

UAS/ECS Use of Robert's Rules

Basic assumptions:

- Role of the Chair.
 - Facilitates the flow of business. The chair applies the rules unless the assembly challenges the action.
 - Normally does not engage in debate while serving as chair.
 - Votes when the vote makes a difference; i.e., to break a tie or to cause a tie.
- Business done with motions.
 - All business is to be introduced in the form of a motion.
 - Debate follows and must be germane to the current motion.
 - Once made, motions belong to the body.
- Majority rules, while minority needs to be protected.

Basic rules:

- Agenda
 - UAS by-laws require the circulation of the agenda at least 5 class days before the meeting.
 - Should contain the wording of the motions to come as business items.
- Quorum
 - UAS by-laws set this at a simple majority [50% +1]. However, the chair declares a "quorum". This ruling may always be challenged.
- Main motion
 - Statement of the business to be acted on. Must be introduced before debate on the item.
 - May be amended by addition, deletion, or substitution.
 - Discussion only on the amendment.
 - If an amendment is approved, the "amended" motion now becomes the motion before the body.
 - Motions need a second, and they are approved by simple majority.
 - Note that a "friendly amendment" must be acted on as a regular motion.
- Actions dealing with a motion
 - "Table" - Purpose is to postpone debate of a motion. Requires a second, is not debatable, and requires simple majority and cannot be taken from the "table" unless a majority supports that action.
 - Refer - Purpose is to have another group deal with the motion. Requires a second, can be debated, can be amended, and requires simple majority.
 - Reconsider - Purpose is to have another say about a motion on that day that was already dealt with. Mover must have voted with prevailing side, requires a second, and requires a simple majority.
 - "Call the question" - Purpose is to close debate on the item before the house, requires a second, and requires 2/3 this motion is not debatable.
- Voting
 - UAS rules allow voice vote, show of hands, or secret ballot at the discretion of the chair.
 - Secret ballot if requested by 10% of the members present.
 - Proxy votes are not allowed.
 - Robert's Rules treats abstentions as non-votes. *[Our current practice is to count abstentions, thus treating these positions as "another type of vote". Which raises the question of whether it is possible to abstain from voting - can you abstain when an abstention is counted as a vote just the same as voting yes or no??]*
- Ex-officio membership
 - Purpose is to make someone a member because of the "office" held. Robert's Rules count these members as any other member; e.g, right to debate, right to vote, and right to hold office. Under GVSU's Faculty Handbook voting rights of ex officio members have been removed in many settings.