Nothing could possible go wrong at our meeting tonight...

Think Again

SCSBA Chairmen’s Workshop
February 19, 2015

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Executive Director
South Carolina School Boards Association
If you haven’t felt this way at a board meeting yet... you will
School boards in conflict

The four most common reasons school boards are in conflict:

• Board members not “staying on their page”

• Forgetting that individual members, including chairs, have no authority … unless authority is given to them by the rest of the board

• A chairman not doing his/her job

• A disregard for proper meeting protocol
The reasons may vary, but many times…:

We have met the enemy and he is us!!

Pogo Comic Strip
Walter Kelly, 1971
Basic Principles of Robert’s Rules of Order

- Balancing efficiency with fairness
- One thing at a time - discussions must be germane to a pending motion
- No interruptions and no surprises
- Simple majority rules-usually
- Everyone is equal (including the chair)
- An individual is secondary to the board as a whole
- Silence implies consent

The Bottom Line
The sole purpose of a meeting is to determine the collective will of the majority in a fair and efficient manner
The Chairman

All animals are equal,

but some animals are more equal than others

Animal Farm
George Orwell
1945
Role of the Board Chair

The board chair must be in control ... but not be controlling.

- Don’t allow surprises
- Treat all fairly
- Earn the board’s confidence and trust
- Be sensitive to timing & mood
- Prevent confusion
- Demand proper conduct
Common protocol tools to make your job easier

- Speak only after being recognized
- Some limits on debate are good
- Chair may make motions and vote .. cautiously
- Motions to close debate should be allowed
- Motions should be seconded
- Keep discussions prior to a motion to a minimum
- Liberal use of “unanimous consent”
- Consent agendas
- Controversy requires a high level of formality
Common mistakes made by chairs

1. The chairman dominating the body
2. Improper handling of motions
3. Forget to manage the pace of the meeting
4. Discussion on multiple issues at the same time
5. Poor agenda planning
6. Allow surprises..adding items to the agenda
7. Allow member to speak without recognition
8. Allowing discussions without a pending motion
9. Allowing too much informality
10. Allowing negatively worded motions
What is the status of the hearing?

What is the status of the main motion?

What would a “no” vote mean?

What does a “yes” vote mean?

Main Motion

I move that we not accept the recommendation of the Superintendent.

Supt. Recommends

I recommend that that a hearing not be granted to teacher XYZ.
Formality versus informality

Some informality is acceptable…
but not much!!!

High level of controversy
requires
High level of formality
Robert’s Rules of Order simply help you find the balance between efficiency and democracy.
Parliamentary Tools that Support Efficiency

- Properly planned agendas
- Using a Consent Agenda
- Reconsideration and other “re-do” motions
- Close Debate
- Postpone or table a motion
- Refer to committee
- Using “without objection” instead of motions
- Being repetitive to assure clarity
Parliamentary Tools that Support Democracy

- All decisions of the chair may be appealed
- All board members are equal (including the chair) unless given authority
- Only the board as a whole has authority
- Advance notice of items to be discussed
- Bosard meetings must be held in public... they are not meetings of the public
Public Input Policies Should Be Clear

- Have sign-up procedure
- Limit comments to items on agenda
- Time limit – stick to it
- Comments limited to issues
- Don’t allow response
- Establish follow-up procedures
Effective meeting management starts long before the meeting starts.
The agenda ...

• Consent agendas

• Be careful of an agenda item called “general comments by members”

• Be careful about indicating “action” items versus “information” items

• Adding items to the agenda the night of the meeting allowed, but a very bad idea (Lambries v. Saluda County Council)
A word about minutes

- date, time and place of meeting
- board members present
- all motions and their disposition
- discuss how to record the votes of individual members
- members (including Chair) should vote or abstain
- record of what was done, not what was said
Minutes are critical

- Minutes are legally binding once approved.
- Minutes are a record of actions of the board and not of an individual.
- Everyone’s job to ensure the minutes accurately reflect actions of the board.
- The “I didn’t mean it” council member
A few time-savers

- Please state your motion prior to discussion
- Without objection, we will …
- The Chair making a motion can save time… but do so cautiously
- Are you ready to vote?
- Your comments are out of order at this time
- What is the pleasure of the group
- Postponing consideration or tableing can save time
Adopting Motions

Let’s see how to handle the adoption of motions …

with a few detours along the way
Adopting a Motion

There are six steps for adopting a motion.

Step 1 A member makes a motion
Step 2 A member seconds a motion
Step 3 The chair states the question
Step 4 The members debate
Step 5 The members vote
Step 6 The chair announces the vote
A common pitfall … handling of amendments

- A motion to amend modifies main motion, requires second & is subject to debate & is amendable
- Three types of amendments: strike, delete, or strike and delete
- Main motion limited to an amendment and an amendment to an amendment
- Amendments limited to immediately pending motion and must be germane
- Friendly Amendments
You must know if motions are germane and the proper order in handling multiple motions all pending at the same time.
I move we buy a computer for the office

I would like to amend the motion by inserting the word "laptop" before the word "computer".

I move to amend the amendment by inserting the word "used" before the word "laptop".

I wish to strike "office" and insert "chairman".

I would like to amend the motion by inserting the word "laptop" before the word "computer".

Out of Order

Close debate

Procedural Motion

Secondary Amendment

Primary Amendment

Main Motion
Main Motion as amended

I move we buy a laptop computer for the office

Secondary Amendment

I would like to amend the motion by inserting the word “laptop” before the word “computer” (Passes)

Primary Amendment

I move to amend the amendment by inserting the word “used” before the word “laptop” (Fails)

Procedural Motion

Close debate (Passes)
The 10 “Must-Know” Motions

1. Adjourn
2. Recess
3. Lay on the table
4. Close Debate
5. Limit or extend debate
6. Postpone to a certain time
7. Refer to Committee
8. Secondary amendment
9. Primary amendment
10. Main motion
Specialty Motions
Make All the Difference
Motions to Control Debate

- Set Limits on Debate
- Close debate on immediately pending motion (2/3 vote)
- Close debate on all pending motions (2/3 vote)
Procedures to Protect Rights

- Point of Order
- Appeal the decision of the Chair
- Point of information
- Parliamentary inquiry
Motions to Delay Actions

- Refer to committee
- Adjourn
- Postpone to a definite time
- Object to consideration (2/3 vote)
- Recess
- Lay on the table
Motions to Vary Procedures

- Suspend the rules
- Division of the question
- Consider by paragraph
Re-Do Motions

- Reconsider
- Rescind
- Amend item previously adopted
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motion</th>
<th>Debatable</th>
<th>Amendable</th>
<th>Vote</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjournment</td>
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<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
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<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lay on the table</td>
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<td>no</td>
<td>majority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close debate</td>
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<td>no</td>
<td>2/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limit/Close Debate</td>
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<td>yes</td>
<td>2/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postpone definitely</td>
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<td>yes</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer to committee</td>
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<td>yes</td>
<td>majority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amend amendment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amend main motion</td>
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<td>yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main motion</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>majority</td>
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# Simplified Chart of Procedural Motions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motion</th>
<th>Debatable</th>
<th>Amendable</th>
<th>Vote</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Point of order</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inquiry</td>
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<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object to consider point of order</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>2/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roll call</td>
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<td>none</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appeal decision of chair</td>
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<td>majority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divide question</td>
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<td>yes</td>
<td>majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspend rules</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Points to Ponder

• You've carefully thought out all the angles.
• You've done it a thousand times.
• It comes naturally to you.
• You know what you're doing, it’s what you've been trained to do.
• Nothing could possibly go wrong, right?
Think Again!