

# DEMOCRACY 2.0

Rules of Order for Everyday Democrats



## The Voting Member's Handbook

*by C.D. Madson, B.A., A.A., Parliamentarian*



*The KEEP-IT-SIMPLE-STUPID alternative to Robert's Rules of Order*

*For practical use by ordinary people facing everyday realities*

**Ideal for Non-Profits • Strata Condos • Unions • Service Clubs •  
• Co-Ops • Corporate Boards • NGOs • Volunteer Societies •**

Copyright © 2014 by C. D. Madson

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the author except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

First Edition, version 1.1

ISBN 978-0-9940176-0-4

The Solon Academy  
[www.TheSolonAcademy.com](http://www.TheSolonAcademy.com)

**Copying and Licensing:**

The Solon Academy is a small, independently run consulting and publishing business. We feel passionately about our mission to restore the lost art of participatory democracy, and we hope you find the D2.0 system useful to your organization.

To show our support for democracy in your organization we allow *The Voting Member's Handbook*© to be shared using the honour system. The PDF form of this book may be shared with others in your organization so your group can try the system out in one of your meetings. If your group adopts the system we simply ask each individual who keeps a copy of the PDF to contribute a small licensing fee that goes directly to support the author's work and the continued development of the D2.0 system. Please visit the following webpage or click on the button below:

[www.solonacademy.com/democracy20/](http://www.solonacademy.com/democracy20/)



Thank you for your honesty and financial support!

C. D. Madson,  
Democracy 2.0

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE:</b>	<b>4</b>
DEMOCRACY IN DECLINE	4
REBOOTING THE SYSTEM	5
<b>SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION:</b>	<b>6</b>
S1.1 - WHAT ARE RULES OF ORDER?	6
S1.2 - WHY DO WE NEED RULES OF ORDER?	6
S1.3 - WHICH RULES OF ORDER?	7
S1.4 - THE BIRTH OF DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING	7
S1.5 - THE SOCIAL CONTRACT	9
<b>SECTION 2 - GENERAL PRINCIPLES:</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CORE PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>11</b>
1. THE DEMOCRATIC CONTRACT	11
2. MAJORITY RULE	11
3. ORDER	11
4. EQUALITY	12
<b>ANCILLARY PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>12</b>
5. SIMPLICITY	12
6. GERMANENESS	12
7. SPECIFIC SUPERSEDES GENERAL	12
8. SILENCE EQUALS CONSENT	12
9. AGENDA TRANSPARENCY	12
10. ONE SPEAKER	13
11. ONE TOPIC	13
12. NO DISCUSSION WITHOUT A MOTION	13
13. SPEAKING RIGHTS	13
14. POLITE DECORUM	13
15. QUORUM	14
16. ADVANCE PREPARATION	14
17. CHAIR IMPARTIALITY	14
18. CHAIR SUBORDINATION	15
19. DILATORY TACTICS FORBIDDEN	15
20. CONFLICT OF INTEREST	15
21. DISTANCE MEETINGS	16
<b>SECTION 3 - DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE</b>	<b>16</b>
S3.1 - MEMBERSHIP RIGHTS	17
S3.2 - TYPES OF MEETINGS	17
S3.2.1 - GENERAL MEETINGS	17
S3.2.2 - BOARD MEETINGS	18
S3.2.3 - COMMITTEE MEETINGS	19

S3.3 - RANKING SOURCES OF AUTHORITY	21
<b>SECTION 4 - MEETING ESSENTIALS</b>	<b>22</b>
S4.1 - FLEXIBLE FORMALITY	22
S4.2 - AGENDA TRANSPARENCY	22
S4.2.1 - TRANSPARENCY RULES	23
S4.3 - REQUIRED AGENDA ITEMS	24
S4.4 - MEETING MINUTES	24
<b>SECTION 5 - MOTIONS</b>	<b>25</b>
S5.1 - MOTION BASICS	25
S5.2 - MOTION PRECEDENCE	26
S5.3 - MOTION DETAILS	27
S5.3.1 - POINT OF ORDER: TO CORRECT A VIOLATION	27
S5.3.2 - POINT OF INFORMATION: TO ASK A QUESTION	28
S5.3.3 - CALL THE VOTE: TO STOP TALKING AND VOTE NOW	28
S5.3.4 - CONCLUDE: TO END THE MEETING NOW	29
S5.3.5 - RECONSIDER: TO REDO SOMETHING PREVIOUSLY DONE	30
S5.3.6 - REFER TO COMMITTEE: MORE RESEARCH BEFORE MAKING A DECISION	31
S5.3.7 - AMEND: TO CHANGE THE WORDING OF A MOTION	32
S5.3.8 - POSTPONE/RENEW: TO DELAY A DEBATE OR RESUME THE DEBATE	34
S5.3.9 - MAIN MOTIONS: TO INTRODUCE A WHOLE NEW PROPOSAL	34
S5.4 - VOTING	35
S5.4.1 - SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE THRESHOLD AND THE "NUCLEAR OPTION"	36
S5.4.2 - PLURALITY VOTES	36
S5.4.3 - VOTING METHODS	36
<b>SECTION 6 - HOW TO HAVE A MEETING</b>	<b>37</b>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

C.D. Madson is a certified parliamentarian, community activist, and former real estate professional. He is currently a member of the *Parliamentarian's Association of British Columbia* and the *National Association of Parliamentarians*. He has degrees from the University of Victoria, Camosun College and has held licenses as a realtor and property manager in the province of British Columbia. Having served on numerous boards, councils, committees and non-profit organizations, he has amassed a wealth of practical wisdom over more than two decades in the trenches of everyday democracy.

## PREFACE:

### Democracy in Decline

Our society is losing the art of participatory democracy. Strata councils, volunteer clubs, non-profit societies, corporate boards, unions, NGOs, co-ops, parent advisory councils, service clubs, charities; all of these are suffering with the same general malaise. We, as a society, as a body of individual citizens, have forgotten *how to do democracy*.

In our busy lives no one has time to read the 700+ pages of *Robert's Rules of Order* so they can attend their strata condo AGM. Most people haven't even *heard* of *Robert's Rules*, yet it's the overwhelmingly dominant rules system. Alienated and disenfranchised from the process, many just stay home. In that vacuum our democracy is floundering.

Sadly no one invests the time to cultivate the art of participatory democracy. Entire generations have never been exposed to it. The schools don't teach it. Political parties seek to subjugate it. Academia studies it in the esoteric past without teaching the practical skills essential for the living present. Flame wars in the comments section of a Facebook post seem to be our primary lingering legacy from Pericles and Voltaire. Everywhere the Enlightenment principles of citizen democracy atrophy as we, as a body politic, as a *polis*, forget the fundamental principles of self-government that 2500 years of our ancestors fought and died to cultivate. We have created the perfect incubator for a return to tyranny.

Recently some have tried with noble intent to reverse this slide. Experiments in "consensus" models by the Occupy movement and others, while laudable, have suffered from the fatal naiveté of idealism divorced from pragmatic experience. By abandoning the principle of Majority Rule their attempted surgery to save democracy cut too deeply into the skeleton of the patient, creating a system that can not survive a collision with the messy facts of everyday reality.

Both *Robert's Rules of Order* and the Consensus models have gone too far to their respective extremes. At 700+ pages, *Robert's Rules* is far too formal, rigid and complex to be practical for everyday use. As a rule system it is beyond reproach for completeness, but this great strength is also its fatal weakness. It has anticipated almost every eventuality, including just the exact words that everyone is supposed to speak at just exactly the particular time. The only problem is that absolutely NO ONE reads it. It's just too big and too daunting. Those who dive into the tome rarely understand it. Certainly no one but a professional parliamentarian can be expected to master it. Such a system, while suited for professional politicians, is simply not appropriate for 99.99% of everyday volunteer organizations. Using *Robert's Rules of Order* for a volunteer club or non-profit makes about as much sense as forcing Generally Accepted Accounting Principles on a lemonade stand.

The unsuitability of *Robert's Rules of Order* for the overwhelming mass of popular discourse has left a vacuum, alienating a generation from the everyday workings of citizen democracy. Into that vacuum spawned the idealistic experimentations of the Consensus and Modified Consensus models of decision-making. Sadly, in all but a few highly specialized and select circumstances those experiments have failed.

The main difficulty with Consensus is the hopelessly naive attempt to eliminate direct conflict from democratic discourse. This delusional idealism makes consensus fragile,

immediately breaking down when faced with entrenched disagreement. Systemically unable to cope, conflict gets papered over with groupthink and coercion as every entrenched minority is gifted the power to blackmail the majority with organizational gridlock.

The hard fact is that the real world is brimming over with conflict. A democratic system that is going to work in that world must be built around that fact. For any real-world organization to function, decisions must be decisive and efficient without handholding or pampering. Democracy is not group therapy. There is no time in the real world for the constant navel-gazing and second-guessing of Consensus. You will win some votes and lose others. In the mean time the business of the organization must go on.

The failure of both *Robert's Rules of Order* and the Consensus models in the everyday world leaves the void of participatory democracy unfilled. It's time to head back to the drawing board.

### Rebooting the System

The Democracy 2.0 rule system (hereafter abbreviated D2.0) is designed to fill that void, as a democratic system for everyday use by everyday people facing everyday realities. It is pragmatic and simple. It keeps what works and throws out the rest. It's the accessible, user-friendly, Keep-It-Simple-Stupid rules of order system that anyone can navigate with about as much investment as learning to operate that TV remote, or installing the latest social media app on your smartphone. Each of us has learned harder things for more trivial reasons.

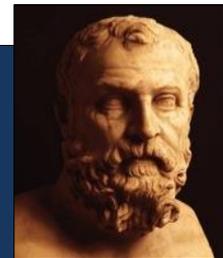
Democracy 2.0 will not grind to gridlock the moment someone asserts their individual rights or refuses to bow to groupthink. Nor is it so formal and convoluted that it requires a degree in law or political science to navigate. It preserves the essential lessons learned from 2500 years of democratic trial and error, making it robust enough to channel strident disagreement into productive discourse while insuring the process is simple, efficient and decisive.

In short, the two-and-a-half-millennia year-old operating system of everyday democracy needs an upgrade to make it work for today's citizens. The Democracy 2.0 rules of order system is that upgrade, but it is more. It is an attempt to restore our cultural birthright: the lost art of participatory democracy.

*"But ye who have store of good, who are sated and overflow,  
Restrain your swelling soul, and still it and keep it low;  
Let the heart that is great within you be trained a lowlier way;  
Ye shall not have all at your will, and we will not forever obey.*

*"I gave to the mass of the people such rank as befitted their need,  
I took not away their honour, and I granted naught to their greed;  
While those who were rich in power, who in wealth were glorious and great,  
I bethought me that naught should befall them unworthy their splendour and state."*

**- SOLON OF ATHENS (c. 638 – c. 558 BCE)**  
***The Athenian Constitution, by Aristotle***



## SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION:

### S1.1 - What are Rules of Order?

Democracy is a verb. At the most basic level, democracy is the act of group decision-making. *Rules of order* are the formally agreed upon system of procedures that give structure to that group decision-making process. Their purpose is to facilitate the orderly conduct of business that safeguards fundamental democratic rights in a fair and transparent manner.

