*

*Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn:* Needs a second; not debatable if made when another question is pending; amendable as to date and time; requires a majority vote. Wording: “I move that upon adjournment today, we meet again at X time and date.” *This motion is to fix the time when the next meeting shall commence.* It is treated as a main motion if made when another question is not pending. A meeting scheduled with a Motion to Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn is an “adjourned meeting,” a continuation of the meeting in which the motion is adopted. An adjourned meeting may not be scheduled after the next regularly-scheduled meeting.

#### **4. INCIDENTAL MOTIONS** (no fixed order of precedence among them, but the actions to which they pertain yield to them)

*Point of Order:* No second; not debatable; not amendable; Chair decides. Wording: “I rise to a point of order, which is that . . .” If a member believes that proper procedures have not been followed, he or she so informs the Chair. The Chair may consult the Parliamentarian and decide the matter or the Chair may ask the faculty to decide the issue by a majority vote.

*Appeal:* If successful, reverses a ruling by the Chair. Needs a second; debatable; not amendable; requires a majority vote; must be made immediately after the ruling in question. Wording: “I appeal from the decision of the Chair, because . . . [*explain the reason*].”

*Suspend the Rules:* Needs a second; not debatable; not amendable; requires a 2/3 vote. Wording: “I move to suspend the rules in order to . . . [accomplish some purpose].” This motion may be made at any time to temporarily remove rules relating to the order of business, procedures, admission to the meeting, etc. Certain rules may not be suspended, such as fundamental parliamentary rules (for example, the right to speak as specified in *Robert’s*; the requirement for no actions in the absence of a quorum; the ban on voting by non-members); and rules contained in the Faculty Bylaws and Faculty Rules of Order.

*Object to Consideration:* No second; not debatable; not amendable; requires a 2/3 vote *against* consideration to sustain the objection. Wording: I object to considering . . . .” Used to avoid an issue when the faculty strongly believes that consideration itself would be undesirable.

*Divide the Question:* Needs a second; not debatable; amendable as to the manner of division; requires a majority vote. Wording: “I move that the question be divided and considered in parts as follows . . . .” Used to take up or vote on the parts of a complex motion one at a time.

*Requests:*

A) Parliamentary Inquiry: Raised when a person is unfamiliar with some procedure or is in doubt about the proper manner to proceed under the rules.

B) Request for Information: Raised when a member of the faculty desires specific information from the Chair or a speaker.

C) Withdrawal of a Motion: No second; not debatable; not amendable. May be made at any time before a vote is taken on the motion, but *only* by the person who submitted the motion. Before the Chair states the motion to the faculty, it may be withdrawn unilaterally by its maker. *After the motion is stated, it may be withdrawn only upon approval by majority vote or unanimous consent.*

## **5. REVISITATION MOTIONS** (no precedence among them; generally treated as main motions and out of order if other business is pending)

*Take from the Table:* Needs a second; not debatable; not amendable; requires majority vote. Wording: “I move to take from the table the question of . . . .” May be made at the same meeting or the following meeting after an issue has been laid on the table, but some business must intervene between a successful motion to lay on the table and a motion to take from the table.

*Renew:* If successful, renews or takes up again a motion already disposed of. But outside of motions to reconsider or rescind as listed below, motions to renew main motions and amendments that have already been voted upon within the same “session” are generally not allowed. See *Robert’s* for the complex rules on what is allowable.

*Reconsider:* If successful, leads to another vote on a motion already either adopted or defeated in the same meeting. Needs a second; debatable if the question to be reconsidered is debatable; not amendable; requires a majority vote. Wording: “I move to reconsider the vote on the question of . . .” This motion must be made by a member on the prevailing side in the original vote. Not all votes may be reconsidered, but generally votes on main motions and amendments may be. An affirmative vote to reconsider returns a question to the meeting as if it had never before been voted on.

*Rescind (or Amend Something Previously Adopted):* If successful, by itself repeals or modifies a motion adopted at a prior meeting. Needs a second; debatable; amendable (*either* to change a main motion to rescind *into* a motion to amend something previously adopted, *or* to change a main motion to amend something previously adopted *into* an amended motion to amend); must meet the notice and voting requirements of the Self-Denying Ordinance; some restrictions on what can be rescinded or changed. Wording: “I move to rescind [*or* repeal] the previously adopted motion to . . . [*identify the motion*].” Or, “I move to amend the previously adopted motion to . . . [*identify it*] by deleting [*or* by adding *or* by substituting] . . . [*describe the change*].” A negative vote on a motion to rescind may be reconsidered at the same meeting, but not an affirmative vote.

## THE SELF-DENYING ORDINANCE

The CMC Faculty’s Rules of Order contain an important procedural rule not appearing in *Robert’s Rules*. This is the “self-denying ordinance,” which governs when a vote on a “matter calling for resolution by means of a vote of the faculty” is “final.” To be final, a vote on a main motion must meet *one* of these three conditions: (a) the motion was moved at the preceding faculty meeting; or (b) the motion was circulated with an official agenda at least three full days prior to the faculty meeting at which the vote is taken; or (c), having been introduced at a faculty meeting, the motion passes in the same meeting without any dissenting votes. By *Robert’s Rules*, a motion not receiving a final vote or otherwise disposed of (for example, by referral to committee) by the end of a meeting carries over to the following faculty meeting as the first order of business after required formalities. As it has been generally interpreted, the self-denying ordinance does not govern procedural votes nor do its requirements begin to apply anew if a previously-introduced or previously-circulated main motion is amended in a minor, non-controversial way. *The requirements do begin to apply anew to a previously-introduced or previously-circulated main motion if the motion is significantly amended and the amendment or amendments themselves do not meet either condition (a) or condition (b), as described above.*