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Rules of Order for Board Meetings

A note about Rules of Order:

Rules of Order ensure that meetings run effectively and fairly, ideas are discussed and debated, and important business is documented. The level of formality in use of rules of order can vary from board to board. The OLA refers to Roberts Rules of Order when needed.

OLA board meetings are intended to encourage discussion, debate, and decision on agenda items. Meetings are generally conducted using some basic rules, rather than strict adherence to all procedures contained in Roberts Rules of Order. However, Roberts Rules of Order can be referred to should a process be in doubt. At any time during the meeting, if you are not sure of a process, please ask the president. What is most important is that board members feel comfortable participating in and contributing to board meetings.

Here are the essential rules OLA Board meetings follow:

Obtaining 'the floor'

The president is the chair of the meeting. When you wish to participate just raise your hand and the president will acknowledge you. This process is helpful and orderly when multiple board members wish to comment on an item. All board members should have the opportunity to comment before the discussion closes.

Motions

Motions ensure that any business or actions that are important are put forth for discussion and decision and are recorded in the minutes. A Motion requires a mover and seconder. Moving and seconding a motion puts the business on the table for discussion. This does not mean the mover/seconder are endorsing the particular item. See below for an example of the process for a motion.

Vote on a motion

After debate/discussion usually a show of hands for yes/no at which point the motion is carried or defeated.

In-Camera

While transparency is important for the work of any board, there may be times when a portion of the meeting is conducted in privacy or 'in-camera'. The minutes and business of this portion is recorded and kept separately from the meeting minutes. Staff may be asked to leave the meeting during an in-camera session. A motion must be presented to move the meeting in-camera, and out of camera.

Minutes

The Executive Director records the minutes of the meeting. These contain motions and actions, and where necessary some context of any discussion on an item where a motion or action is recorded. The minutes do not record a verbatim account of all comments made at the meeting.

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Actions

Not a procedure of Roberts Rules, but the OLA Board minutes will capture actions that need to be taken on an issue or project, but for which a formal motion is not required. Examples could be a situation where the executive director needs to provide a draft discussion paper for the next meeting, or a divisional president is tasked with consulting with their council on an issue.

Examples of Motions at OLA Board meetings

Example 1:

- “I move to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2010 OLA Board of Directors meeting”
- Seconded by ...
- Questions, discussion, possible amendments
- Move to approve, or approve with amendments
- Votes
- Carried/defeated

Example 2:

- “I move that OLA designate \$2,000 from reserve funds to support xyz library initiative”
- Seconded by ...
- Questions, discussion, possible amendments
- Move to approve, or approve with amendments
- Votes
- Carried/defeated

Further resources for Roberts Rules can be accessed at: <http://www.robertsrules.com/>

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