We can imagine rules of order as being like the Operating System (the OS) of a computer. A particular democratic group may pick from a variety of rule systems depending on the needs of the membership, just as you might choose to run Windows, UNIX, or Mac OS on your computer. Every computer can run a variety of operating systems, but in practice the choice should be guided by the intended function of the machine; a business computer might opt to run Windows, a network server might run UNIX, while those seeking the easiest user-friendly experience might run Mac OSX.

Every democratic organization must decide for itself how to structure their group decision-making and should choose carefully from the various systems based upon their own unique circumstances.

### S1.2 - Why do we need Rules of Order?

Group decision-making is notoriously difficult and fraught with conflict. Rules of order should clearly set out what rights a member has and how they should go about exercising those rights, creating a fair and level playing field for all members to present their ideas. They must be broad enough to apply to unforeseen situations, but specific enough to admit only one reasonable and legally binding interpretation.

Rules of order exist to protect and balance the rights of three distinct groups of members whose interests are often in conflict:

1. **Individual Members:** Individual members have the most rights, including the right to vote, move and second motions, speak to motions, stand for office, freely participate in proceedings without obstruction and receive complete and timely information.
2. **The Minority:** All of the rights associated with free and fair debate are in place largely to protect the rights of those who happen to hold the current minority position, in accordance with the *Democratic Contract*.
3. **The Majority:** All of the mechanisms and procedures that are in place to insure order and the smooth, efficient and decisive resolution of business protect the rights of the current majority.

Many people malign rules of order because they get in the way of doing what they want, but one should never forget: a violation of the rules of order is almost always a violation of democratic rights for one or more members. Disorder almost always serves to disenfranchise members who are already at a disadvantage. Eroding rules of order is a necessary first step down the path to dictatorship.

Sadly, through neglect or oversight many organizations have no formally approved rules system, leading to the exercise of arbitrary authority, confusion, misunderstanding and conflict. Such groups often struggle with a deeply frustrating process that devolves

into mob dysfunction or worse: dictatorship by the presiding officer. In such a situation the rights of all three groups frequently suffer, sometimes catastrophically.

For democratic group decision-making to work effectively there must be order; democracy is meaningless if no decision is made. The rights of the members must be balanced against other factors such as the speed and efficacy of the process. When mob gridlock arises it is tempting to turn to dictatorship to sweep away the obstacles, yet we know that tyranny breeds all manner of abuse. We know where that path leads, and it is nowhere most of us want to go. Democratic rules of order try to build a procedural system that can chart a middle course between these extremes of mob anarchy and tyranny.

### **S1.3 - Which Rules of Order?**

A properly structured democratic organization should immediately adopt a specific rule system—known as the *parliamentary authority*—to govern their internal decision-making. Typically adding a clause to the bylaws does the trick, though other ways are possible. There are a range of rule systems to choose from, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Some of the better-known ones are *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, *Bourinot's Rules of Order*, *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*, *Demeter's Manual* and the whole loosely connected and poorly codified spectrum of modified consensus models of decision-making. The choice of rule systems can dramatically improve or hinder the smooth functioning of a democratic organization in the same way that the choice of operating system can affect how useful a computer is to the person actually using it.

The Democracy 2.0 system is intended to be the simplest possible parliamentary authority compatible with smooth and efficient democratic decision-making. It is designed for lay people for whom the excessive formality of systems such as *Robert's Rules* is a needless waste of scarce time and energy better spent on doing the business of the organization rather than quibbling over procedural niceties.

This book is your referee and neutral arbitrator. It is a complete reference manual designed to quickly and easily settle disputes about procedure. To make the Democracy 2.0 rules of order system binding on your organization simply amend your Bylaws to add the following clause:

*“All meetings of the [organization name] shall be conducted according to the latest edition of the Democracy 2.0 Rules of Order manuals, except in specific cases where the Rules of Order are inconsistent with and thereby superseded by these Bylaws or other higher legal authorities.”*

### **S1.4 - The Birth of Democratic Decision-Making**

Unity is the whole purpose of democracy. Since Solon of Athens 2500 years ago it has been understood that a city, nation, or house divided is vulnerable.

Unity must be voluntary to be stable and effective. Political unity can be imposed through intimidation and force, but such “unity” is generally oppressive, unstable and sows the seeds of its own destruction; sooner or later the tyranny will become corrupt and the oppressed will revolt. In his famous Melian dialogue, Thucydides described the logical downward spiral of brutality that naturally flows from a tyranny underwritten by force. Such “unity” will inevitably end in brutality and revolt.

During a revolt the dictatorship of tyranny is traded for the chaos of mob anarchy. The collapse of order during a revolution can only be sustained for a short period or the entire system will collapse, a new order must be put in place quickly.

The solution to mob chaos through most of human history has been to install a new dictatorship more favorable to those leading the revolution, setting into motion the next cycle of corruption. The revolution becomes the tyranny.

In this way the ancient world was almost universally governed by dictatorship, punctuated with periods of mob revolt in a destructive cycle. To break this cycle another method of governance had to be found.

The ancient Athenians were extraordinary in their attempts to break the cycle by pioneering a middle path of group decision-making they called *demo-cracy*, or “people’s government.” The centerpiece to this system was the explicit bargain or *social contract* between the various factions within the state to abide by a collaborative system of government based on the principle of majority rule.

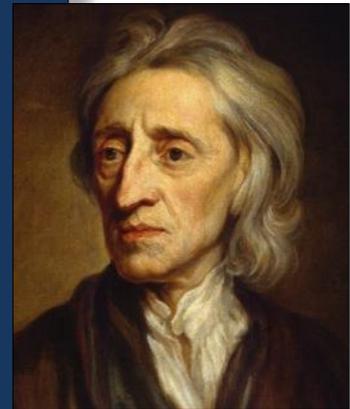
The early Athenian experiments with democratic decision-making were only partially successful, but the trial-and-error accumulation of practical wisdom through the constitutional reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes began a 2500-year journey of development that culminated in the Enlightenment and our mature western democracies.

## THE INALIENABLE RIGHT OF REVOLUTION

*“Whenever the Legislators endeavor to take away, and destroy the Property of the People, or to reduce them to Slavery under Arbitrary Power, they put themselves into a state of War with the People, who are thereupon absolved from any farther Obedience, and are left to the common Refuge, which God hath provided for all Men, against Force and Violence.*”

*“Whensoever therefore the Legislative shall transgress this fundamental Rule of Society; and either by Ambition, Fear, Folly or Corruption, endeavor to grasp themselves, or put into the hands of any other an Absolute Power over the Lives, Liberties, and Estates of the People; By this breach of Trust they forfeit the Power, the People had put into their hands, for quite contrary ends, and it devolves to the People, who have a Right to resume their original Liberty.”*

**- JOHN LOCKE,  
Two Treaties of Government**



**John Locke  
(1632-1704)**

## S1.5 - The Social Contract

At the heart of democracy is the *Social Contract*, the fundamental bargain by all parties to adopt a fair procedure of group decision-making that enshrines freedom of speech, thought and association in a free-flow of ideas. All members (citizens, owners, etc.) are given a fair chance to present their ideas, and then the group as a whole decides among the various options by choosing the most popular.

Once the group has chosen by formal vote then all members of the group agree to support the most popular choice, *especially* those members of the group who supported a less popular choice. In exchange for the rights to freely speak and present their views the minority agrees to abide by and support the majority until such time as they can persuade enough of their peers to change their mind, thereby shifting the will of the majority to their own position.

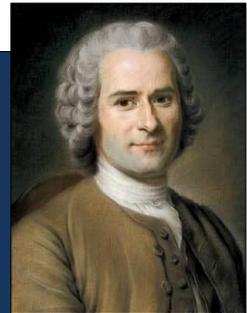
This bargain, described by Enlightenment thinkers as the “Social Contract” (sometimes translated as “Social Compact”) is based on the wise foresight that group unity is preferable to discord and civil strife, even if that means accepting a course that is not your first choice or that you may even strongly disagree with.

It is often tempting for the majority faction to suppress or restrict weaker rival factions that currently find themselves in the minority. This was Plato’s famous critique of the democratic process, what he called “tyranny of the majority.” If the governing regime of the day goes down this road it commits a fundamental breach of the Social Contract. The minority whose rights are being violated is then well within *their* rights to withdraw support and revolt against the majority, since the majority has breached the fundamental democratic bargain. The result entails a descent into open and unconstrained conflict, returning to the pre-democratic cycle between tyranny, revolt, anarchy and tyranny again.

To accentuate the centrality of this concept the Democracy 2.0 system has placed it as the First Principle and named it the *Democratic Contract*. It is absolutely critical for all participants within a democratic decision-making body to understand this concept. Even within the microcosm of a strata council or non-profit NGO, the same fundamental democratic principles are at work. A basic understanding of them is necessary if we are to navigate the middle ground between tyranny and mob anarchy. These are your neighbours, colleagues and friends, after all. The majority *must* respect the rights of the minority, and the minority *must* support the decision of the majority. These two principles are the opposite side of the same coin, and the name of that coin is Democracy. They come as a package deal, they cannot be separated, and they are not optional. Failure to uphold either end of the bargain is a repudiation of Democracy itself.

*“The social pact, far from destroying natural equality, substitutes a moral and lawful equality for whatever physical inequality that nature may have imposed on mankind; so that however unequal in strength and intelligence, men become equal by covenant and by right.”*

**- JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, (1712 –1778)**  
***The Social Contract***



## SECTION 2 - GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

Democracy 2.0 does not attempt to account for all possible circumstances with hundreds of pages of specific rules. Instead it establishes general principles to guide the system. When a specific rule conflicts with a General Principle, the specific rule takes force. The General Principles govern decisions in the absence of a specific rule. A meeting using this system is charged with the task of exercising reason and common sense to accommodate novel circumstances.

The General Principles are divided into two classes: Core Principles and Ancillary Principles. The Core Principles are universally applicable at all times in all situations, and should never be broken. The remaining Ancillary Principles are of a more specific or limited nature, applying to particular situations.

When a circumstance creates conflict between two or more General Principles it falls to the Chair and ultimately the assembly itself to resolve the conflict, with higher ranked principles ordinarily holding more weight. However the group itself always retains complete responsibility for the manner with which it conducts business.

The General Principles that follow are intended to entrench certain fundamental values and guide group deliberation, however it remains up to the members to implement and enforce them during the conduct of business.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### CORE PRINCIPLES

#### 1. The Democratic Contract

All voting members are given a fair chance to present their ideas, and then the group as a whole chooses the most popular option by formal vote. In exchange for a fair process that enforces democratic freedoms of speech, thought and association, those of a minority view agree to abide by and support the majority will until such time as they can persuade enough of their peers to change their minds and hold a new vote.

#### 2. Majority Rule

Actions taken on behalf of the organization as a whole are decided by the formal support of the majority, defined as "more than half of those voting." Tie votes fail, since half is not more than half. The will of the general membership of the organization, as expressed at a [General Meeting \(S3.2.1\)](#) by majority vote, is the final sovereign authority for all actions of the organization, constrained only by [higher legal authorities \(S3.3\)](#) that bind the organization (ie. the courts, federal, provincial, state or common law).

#### 3. Order

The organization can only function if there is order. Anything that causes disorder is an affront to the rights of the majority and the purpose of the organization itself. The Chair should immediately block actions of members that cause disorder. If the Chair fails to act to prevent disorder then individual members have an obligation to raise a

[Point of Order \(S5.3.1\)](#) and demand that order be restored before the business of the meeting can proceed.

#### 4. Equality

All voting members have equal rights, privileges and obligations, subject only to the additional rights, privileges and obligations bestowed upon individual members through the proper election or appointment of portfolios, offices, or positions within the organization.

### ANCILLARY PRINCIPLES

#### 5. Simplicity

Pointless formality and procedural complexity is harmful to the functioning of the organization on many levels. It is a barrier to participation (especially for new members), it clogs the effectiveness of meetings and generates frustration that undermines democracy itself. All democratic organizations should operate with the minimum complexity or formality consistent with the fair, efficient and legal transaction of business.

#### 6. Germaneness

All meeting business (other than [Main Motions S5.3.9](#)) must be germane, that is: “closely or significantly relevant to the most proximal topic of deliberation.” All discussion, amendments, motions or other business must be germane to the motion on the floor. Only a properly formulated [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#), by definition, need not be germane to anything else. It is important to note that “germane” entails neither support nor opposition; one may advance any position one wishes relative to a particular topic, so long as the position is *relevant* in some *significant* way, as determined by the Chair, or ultimately by the whole assembly if the Chair’s decision is subject to [Appeal \(S5.3.1.1\)](#).

#### 7. Specific Supersedes General

When a specific rule conflicts with a General Principle, the specific rule takes force. Exceptions to general principles require a specific rule, and in the absence of a specific rule the General Principle is in force.

#### 8. Silence Equals Consent

All members have the obligation to attend, participate and voice dissenting views. Failure to do so constitutes binding consent to the decisions of those who do. In accordance with this principle the Chair should always ask for “unanimous consent” on uncontroversial topics instead of calling a formal vote. Seeing no disagreement the Chair may then declare the resolution to have passed unanimously. If a member disagrees with the proposal such that they would vote against it the member is obliged to note their opposition to the Chair, thereby triggering a formal vote. In this way much otherwise routine business can be dispensed with quickly and efficiently.

#### 9. Agenda Transparency

Under the [Agenda Transparency Rules \(S4.2\)](#) meetings require a formal advanced call that *includes* a proposed agenda made available to all voting members. All [Main](#)

Motions (S5.3.9) require notice of motion with draft wording in the proposed agenda. Only topics germane (S2.6) to the draft wording included in the proposed agenda may be deliberated upon at the meeting. Any two voting members may give notice of motion by submitting draft wording for inclusion in the proposed agenda. Only an emergency with unanimous consent of all voting members present can allow a main motion to be moved at a meeting without advance notice in the meeting call.

#### 10. One Speaker

Only one person at a time may speak. Only the person who has been granted the floor by the Chair has the right to speak.

#### 11. One Topic

Only one topic, in the form of a motion (S5), may be on the floor for deliberation at a time. Some motions have the power to interrupt deliberation of the current motion on the floor. When this happens the motion on the floor is temporarily suspended until the new motion is resolved, then the previous motion is immediately resumed at the exact place where deliberations were halted. It is possible for multiple such motions to arise, leading to a nested chain of embedded motions. Such nested motions are simply resolved in reverse order, one at a time. In this way no more than one motion at a time is ever under deliberation by the assembly.

#### 12. No Discussion Without a Motion

Closely related to the principle of Germaneness (S2.6), no discussion should occur at a General or Board meeting if there is no motion on the floor. All discussion must be germane to the proximal topic, and if there is no topic then nothing can be germane. From a pragmatic point of view, without a motion to focus debate a meeting could talk all night and get nowhere. The exception to this rule is at Committee (S3.2.3) meetings, where such free-ranging discussions are intended to take place.

#### 13. Speaking Rights

All voting members have the default right to speak twice to every motion, for a maximum of five minutes each time. No member may speak a second time to a motion so long as a member who has not yet spoken to the same motion is seeking the floor or on the speakers list. Exceptions to this principle may be permitted on a case-by-case basis by majority vote. If a member feels that an exception would serve the greater interest they may move to *Permit Exception* by stating the specific exception they propose to make to General Principle #13. Only exceptions to Principle #13 are permitted. The motion is in order when moved by the member who has the floor, must be seconded, and may not be amended or debated.

#### 14. Polite Decorum

2500 years of democratic trial and error reveal that certain pragmatic rules of human psychology produce the best outcomes when disagreements arise.

- 14.1. All comments by the speaker must be directed to the Chair; members are never allowed to address each other directly or argue back and forth directly at one another.
- 14.2. Reference to the motivations of others is strictly forbidden. You may speak about why you are taking a certain action, but you may never lay claims

about why someone else is doing something; such claims are almost always veiled insults.

- 14.3. Foul language, name calling, insults, threats or other obvious impolite behaviour should prompt the Chair to immediately eject the offending party from the meeting. If the chair fails to eject the offending member than any other member has a right to raise a [Point of Order \(S5.3.1\)](#) demanding that the offending party be expelled from the meeting under [General Principle #3: Order](#). The Chair should not resume the meeting until the offending party has been removed and order is restored.

## 15. Quorum

Democratic meetings are means to make decisions on behalf of the entire group. For such decisions to be legally valid and binding the meeting must have a minimum number of voting members present and accounted for. It would be abusive and illegitimate, for example, to allow a meeting consisting of only two members to vote and enact decisions on behalf of an organization comprised of hundreds of members. The minimum threshold number of members needed to make decisions valid and binding is referred to as a “quorum.” A meeting that does not “have quorum” may not legally conduct business.

- 15.1. The specific threshold that constitutes quorum for a particular meeting may be set in the organization’s bylaws or other governing documents. In the absence of any such specification the default quorum for all assemblies is a majority (more than half) of the total current voting members of the assembly. Great care should be exercised when determining the quorum threshold; a quorum set too low may permit abuse by a small cabal of rogue members, whereas a quorum set too high may paralyze the organization by preventing the conduct of legitimate business.

## 16. Advance Preparation

It is expected that members should have proposals developed into a cohesive plan prior to presenting it before a General or Board meeting for deliberation. Meetings are neither the time nor the place for brainstorming, research, proposal development or fleshing-out of details. All members cannot be well versed in the details of all topics. If the meeting feels that more development is needed before a decision can be made the normal course of action should be to [Refer \(S5.3.6\)](#) the matter to a committee by use of the motion of that name. A [committee \(S3.2.3\)](#) comprised of voting members representing a cross-section of the organization should do the job of researching and developing a proposal on behalf of the group. The committee’s duty is to produce a detailed proposal for reintroduction and final consideration at a future meeting.

## 17. Chair Impartiality

The Chair only votes to make or break a tie. The Chair never gets a second vote to break a tie (as in *Bournoit’s Rules*, an glaring violation of the [Equality \(S2.4\)](#) principle). The Chair does not move, second or speak to motions except if the assembly has 7 or fewer voting members. If the Chair is a member and wishes to exercise their membership rights to debate motions (under the [Equality \(S2.4\)](#) principle) then they need to temporarily pass the Chair to another for the duration of

the matter in question. They may only retake the Chair after the matter for which they have declared partisanship has been concluded. These Chair Impartiality restrictions are not in force in a deliberative assembly composed of 7 or fewer total members. In such small assemblies the Chair may move, second and speak to motions, but must still use caution to fulfill their duties in an impartial manner in light of [Chair Subordination \(S2.18\)](#).

## 18. Chair Subordination

The Chair is a servant of the assembly delegated the task of maintaining order and exercises all authority at the discretion of the assembly. All rulings or other actions of the Chair require majority support. The Chair should be able to justify all rulings by reference to the organization's approved *Parliamentary Authority* (this manual) or other [legal authority \(S3.3\)](#) binding upon the organization. Any ruling or action of the Chair can be [Appealed \(S5.3.1.1\)](#) to a vote of the assembly and overturned by a majority. The Chair may preemptively put controversial rulings to vote in order to preserve the impartiality of their position (Principle #17 above.)

## 19. Dilatory Tactics Forbidden

Democratic rules are designed to facilitate and simplify the group decision-making process. Legitimate procedures can, in certain circumstances, be used to obstruct, delay or disrupt proceedings. When legitimate procedures are used this way it is the duty of the Chair, acting in their delegated role, to protect the proper function of the organization by barring such abuse. The Chair (or individual members through a [Point of Order S5.3.1](#)) may block such actions as a special instance of [General Principle #3: Order](#).

- 19.1. “Dilatory” is defined as *any otherwise legitimate procedural action that is frivolous, absurd, or devoid of rational content*. Extreme care should be taken when suppressing legitimate procedures. It is possible for the majority to suppress legitimate dissent under the pretext of limiting dilatory actions, which would constitute a fatal violation of the [Democratic Contract \(S2.1\)](#). This Principle should only be invoked in circumstances that are obviously absurd or irrational, such as when one or two rogue members repeatedly raise the same or similar points of order or motions.
- 19.2. It is important to distinguish between dilatory actions and a “filibuster” action, which is one of the few legitimate tools of a minority to express strong objection to a proposal. A filibuster involves minority members exercising their legitimate rights as a means of symbolic opposition. The majority always has recourse against a filibuster through use of the motion to [Call the Vote \(S5.3.3\)](#), and should never invoke Principle #19 merely to suppress coherent forms of legitimate democratic dissent. The assembly itself is the final judge of what constitutes a dilatory action, in accordance with the above definition, although careful attention must be paid to preserve the [Democratic Contract \(S2.1\)](#).

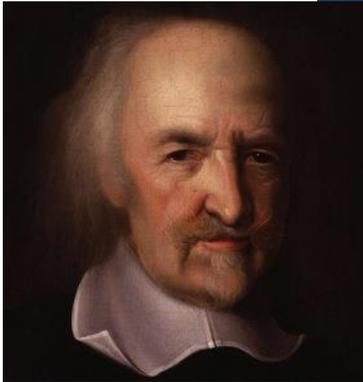
## 20. Conflict of Interest

No member may move, second, debate or vote on a motion for which they stand to make a financial gain *different from all other members of the assembly*. By general

standards of ethical behaviour it is expected that members who stand to make a financial gain from the outcome of a proposal not common to other members will declare themselves in a conflict of interest and either abstain from all forms of participation (speaking, moving, seconding, voting, etc.) or physically absent themselves if information of a sensitive nature is being discussed (as when sensitive details of legal or financial negotiations are being discussed.)

## 21. Distance Meetings

To be a valid meeting all members must be able to engage in real-time two-way communication with the meeting Chair (or facilitator) at all times, and all members must be able to hear the individual who currently has the floor in real-time. Any medium of communication that meets these criteria may be considered a valid meeting, including but not limited to web- or tele-conferencing. Any member who is denied these rights is entitled to raise a [Point of Order \(S5.3.1\)](#) and the Chair is obliged to rectify the situation or declare a recess until the above requirements are met. If these requirements cannot be met at a particular meeting due to circumstances beyond the control of the meeting organizers that meeting may *not* be considered a legally binding meeting and must be treated as though the meeting lost [quorum \(S2.15\)](#).



**Thomas Hobbes  
(1588—1679)**

### **BELLUM OMNIUM CONTRA OMNES** "WAR OF ALL AGAINST ALL"

*"Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called War; and such a war as is of every man against every man.*

*"In such condition there is no place for Industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continual Fear, and danger of violent death; And the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."*

**- THOMAS HOBBS, LEVIATHAN (1651)**

## SECTION 3 – DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE

### S3.1 - Membership Rights

There is a sharp divide between members and non-members of a democratic organization. Members have the full range of democratic rights:

- Move and Second motions.
- Seek the floor and speak.
- Vote.
- Seek and hold officer positions.
- Receive complete and timely information about the administration of the organization.

Non-members have none of these rights. If the meeting is public they may observe the proceedings in what is called the “gallery” but they may not participate or interrupt in any way. The only exception is that the Chair may potentially recognize a non-member to speak in order to provide information requested to assist members during a meeting.

### S3.2 - Types of Meetings

Any democratic group of individuals that collaborate in a formal decision-making process are technically known as a “deliberative assembly.” There are many names for deliberative assemblies, but for our purposes we may define any “deliberative assembly” as a democratic “meeting” and use the two terms interchangeably.

In the Democracy 2.0 system there are 3 types of meetings, forming a tiered hierarchy:

1. General Meetings
2. Board Meetings
3. Committee Meetings

#### S3.2.1 - General Meetings

General Meetings consist of all voting members of the organization, called the *General Membership*. The General Membership, taken together, is the governing body of the organization. An act or resolution of the General Membership supersedes, overrides and voids the acts or resolutions of subordinate bodies within the organization, such as the Board, Committees or the actions of individual Officers.

The general membership, by voting at a general meeting, has the sole authority to do the following:

- Establish or amend the organization’s governing documents, which typically include a Constitution, Bylaws, or other similar documents.
- Elect a Board of Officers delegated with the authority to act on behalf of the organization for the administration of day-to-day operations.
- Establish or modify membership fees or special levies.
- Establish, approve or amend a budget.
- Issue orders, directives or constraints upon the Board and/or Officers in the implementation of their duties.
- Remove board members and/or Officers.
- Dissolve the organization.

There are two types of general meetings, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Special General Meeting (SGM.) Most democratic organizations are required by law to hold an Annual General Meeting once per year at a time specified in the Bylaws. If not required by external law it is still good practice for a democratic organization to place the requirement to hold an AGM in their Bylaws. The AGM is usually *required* to include, at minimum, the following agenda items:

- Officer reports
- Presentation and approval of budget
- Election of Officers/Board Members

An AGM may also include additional agenda items, provided applicable notice has been given.

Special General Meetings (SGMs) are held to allow the general membership to make a decision on one or more specific motions. The agenda of an SGM is prohibited from being changed to deal with any item that was not included in the notice of the draft agenda at the time the SGM was called.

Other types of general meetings are possible, such as a Semi-Annual General Meeting (SAGM) held halfway between AGMs, a Biennial General Meeting held every two years, or various types of conventions and conferences. All of these alternate meeting varieties can be classed as a special instance of SGM.

A very unique form of the SGM that bears specific mention because of its particular properties is the Founding General Meeting. This is the first meeting of an organization where the governing documents themselves are debated and adopted. The principle of [\*Agenda Transparency \(S2.9\)\*](#) does not apply to a Founding General Meeting because prior to the ratification of the governing documents there are no members to provide notice of motion to. At a founding meeting a main motion may be moved any time that no motion is pending, or may be added to the agenda by amendments from the floor.

### **S3.2.2 - Board Meetings**

A Board is a small subgroup of members selected by the General Membership and given the task of administering the day-to-day operations of the organization. If the organization has staff the Board is solely responsible for the hiring, firing and direction of the Chief Executive Officer, who in turn is solely responsible for the hiring, firing and direction of staff. Individual board members are often called Directors, thus the name of the board is often called the Board of Directors, though other names could include Board of Governors, Council, Executive Committee, or Board of Trustees, to name just a few.

Individual members of the board typically hold specific officer or executive portfolios, such as President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. Though these are the typical default officer positions, an organization is free to tailor their officer portfolios as they see fit. For example, some organizations may replace President with Chairperson. Many will create officer positions tied directly to the mission of the organization. A Board member without portfolio is called an "at-large" member.

It is possible for the Bylaws to permit a single person to hold more than one portfolio (ie. Secretary/Treasurer), except that the same individual may never hold President and Vice-President.

The selection process for officer portfolios should be set out in the bylaws. It is commonly done in one of two ways:

1. A separate election for each officer portfolio may be held during the Annual General Meeting, or;
2. The Annual General Meeting may select a number of members to become Directors on the Board. These Directors are selected as “at-large” positions without portfolio, and at the first board meeting (typically convened immediately after the AGM ends) the Board itself elects from among their members who will hold the various officer portfolios.

### **S3.2.3 - Committee Meetings**

Committees are subordinate bodies composed of a subset of Board members. They are delegated the task of conducting detailed research, planning and development of particular proposals too cumbersome for the whole Board.

When completed, the recommendations of the committee are sent back to a meeting of the full Board for deliberation and (hopefully) approval, and where necessary forwarded on to a General Meeting for approval from the general membership.

Committee meetings are usually informal and are not *required* to follow the usual rules of order, though it may be beneficial to do so at the discretion of the committee Chair. When creating a committee the Board should always designate the committee Chair, who is responsible for the tasks assigned to the committee. The board may also appoint additional at-large committee members to assist the chair. If the Board fails to designate a committee Chair then the first individual appointed to the committee may act as Chair. The committee Chair may enlist the assistance of others as he/she deems helpful to accomplish the goals of the committee.

Depending on the size, complexity and duties assigned to the committee, the chair conducts the research with the assistance of others and reports back to the Board with the committee findings and proposals. This process may or may not involve formal meetings of the committee, depending on circumstances.

Committee meetings are informal and conducted in any fashion the Chair deems helpful for gathering the necessary information and producing a report to the board or general membership. General Principles [6](#) and [11-14.1](#) are effectively suspended at the discretion of the committee Chair, though the Chair may reimpose such restrictions if necessary for the effective function of the committee's duties. Committees in larger organizations may be more formal in their structure and operate in the manner of Boards, with fully enforced rules of order. In small organizations the committee chair may simply act alone to get the job done.

If there is strong disagreement about certain proposals within a committee it is possible for dissenting members of the committee to present a “minority report” to the Board alongside the official “majority” findings of the committee report.

There are three types of committees: Standing, Ad Hoc, and Committee of the Whole.

#### **S3.2.3.1 - Standing Committees**

Standing committees are in permanent operation, and are charged with ongoing duties central to the operation of the organization. Most organizations have some form of finance standing committee, typically chaired by the Treasurer or equivalent position. Other standing committees may also exist, depending on the size and purposes of the organization. As a general rule standing committees are

established by clauses embedded in the Bylaws or other governing documents of the organization, which permits the committee to ceaselessly continue operations.

### S3.2.3.2 - Ad Hoc Committees

A committee [created \(S5.6.3.1\)](#) to perform a particular duty specified in the motion to create the committee. Any committee that is not established by clauses embedded in the governing documents must be established by a resolution of the Board. When the task for which the committee was created has been completed the committee is said to have “discharged” its duty and automatically ceases to exist. Typically an ad hoc committee is struck by the Board to research the details of a particular proposal and create a report for presentation back to the Board recommending one or more options for deliberation and approval.

### S3.2.3.3 - Committee of the Whole

The Committee of the Whole is something of a misnomer, being not a committee *per se*, but a way for the entire Board (or even potentially a General Meeting) to side step the rigors of strict rules of order. Committees are not bound by the same formal restrictions on speaking and debate that a Board meeting is bound by. Thus, if a Board wishes to have a freewheeling discussion that relaxes the rules of decorum, the move to [Enter Committee of the Whole \(S5.3.6.2\)](#) during the midst of a meeting essentially acts to temporarily suspend General Principles [6](#) and [11-14.1](#) inclusively.

Obviously great care should be taken when suspending General Principles. Rules have been created through 2.5 millennia of trial and error. Suspending rules opens the door to the very problems that the rules were created to fix in the first place. Never the less, in situations where lower levels of formality can benefit the deliberations of the assembly a move to enter Committee of the Whole can be an efficient tool for the smooth functioning of the democratic process.

#### Copying and Licensing:

The Solon Academy is a small, independently run consulting and publishing business. We feel passionately about our mission to restore the lost art of participatory democracy, and we hope you find the D2.0 system useful to your organization.

To show our support for democracy in your organization we allow *The Voting Member's Handbook*© to be shared using the honour system. The PDF form of this book may be shared with others in your organization so your group can try the system out in one of your meetings. If your group adopts the system we simply ask each individual who keeps a copy of the PDF to contribute a small licensing fee that goes directly to support the author's work and the continued development of the D2.0 system. Please visit the following webpage or click on the button below:

[www.solonacademy.com/democracy20/](http://www.solonacademy.com/democracy20/)

Thank you for your honesty and financial support!



### S3.3 - Ranking Sources of Authority

Every democratic organization exists within a wider legal context. A deliberative assembly has authority to make certain decisions, but not others. Obviously the local Ornithologist Society cannot pass laws setting motor vehicle regulations, even by unanimous vote. It is vital to understand the limits on authority each group must work within. As a general principle, an organization can only make rules that are binding on its own members.

Each organization will need to determine their own unique relationship to the wider legal context, depending on the jurisdiction they operate within. However we can set down the following very broad ranking of legal authority that will apply to almost all democratic organizations. When two legal authorities are in conflict the higher-ranking authorities will over rule and void the lower ranking authority *only with respect to the issue where the two are in conflict*.

This last point is critical and bears repeating with examples; if the Bylaws are amended in such a way that they contravene the law of the land then those clauses that contravene the law, *and only those clauses*, are void and without force. The entire set of Bylaws is not void, only the clauses that are in contravention of the law. Similarly, if the Board passes a series of standing rules, some of which contravene the Bylaws, then only those standing rules that contravene a higher authority are void, while those that are compatible with all higher authorities remain in force and binding on members.

#### AUTHORITY RANKING

1. National, provincial, state, municipal, or common law. The courts.
2. Governing Documents (Constitution/Bylaws) of the Organization - established or amended by vote of a General Meeting.
3. Rules of Order/Parliamentary Authority - usually (but not necessarily) entrenched within the Bylaws by vote of a General Meeting.
4. Standing Rules - established by resolution of the Board, in force until amended or rescinded by the Board.
5. Custom, unadopted rules of order, arbitrary authority of presiding officer.



"I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

- VOLTAIRE (1694-1778)

## SECTION 4 - MEETING ESSENTIALS

The Democracy 2.0 system is designed to make democratic group decision-making as “user friendly” as possible for the average member, without compromising fundamental principles or slipping into the expediency of dictatorship. A good system must balance the need for legal precision against maximum inclusiveness of members by keeping the process simple.

Formal democratic meetings can be intimidating, filled with mysterious practices that confound new and experienced participants alike. Some of these have evolved for good, practical reasons over 2500 years of trial-and-error. Others are merely archaic rituals and traditions without functional value. The Democracy 2.0 system strips down the meeting process to the essential elements, retaining those practices that have a valuable function and discarding everything else.

### S4.1 - Flexible Formality

Meetings are flexible and allow dynamic give-and-take among members through debate and discussion. They are fluid and adaptable, but can be crippled by conflict if procedures get too lax. Many people malign the process of a formal meeting, yet worldly experience tells us that removing the structure of formal rules will usually result in the meeting devolving into a free-for-all, and in some cases actual violence—the later being why the Westminster Parliamentary model literally places the government and opposition benches just over two sword-lengths apart!

Practical experience shows that modulating the formality of the meeting to suit the size and mood of the participants can improve efficiency, productivity, and the overall temperament of the group. With this practical wisdom in mind it is generally advisable to institute greater formality and procedural rigidity as the size of the group rises. Conversely, smaller groups can generally be less formal and rigid without loss of order or productivity. There are certain minimal levels of procedural formality that should always be maintained, [General Principles 14.2 and 14.3](#) being obvious examples of this.

Above all else, as disagreement and passions rise the level of formality must equally rise. The meeting Chair should exercise fluid discretion in finding the right balance of formality for each meeting, and should remain flexible as tempers ebb and flow with time and the topic under discussion.

### S4.2 - Agenda Transparency

One critical feature of the Democracy 2.0 rule system is the introduction of a principle called *Agenda Transparency*. Under other systems such as *Robert's Rules* it is possible for a caucus of members to ambush the meeting with a motion for their pet project, springing it by surprise with an amendment to the agenda after the meeting has started. This allows the ambushers to go into the meeting fully prepared to discuss the proposal but deprives those who may be opposed to the resolution an opportunity to prepare a counter-case. Crucially, it may also deprive some members of the opportunity to attend the meeting, unfairly stripping them of both voice and vote.

There are always a certain percentage of members in any organization who are unable to attend every meeting. They may pick and choose which meetings to attend based on what they deem important. If a particular meeting is only dealing with housekeeping it

may not be necessary for all hands to be present for the meeting. Such a situation is the ideal time for an ambush motion, potentially catching some opposition members away from the meeting who would have insured attendance had they known the question was going to be raised. Such methods can be used to gerrymander the balance of votes, potentially tipping support for a close vote into majority territory where the same resolution would have failed with full attendance. Ambush tactics create instability and undermine several of the General Principles, most notably [Majority Rule \(S2.2\)](#).

#### **S4.2.1 - Transparency Rules**

Democracy 2.0 introduces several requirements to combat ambush tactics and promote open, honest, fair and democratic meetings:

1. All meetings require an agenda.
2. All meetings, even regularly scheduled recurring meetings, must have a formal call to be valid and binding.
3. A proposed agenda must be included with the call of every meeting. Adoption of the proposed agenda is a [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#) and must be the first item of business after the call to order and house keeping (quorum, temporary officers, etc.) The agenda may be [amended \(S5.3.7\)](#) normally like any other [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#).
4. All voting members must receive the call notice, which must include particulars of the meeting time and location, as well as the draft agenda for the meeting.
5. All [Main Motions \(S5.3.9\)](#) require notice in the draft agenda during the call of the meeting. Notice must include a draft of the exact proposed wording for each [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#). No [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#) that has not been included on the proposed agenda during the call of the meeting may be moved at a meeting (exceptions for Emergency motions, see #10 below).
6. Any two voting members (mover/seconded) may submit a [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#) in advance for inclusion in the agenda. The particular requirements (deadlines, etc.) for how notice of motions is submitted, how the draft agenda is drawn up, and how notice is delivered is left up to individual organizations to specify in their governing documents.
7. [Main Motions \(S5.3.9\)](#) may not be moved or added to the agenda after the formal call of the meeting (except by emergency provision #10 below).
8. [Main Motions \(S5.3.9\)](#) with notice in the agenda may be [amended \(S5.3.7\)](#), so long as amendments are [germane \(S2.6\)](#) to the draft wording included as part of notice.
9. If a majority of members do not even want the issue to arise they may vote to [Amend \(S5.3.7\)](#) the agenda by deleting the item all together.
10. If an emergency arises a [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#) may only be introduced without notice by unanimous consent of all voting members supporting an amendment to the agenda. Such a motion may or may not involve moving to [Reconsider \(S5.3.5\)](#) the agenda if it has already been approved.

### S4.3 - Required Agenda Items

Every draft Board or General meeting agenda must include the following items:

- Call to Order
- Quorum Confirmation
- Approval of Agenda
- Ratification of previous Minutes (not for Special General Meetings)
- Officer & Committee reports (not for Special General Meetings)
- Unfinished Business (not for Special General Meetings)
- New Business
- Conclude Meeting

### S4.4 - Meeting Minutes

At every meeting one member must be designated as the Recording Secretary, responsible for keeping detailed notes that become the official, legal record of the business of the meeting. This record is called the meeting “minutes.” Recording Secretary is a vital job and should be taken seriously. If anything relating to the business of the organization should ever wind up in court it is the meeting minutes that will be submitted as legal evidence and official record of the organization’s actions.

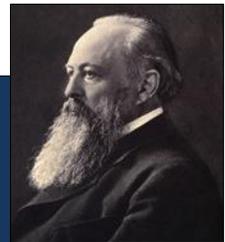
The Recording Secretary should carefully note the following information during the meeting:

- Scheduled date, time, and location.
- A list of all voting members present, including officers.
- Time of call to order.
- The exact wording of all motions with mover identified (but not seconder).
- The result of each vote (pass, fail) including manner of vote and count for and against (if counted) and the names of any noted votes or abstentions.
- The time the meeting ended.

The Recording Secretary and Chair should both sign the minutes certifying their authenticity, once approved by vote at a later meeting.

*“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.”*

**- LORD JOHN DALBERG-ACTON, (1834-1902)**



## SECTION 5 - MOTIONS

### S5.1 - Motion Basics

A democratic organization makes group decisions through the use of “motions” or “resolutions.” Motions are statements of action, for the organization to *do* something. Resolutions are statements of principle, that the organization supports a certain belief or ideal. In practice both terms are often conflated and used interchangeably, so they may be considered functionally synonymous.

Motions may *not*:

- conflict with a higher authority (see [section 3.3](#));
- revisit a previous question already voted on (see [section 5.3.5](#));
- be dilatory (see [General Principle #19](#));
- be moved while a higher ranking motion is on the floor (see [section 5.2](#)); or
- conflict with any other D2.0 rule that is in force.

Any motion that does any of these things is out of order and should be blocked by the chair, who should immediately overrule the motion and carry on with business as though nothing had happened. If the Chair fails to block it any member may compel the Chair to do so by raising a [Point of Order \(S5.3.1\)](#).

Motions in the D2.0 system can be divided into three ranked categories that have particular attributes distinguishing them from each other.

#### 1. POINTS

- a. Address the (sometimes urgent) needs or rights of a member.
- b. May be raised without the floor.
- c. No second required.
- d. No debate.

#### 2. SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

- a. Act upon a previous motion or change the meeting procedure.
- b. Must have the floor.
- c. Must be seconded.

#### 3. MAIN MOTIONS

- a. Introduce an entirely new topic.
- b. Require notice at call of meeting unless an emergency.
- c. Emergency motion requires unanimous consent to add to the agenda if no previous notice included in the meeting call.

Discussion begins with the lowest ranking motion, a [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#), and proceeds with the possible introduction and resolution of higher ranking motions until finally the main motion is resolved and the meeting moves to the next main motion listed on the agenda.

Because of [General Principle #12: No Discussion Without a Motion](#) it is assumed that any motion that is made aside from a Main motion will be done while another motion is already on the floor. [General Principle #11: One Topic](#) requires that only one motion be on the floor at any one time. This creates a conundrum requiring motions to have rank.

## S5.2 - Motion Precedence

If a motion is to be considered when another motion is already on the floor the new motion must take precedence and the previous motion must yield. If every motion were to yield to any other new motion it takes just a moment's thought to see that an infinite loop will arise. Motion A is on the floor, a member moves motion B forcing motion A to yield, then a different member moves motion A forcing B to yield, *ad infinitum*.

To escape this logical loop it is necessary for motions to have ranked precedence. The 11th Edition *Robert's Rules of Order* lists a total of 86 possible motions, with a massively convoluted ranking system. D2.0 has eliminated or combined this list down to just 9 motions, each performing an indispensable function necessary for an organization to conduct business fairly and efficiently.

When a member introduces a new motion (or point) the Chair should immediately compare its respective rank to that of the motion currently on the floor. Motions with *equal or lower rank* to the motion on the floor are out of order and should be refused by the Chair. Motions with higher rank take precedence over motions with lower rank, in which case the motion on the floor yields to the new motion. When a motion of lower rank yields the floor the debate is temporarily suspended while the motion of higher rank is resolved, then the previous motion is immediately resumed at the exact place where deliberations were halted. It is possible for multiple such motions to arise, leading to a nested chain of embedded motions. Such nested motions are simply resolved in reverse order, one at a time, from highest rank to lowest. In this way no more than one motion at a time is ever under deliberation by the assembly.

The following list ranks all 9 motions in descending order, with lower ranked motions yielding to those higher on the list:

### POINTS:

1. [Point of Order \(S5.3.1\)](#)
2. [Point of Information \(S5.3.2\)](#)

### SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS:

3. [Call the Vote \(S5.3.3\)](#)
4. [Conclude \(S5.3.4\)](#)
5. [Reconsider \(S5.3.5\)](#)
6. [Refer to Committee \(S5.3.6\)](#)
7. [Amend \(S5.3.7\)](#)
8. [Postpone/Renew \(S5.3.8\)](#)

### MAIN MOTIONS:

9. [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#) - infinite variety, order determined by agenda.

Any rule system that fails to include a ranked system for motions cannot deal fairly with the infinite loop problem and will have to rely on arbitrary whim to decide precedence, creating chaos, inconsistency, confusion and resentment among members. It will open the door to abuse and corruption, undermining the very purpose for rules of order in the first place.

## S5.3 - Motion Details

Specific details for each of the nine motions in the D2.0 system are listed below, in descending order of ranked precedence from the highest to the lowest. This is the order that nested motions must be *resolved*, highest motions first, and then successively lower. Motions will be *introduced* in the opposite direction, starting from the bottom of the list and moving upwards. A motion is out of order if it is equal or lower than the motion currently on the floor.

### S5.3.1 - Point of Order: to correct a violation

Any member may raise a *Point of Order* to correct a breach in the rules of order, a transgression of member's rights, a violation of law or anything else that illegitimately impedes or undermines the proper functioning of the meeting process. A *Point of Order* is the highest ranked motion; all motions yield to it except another *Point of Order*. It is in order when another has the floor and may interrupt the speaker.

*PROCEDURE:* Any voting member may raise a *Point of Order* after noticing a violation by simply interrupting the proceedings and addressing the Chair with the words "point of order." The Chair recognizes the member, asking what the nature of the violation is. The Chair must then rule on the point, either correcting the breach or ruling the point out of order. Regardless which way the ruling goes the Chair is obliged to explain to the assembly the reasons for the decision, in accordance with the principle of [Chair Subordination \(S2.18\)](#).

#### S5.3.1.1 - Appeal

In accordance with the principle of [Chair Subordination \(S2.18\)](#), any ruling or action of the Chair can be appealed to a vote of the members present and overturned by a majority. After the Chair has explained the reasoning for their decision, if any member is not satisfied with a ruling of the Chair the member may immediately interrupt the proceedings, addressing the Chair with the words "I move to appeal the decision of the Chair."

A motion to *Appeal* requires the second of another member. If moved and seconded, the member then explains to the meeting why they believe the decision of the Chair was in error. The Chair may then explain their reasons in response to the appeal, or may simply submit the decision straight to the vote so as to remain as impartial as possible. There can be no further debate, and no one should speak during an appeal other than the Chair and the member making the appeal, and each may speak a maximum of one time. The Chair then calls the vote to the question: "Shall the decision of the Chair be overturned?" A majority vote is required to overturn the decision of the Chair. A tie vote sustains the decision of the Chair. As always, the Chair may only vote to make or break a tie.

Once the assembly has voted on the matter the decision is final and cannot again be appealed. Any further appeal on the same matter should be immediately ruled out of order as a [dilatatory \(S2.19\)](#) abuse.

### **S5.3.1.2 - Division**

An omnibus motion is a single motion that contains multiple discrete proposals capable of standing on their own as separate motions. Each discrete proposal within an omnibus motion is known as a clause. Members may support some but not all of the clauses embedded within an omnibus motion. For this reason omnibus motions may be split into a separate motion for each clause contained within. Provided the omnibus motion has not yet been voted on, a single member may raise a *Point of Order* and compel the *Division* of the omnibus motion into separate motions that must be debated and voted on separately. To do so a member raises a *Point of Order* and asks for *Division* of the omnibus motion.

### **S5.3.2 - Point of Information: to ask a question**

The *Point of Information* is always and only a *question*. It is never an excuse to jump the speakers list. Under no circumstances should the Chair allow a point of information to turn into a statement or a speech. The questioner must immediately state their question, and if no question is immediately forthcoming the Chair should cut the member off and rule them out of order.

There are two forms, one to direct a question to the speaker who currently has the floor, and the other to ask a procedural question of the Chair to help the member navigate the rules of order (alternately called a “parliamentary inquiry”). The *Point of Information* is always voluntary at the discretion of the member who has the floor. It is in order when another has the floor, but it may *not* interrupt the speaker if they make known their wish not to be.

*PROCEDURE:* To raise a *Point of Information* the member should seek the attention of the Chair in the most non-intrusive manner possible, perhaps by raising a hand, standing in place or approaching a microphone. At an appropriate opportunity the member may then address the chair and ask for a “point of information.” The Chair should immediately seek the will of the member who has the floor by asking if they wish to entertain a question at this time. If they decline the Chair must immediately rule the present *Point of Information* out of order until the speaker yields the floor.

If the member accepts the question the Chair then should direct the questioner to proceed by stating their question, being vigilant to only allow *questions* and to immediately rule out of order anything that strays into debate. Under no circumstances can a *Point of Information* be used to move a motion.

### **S5.3.3 - Call the Vote: to stop talking and vote now**

The motion to *Call the Vote* is a fail-safe tool to prevent the business of the organization grinding to a halt by fruitless and repetitive debate. It protects the rights of the majority by insuring that the democratic decision-making process actually makes a decision in a manner that is timely and practical. If the process cannot produce a timely decision then democratic group decision-making has failed. Ultimately the burden lies with the members to move business along.

If two members feel that the discussion of the pending main motion has gone on long enough they may move/second to *Call the Vote*. The mere act of moving

the motion is a way of saying “enough is enough!” Without any debate members must decide if the interests of the organization are better served by allowing more debate to be heard, or by achieving resolution and getting on with other business. A successful motion to *Call the Vote* immediately cuts off [amendment \(S5.3.7\)](#), debate or the introduction of any further subsidiary motions, forcing the immediate vote on all pending subsidiary motions right down to and including the underlying main motion. If multiple subsidiary motions are pending they are immediately resolved in reverse order of [rank \(S5.2\)](#).

*Call the Vote* directly infringes upon the rights of those members who have not yet exhausted their speaking rights. For this reason there are strict restrictions on when and how it can be done:

1. *Call the Vote* may not be moved if the member on the floor has already begun debating the merits of the pending question.
2. *Call the Vote* may not be moved if anyone who has not yet spoken to the motion is actively seeking the floor or on the speaker's list.
3. *Call the Vote* must be seconded.
4. *Call the Vote* may not be amended.
5. *Call the Vote* may not be debated.
6. *Call the Vote* requires a simple majority.

*PROCEDURE:* To *Call the Vote* a member must gain the floor. It can never be used to get the last word, so it must be moved before speaking to the motion. Once the member has begun debating the merits of the pending question they may not move to *Call the Vote* during their current turn on the floor, though they may do so at a subsequent turn on the floor if they have not exhausted their speaking rights. The motion requires a second. If no second is forthcoming the motion immediately dies and the member may continue speaking.

Having heard a second the Chair should *immediately* call a vote, taking pains to make it clear that the vote is on whether or not to cut off debate, and *not* (yet) on the question they have been debating. Absolutely no debate or discussion should occur about whether or not to cut off debate, and the Chair should *not* recognize any members seeking the floor. Once seconded the only legitimate interruptions to *Call the Vote* are [Points of Order \(S5.3.1\)](#) or [Points of Information \(S5.3.2\)](#). If the vote fails the member who moved the motion continues to have the floor and debate continues as before.

If the vote succeeds the Chair should then immediately state the question on the floor, and without acknowledging any members seeking the floor should put the question to vote. Following a successful motion to *Call the Vote* the only legitimate interruptions are [Points of Order \(S5.3.1\)](#) or [Points of Information \(S5.3.2\)](#).

#### **S5.3.4 - Conclude: to end the meeting now**

The motion to *Conclude* the meeting can be moved at any time that a member has the floor and, if the vote passes, will immediately bring the meeting to an end. This motion is always the last item on an agenda, but may be moved while business is still pending if the membership wishes to end the meeting before finishing the agenda. If there are still unresolved agenda items when the meeting

ends they are automatically included under “unfinished business” on the agenda for the next meeting.

It is *not* recommended to use the word “adjourn” if the intention is to end the meeting. “Adjourn” is merely a pause, and implies that it will be continued at some point. Technically a meeting that “adjourns” must be resumed, picking up where it left off on the same agenda. Given the requirements of [Agenda Transparency \(S2.9\)](#) and notice for *Main Motions* it is important to avoid use of the term *adjourn* or *adjournment* for legal clarity. The motion *Conclude* avoids these confusions.

*PROCEDURE:* The motion to *Conclude* requires that a member obtain the floor, and must have a second. It may not be amended, but it is debatable. The moment the vote passes the Chair announces that the meeting has officially ended.

### **S5.3.5 - Reconsider: to redo something previously done**

The motion to *Reconsider*, also sometimes called “*Rescind*,” allows the assembly to revisit a previous vote. If new information has come to light, or the circumstances have changed the minds of some of the members, then any member may move to *Reconsider* a previous decision. The members of the original prevailing side will justifiably feel this to be a waste of time, so those advancing the desire to *Reconsider* a previously resolved matter had better have convincing arguments that the circumstances have changed, and also the voting numbers to back it up.

No motion may be reconsidered that has already been acted upon or that is irreversible, such as selling an asset or spending money.

*PROCEDURE:* Once a meeting has voted on a particular question it is considered resolved and cannot be brought up again during the same meeting. The exception is by making a motion to *Reconsider*. The motion requires a second and may not be amended. It is debatable, but *debate must be confined to the merits of re-debating the question, not to the merits of the question itself*.

There are two very different forms of this motion, depending when the original motion was passed:

1. **Reconsider Decision from Current Meeting:** If the motion in question was voted on during the current meeting then any member may move to *Reconsider* that vote by obtaining the floor while a lower ranking motion is pending. It requires a second. If *Reconsider* passes then the motion in question is immediately brought back to the floor and debate begins on the motion from scratch, as an entirely new main motion but with a higher rank than the main motion already on the floor when *Reconsider* was moved.
2. **Reconsider Decision from a Previous Meeting:** If the motion was passed at a previous meeting the motion to *Reconsider* must be submitted as a main motion according to the rules of [Agenda Transparency \(S4.2.1\)](#). At the start of the meeting during debate on the agenda those members who prevailed in the original vote should test the support for reconsideration by moving

an amendment to the agenda that deletes the motion to *Reconsider*. If the deletion passes then the motion to *Reconsider* was a waste of time.

If the deletion fails then the numbers in favour of reconsidering the motion have sufficient strength to legitimately warrant taking up meeting time when the motion to *Reconsider* comes up on the agenda. If at that time the motion to *Reconsider* passes then the meeting must immediately take up the motion in question as if it were an entirely new motion. A motion passed at a previous meeting may be reconsidered without notice as an emergency if it receives unanimous consent, just as an emergency main motion would require under [section 5.3.9.1](#).

Some rule systems, notably *Robert's Rules*, require that only a member who voted with the prevailing side of a motion may move to *Reconsider*. The Democracy 2.0 system follows Cushing and Sturgis in removing this requirement, which violates the democratic principles of secret ballot and [Equality \(S2.4\)](#), promoting gamesmanship rather than honest democratic conduct. As a practical matter it may be more persuasive for a member who wishes to change their vote to introduce the motion, but that is a matter for the members to determine, not the rule system. Under the D2.0 system any member may move to *Reconsider*.

#### **S5.3.6 - Refer to Committee: more research before making a decision**

If a member feels that the current proposal before the meeting is not sufficiently complete or needs more development before a prudent decision can be made the correct thing to do under the D2.0 system is to send the main motion off to committee for study. The principle of [Advance Preparation \(S2.16\)](#) describes the correct role of committees in the D2.0 system. [Section 3.2.3](#) describes the structure and function of the various forms of committees.

Ordinarily committees are subordinate bodies of the Board that are created by and report to the Board. It is conceivable that the General Membership could create a committee that reports to them directly, but such a body sets up a redundant parallel structure to the Board, which would be a violation of the [Simplicity \(S2.5\)](#) principle. In almost all cases the General Membership should *Refer* motions to the Board. In a practical sense the Board acts like a universal committee to the General Membership, and should be employed as such. True committees ought to be creatures of the Board, not the General Membership.

*PROCEDURE:* A member obtaining the floor anytime during lower ranking debate can move a motion to *Refer*. If successful the motion will immediately clear the main motion and all pending subsidiary business (amendments, etc.) from the current meeting agenda, placing the entire issue into the hands of the designated committee to develop the best solution.

A motion to *Refer* must be seconded and may be debated. The motion must specify the committee to be referred to. If the motion to *Refer* wishes to set up an ad hoc committee with the specific task of developing the proposal in question then a motion to *Strike Ad Hoc Committee* (below) should also be moved, or included as part of an omnibus motion.

#### **S5.3.6.1 - Strike Ad Hoc Committee**

If a particular proposal warrants detailed study then a special ad hoc committee may be struck just for that task. A properly formed motion striking an ad hoc committee should include the following:

1. Name of the committee.
2. Designation of committee chair.
3. A list of appointed committee members, and whether the membership of the committee is closed or open to the additional appointment of members by the committee Chair.
4. Whether the committee business is confidential or public.
5. A deadline for presentation of the final committee report.

#### **S5.3.6.2 - Enter Committee of the Whole**

Any time that a member feels that relaxing the rules of debate may facilitate the smooth conduct of business that member may move to *Enter Committee of the Whole*. The member must gain the floor while lower ranking business is pending. Such a motion requires a second, can neither be debated nor amended and has the effect of turning the current meeting into a committee meeting (as per [Section 3.2.3.3.](#)) and simultaneously referring the present business to the Committee of the Whole for discussion. If the motion is successful the Chair continues with discussion of the proposal at hand using the relaxed committee procedure. Such discussion continues until a successful motion to end Committee of the Whole returns the meeting to the exact place in debate where they were when the motion to *Enter Committee of the Whole* was introduced.

#### **S5.3.6.3 - Discharge a Committee**

A board may not resume debate on a motion if it had previously referred the proposal to a committee for development. To do so prior to the committee's final report, or if the board simply wishes to take the subject out of the committee's hands for some reason, any member may move to *Discharge Committee*. The motion may be moved when business of lower rank is pending, requires a second, may not be amended but may be debated. Discharging does not bring the object motion back before the assembly or place it on the agenda, but it does permit the introduction of a motion to [Restore \(S5.3.8\)](#).

#### **S5.3.7 - Amend: to change the wording of a motion**

The motion to *Amend* is a proposal to change the wording of the motion on the floor in a manner that is germane. Thus, in accordance with the principle of [Germaneness \(S2.6\)](#) any changes to the wording of the motion must be "closely or significantly relevant" to the original wording on the proposed agenda of the formal meeting call. Any change that constitutes a clear *non sequitur* is out of order: a motion about the annual budget can't be amended to endorse a political party, a motion to purchase a new computer can't be amended to purchase shares in a tech company, and a motion to lower membership fees can't be amended to dissolve the organization. The reason for this rule should be clear—members were

put on notice to allow preparation for the discussion of a certain topic, not some other non-related topic. Showing up to discuss a computer purchase is quite a different debate than one about the merits of playing the stock market.

However, so long as the proposed amendment remains relevant to the topic it need not maintain the spirit or intention behind the original. It is perfectly germane to change a motion in a manner that is hostile to or undermines the original. From the three examples above, it would be germane to amend the annual budget to zero, to limit the price of the computer purchase to \$5, or to raise (not lower) the membership fees by 25%. In practical terms it may be more fruitful to just defeat the main motion than to try to undermine the intention through amendments. However there is a whole spectrum of compromise changes to a motion that might make the overall prospect of it passing more or less likely, and many of those potential changes might water down or partially undermine elements of the original motion. This is precisely the give-and-take compromise usually necessary to achieve majority support in a democratic system.

*PROCEDURE:* To amend a lower ranking motion currently on the floor the member must obtain the floor while the motion is pending, and then move to *Amend*. The amendment must be seconded and may be debated. Where possible the member should have the exact wording of the changes worked out in advance and provide this wording to the Recording Secretary at the time it is moved.

Only [Main Motions \(S5.3.9\)](#) and motions to [Postpone \(S5.3.8\)](#) may be amended. Since the motion to *Amend* is of the same rank as itself (see [section 5.2](#)) it follows that meta-amendments are not permitted under the D2.0 system; that is you may not move to *Amend* an amendment. This is a substantial difference from *Robert's Rules of Order*, which permits one (but not two!) levels of meta-amendments. In D2.0 if a member wishes to propose a different amendment they should seek to defeat the current one, then move their own amendment.

Once debate on the amendment has been exhausted the Chair calls the vote on only the change of wording, not the underlying motion being modified. If the amendment fails then the underlying motion's wording remains unchanged and debate resumes on that motion from the point where the amendment was moved.

If the amendment passes then the wording for the underlying motion immediately takes on the amended form. Henceforth all debate on that motion must be [germane \(S2.6\)](#) to the newly amended form. Debate relating to the previous form is out of order. The debate on the underlying motion resumes from the point where it left off when the amendment was moved.

Since it is possible that the entire complexion of the underlying motion might have changed it is also possible that all prior debate may be obsolete. It is even possible that some members who spoke against the previous form may be in favour of the amended form, and vice versa. Consequently a single member may raise a [Point of Order \(S5.3.1\)](#) and require the debate to restart from scratch as though the motion was an entirely new motion (which, in essence, it is). In such a case no member has the right to speak first as motivation, but otherwise the Chair proceeds as though the motion were new.

### **S5.3.8 - Postpone/Renew: to delay a debate or resume the debate**

If a member believes it preferable to decide the present motion at a later time (or possibly never) they may move to *Postpone*. The motion to *Postpone* may specify a particular time when discussion will be renewed, or it may remain silent and leave the postponement indefinite. If the postponement is indefinite it will require a motion to *Renew* to bring it back, which is of the same rank and characteristics as *Postpone*.

*PROCEDURE:* Any member may move to postpone debate on a main motion currently before the assembly when no higher ranking business is pending. The member must obtain the floor to move the motion, which must be seconded and is debatable. The motion to *Postpone* may be amended to add, delete or modify a time when the motion is to be renewed. There are three possible outcomes to a motion to *Postpone*:

1. If *Postpone* fails the debate continues where it left off.
2. If *Postpone* passes and specifies a time when the main motion is to be renewed that renewal must be scheduled as a matter of course and no further action is required to trigger the renewal.
3. If *Postpone* passes but is silent on renewal then the main motion will remain dormant until such time as a motion to *Renew* is introduced onto a meeting agenda, either by means of the [Agenda Transparency \(S4.2.1\)](#) rules or by a motion to [Amend \(S5.3.7\)](#) the agenda, either at the start of the meeting during initial debate on the agenda, or later in the meeting by way of a motion to [Reconsider \(S5.3.5\)](#) the agenda. If the motion to *Renew* is successful the main motion being renewed will immediately take precedence, assuming the current position on the agenda.

The motion to “table” is widely used, however the term is frequently confused and misused, so should be avoided. The motion to *Postpone* replaces the motion to “table” in the D2.0 rule system.

### **S5.3.9 - Main Motions: to introduce a whole new proposal**

The *Main Motion* is a formal proposal for the entire group to take unified action or adopt a certain unified policy. If the motion passes then all members of the organization will be bound by the result, required to uphold and support the will of the majority under the [Democratic Contract \(S2.1\)](#).

The *Main Motion* is unique in that it introduces a substantively new topic for consideration before the assembly, and thus is the only motion that may ignore the principle of [Germaneness \(S2.6\)](#), though the main motion itself becomes the basis for determining if higher-ranking business is germane.

The principle of [Agenda Transparency \(S2.9\)](#) requires that draft wording for a main motion be submitted in advance and included in the draft agenda as part of the official call of the meeting. For details of the transparency rules see [Section 4.2.1](#). Just as with any motion the member who submitted notice of the draft main motion is entitled to speak first to the motion, known as *motivating* the motion.

*PROCEDURE:* To move a motion that introduces a substantially new topic under the D2.0 system it is necessary for the member to submit draft wording to whichever officer is responsible for issuing the formal meeting call and preparing the draft agenda. The bylaws should specify which officer has this responsibility, but if not the default responsibility under D2.0 falls to the presiding officer.

The wording of a main motion should be concise, unambiguous and expressed in a positive form. Motions should avoid being directives *not* to do something, or *not* to support some idea.

The mover of a motion may simply say the words “I move...” followed by their proposal. It is a common form to begin a motion with the words “be it resolved that” (abbreviated BIRT) though this is entirely optional. Any wording that is clear is acceptable.

A single discrete and specific proposal should be confined to one sentence or paragraph within a motion, called a clause. It is possible to combine more than one clause to a motion, making the motion an “omnibus” motion, or a motion dealing with more than one proposal at a time. Additional clauses to a motion are frequently denoted by beginning with the words “be it further resolved that” (abbreviated BIFRT).

A motion may also begin with an optional preamble, starting with “whereas” followed by a statement of background information intended to provide formal context or reasoning to the motion. The preamble only sets the stage, but does not contain a specific proposal. Below is an example demonstrating the form of an omnibus motion containing a preamble:

*Whereas the finance committee has prepared the annual budget based on the assumption of a 10% raise in membership fees;*  
*BIRT the annual budget proposed by the finance committee be adopted, and;*  
*BIFRT the annual membership fees of the society be raised 10% in accordance with the proposal of the finance committee.*

#### **S5.3.9.1 - Emergency Main Motions**

In the case of an emergency the assembly may introduce a main motion in the midst of a meeting without notice by moving to [Reconsider \(S5.3.5\)](#) and [Amend \(S5.3.7\)](#) the agenda, but such a motion requires unanimous consent. If a single member believes the emergency motion to be illegitimate or an ambush tactic that member may state their opposition, requiring the proposed emergency motion to follow the [Agenda Transparency \(S4.2.1\)](#) rules.

### **S5.4 - Voting**

Voting in the D2.0 system has been made as simple as possible. Unless legally required by an authority higher than the Parliamentary Authority (see [section 3.3](#)) motions under the D2.0 system require a majority vote, which is defined as “more than half of those casting a vote.” This is known as a “simple” majority in order to distinguish it from other voting thresholds.

#### S5.4.1 - Simple Majority Vote Threshold and the “Nuclear Option”

The D2.0 system never requires a voting threshold higher than a simple majority. The various modified consensus models all use “super-majority” thresholds, with the pure consensus requiring 100% unanimity. The flaws of such a system were discussed in the [preface](#).

Many rule systems, including *Robert's Rules*, require a 2/3 majority in situations that restrict the rights of members, such as cutting off debate or to suspend the rules for a particular task.

This is one important place where *Robert's Rules or Order* is broken, as demonstrated by the so-called “nuclear option” deployed in the U.S. Senate ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear\\_option](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_option)). In brief, under *Robert's Rules* and related systems (*Standard Code*, *Demeter's Manual*, *Burnout's Rules*, etc.) any decision of the Chair may be overturned by appeal to a simple majority vote of the assembly. Thus, raising a point of order and overruling the Chair with a simple majority can defeat any super-majority requirement. *Robert's Rules* is thus structurally inconsistent, permitting one part of the rules to legally defeat another part of the rules. This is a systemic design flaw that can lead to both sides accusing the other, with justification, of illegal activity.

The D2.0 system fixes this problem by eliminating voting thresholds higher than a simple majority. Other D2.0 mechanisms such as [Agenda Transparency \(S4.2.1\)](#) are used to protect the rights of minorities, instead of vote thresholds.

#### S5.4.2 - Plurality Votes

In most circumstances the vote will be a simple yes or no to a motion, making one side the clear winner (remember tie votes always fail because half is not more than half). It is possible for more than 2 options to be available, such as during elections to the board. Such votes should be by secret ballot. Where 3 or more options are on the ballot it is possible for the option with the most votes to have less than a majority. For instance at a meeting of 10 members with 3 options on the ballot: option A could receive 4 votes, while B and C receive 3 votes each. In this case option A does not have a majority, but it does have the most votes, which is known as a *plurality*.

In the D2.0 system it is necessary to receive a majority, so a plurality is insufficient. When no option receives a majority there must be a re-vote until sufficient members are willing to change their vote in order to break the deadlock, giving one choice more than half the votes. Keep re-voting until a majority is achieved by one of the candidates/options. Some voting systems force a “run-off vote” by requiring a re-vote with all but the top two candidates removed from the ballot. These systems are sub-optimal and permitted under the D2.0 system only if required by a higher authority (as per [section 3.3](#)). In a democracy sometimes the 3rd or 4th place option may wind up being the perfect compromise that can bring all sides together.

#### S5.4.3 - Voting Methods

The default method of voting in the D2.0 system is by show of hands or voting cards, depending on context. To call the vote the Chair reads (or has the Recording Secretary read) the exact wording of the motion, pauses briefly to

allow [Points of Information \(S5.3.2\)](#) from members who may be unclear about something, then asks “those in favour of the motion as stated” to indicate in the appropriate manner. The Chair then calls for “all those opposed” to indicate in the same manner. Counting the votes is up to the discretion of the Chair, depending on the size of the meeting and the apparent vote differential. If the result is clearly for one side no count is needed. If any members are uncertain of the outcome the Chair must count the vote and may designate an assistant to help count. Once the vote outcome is determined the Chair must announce the result and insure the Recording Secretary records it in the minutes.

An archaic method of voting is by “voice vote,” where members merely yell out “yea” when the Chair calls for those in favour, and “nay” when the Chair calls for opposed. This imprecise method has few advantages and obvious disadvantages compared to a show of hands or voting cards. Under the D2.0 system it should not be used unless required by a higher authority as per [section 3.3](#). Other voting methods include:

#### **S5.4.3.1 - Secret Ballot**

Any time during discussion of a motion a member may move that the vote be by secret ballot. The motion requires a second and may not be debated nor amended. If passed by majority vote the Chair and Recording Secretary should jointly oversee the balloting and counting of ballots, taking special care that the identity of those casting the ballots remains secret. Recounts may be requested and witnessed by members. Once the votes are satisfactorily counted a motion is required to ratify the results and to destroy the ballots, after which the result is final. All elections for officer positions *must* be conducted by secret ballot.

#### **S5.4.3.2 - Roll Call Vote**

A single member may require a roll call vote instead of a vote by hands or voting cards. In a roll call vote all members must vote publicly, one at a time, with each member's vote (for/against/abstain) recorded in the minutes. To ask for a roll call vote a single member need only state the request while they have the floor during debate of the motion in question. A roll call vote is required when requested by a single member, unless the meeting approves a different voting method by majority vote.

## **SECTION 6 - HOW TO HAVE A MEETING**

The following is intended as a concise summary of important meeting mechanics under the D2.0 rule system, for the aid of new and veteran democrats alike.

1. A meeting begins with a “call to order” by the Chair, meaning that the rules of order are in force.
2. All meetings require a minimum of two officers: the meeting Chair responsible for presiding and keeping order, and the Recording Secretary responsible for keeping the formal record of what happens at the meeting, in the form of the meeting [Minutes \(S4.4\)](#).

3. The meeting Chair controls the flow of the meeting, grants the floor, and rules on all matters relating to the operation of the meeting.
4. The Recording Secretary keeps detailed notes of the formal actions taken by the meeting, including those members who are in attendance, the time at which the meeting was called to order and ended, the exact wording of all motions, and any other relevant information directed or requested by members.
5. Usually the Chair and Recording Secretary have been designated in advance by virtue of holding officer positions. If a particular meeting finds itself without one of these officers present the first order of business necessary before the meeting can properly begin is to choose who will fill these roles from among those present at the meeting. If the Chair is absent any member may call the meeting to order and ask for a vote on temporary replacements. Should the absent officer arrive they should immediately resume their properly designated role.
6. The meeting must have a minimum number of members present to be legitimate. This minimum is called [quorum \(S2.15\)](#) and is usually set in the bylaws.
7. Any voting member of the assembly may formally propose that the group as a whole take a particular action by moving a [motion \(S5\)](#), the wording of which must be precise. To move a motion a member must obtain the floor (for subsidiary motions) or have submitted the motion in advance as part of the agenda.
8. A motion that raises an entirely new topic is called a [Main Motion \(S5.3.9\)](#). Main motions must have draft wording included in the draft agenda, which must be included with the official meeting call. All voting members must be notified of the meeting call and must be provided the draft agenda.
9. Any subsidiary motion may be moved from the floor, provided the current pending business is of lower rank than the subsidiary motion being moved.
10. Most motions must be seconded. To second a motion any member may simply call out “I second” or something similar, showing that at least some members are interested in discussing it and so is worthy of discussion. Seconding a motion does not imply support of the motion, only that the seconder believes the motion should be debated. If a motion requiring a second fails to receive a second the motion immediately dies.
11. Once a motion has been seconded the meeting must deal with the proposal in some fashion before moving on to the next agenda item; no motion can be ignored or skipped without some sort of resolution voted on by the meeting.
12. Once the mover of the motion receives a second they have the right to immediately speak to the motion to explain why it’s a good idea. This is called “motivating” for the motion.
13. During discussion someone who has the floor can move “subsidiary” motions that modify the main motion or modify the process of deliberation.
14. A main motion can be changed by moving the subsidiary motion to [Amend \(S5.3.7\)](#).
15. A subsidiary motion is treated in all respects as a new motion, however it must relate to the same subject as the main motion, which is called being [germane \(S2.6\)](#).

16. Some special motions can be made without having the floor, thereby interrupting the proceedings. These are generally classed as “points” in the D2.0 system.
17. If you have a question about either the content of the discussion or the process itself you may get the attention of the chair and raise a [Point of Information \(S5.3.2\)](#), which allows you to ask a question only. The question can be directed either to the Chair (if it is about procedure) or to the speaker (if it is about the substance of the discussion) but it should not interrupt proceedings unless urgent.
18. Discussion on the motion ends and the Chair calls for the vote when everyone has spoken twice, when no one else seeks the floor, a motion to [Call the Vote \(S5.3.3\)](#) passes, or if a previously approved time limit on discussion has elapsed.
19. Unless the meeting votes for a different method the vote will be by show of hands or voting cards.
20. The Chair should ask for unanimous consent rather than voting on matters that are not likely to be controversial. Only when it is obvious that there is opposition to a motion should the Chair call for a vote. If the Chair asks for unanimous consent it is the responsibility of a member who opposes the action to make their objection known, in accordance with [Silence Equals Consent \(S2.8\)](#).
21. Any member may, following the vote, ask the recording secretary to record how they voted in the minutes.
22. Barring unusual circumstances the first motion at a meeting is to adopt an *agenda* as the formal schedule for the meeting, which may or may not include scheduled times for specific items. See [Agenda Transparency \(S2.9\)](#). Once the agenda has been adopted the meeting may not deviate from the approved agenda without a vote to [Reconsider \(5.3.5\)](#) and [Amend \(S5.3.7\)](#) the agenda.
23. If the approved agenda contains scheduled items at designated times then other business must be interrupted when the designated time arrives. Preempted or unfinished business may be resumed at the end of the agenda or postponed until the next meeting.
24. If the meeting deviates from the agenda without a motion to do so any member may compel the meeting to return to the agenda by raising a [Point of Order \(S5.3.1\)](#).
25. To obtain the floor you must be recognized by the Chair. How this is done will vary with different meetings of different sizes, but it may involve raising your hand, standing, approaching a microphone or otherwise getting the attention of the Chair, who must then acknowledge you before you may speak.
26. The Chair will keep a speakers list if multiple people seek the floor at the same time. In large assemblies microphones may be used, in which case the line-up to the microphone may replace a speakers list. Some organizations may have separate microphones and/or speaker’s lists for those wishing to speak for or against the proposed motion.
27. There can be no discussion without a motion, and all comments by the speaker who has the floor must be [germane \(S2.6\)](#) to the motion on the floor. The Chair should immediately stop off topic discussion.
28. Members may have a maximum of two turns on the floor for each particular motion under debate, though no member may take their second turn on the floor so long as any member who has not yet spoken seeks the floor.

29. If the Chair feels that a short break in the meeting is necessary they can call a “recess” that can be as short as 5 minutes but should not be longer than 30 minutes. If a member objects to a recess being called the matter can be put to a vote. Similarly a member can move to call a recess, and if there is opposition the Chair should call a vote, though debate should be extremely minimal and limited only to the duration.
30. Once a meeting has voted on a particular question it is considered resolved and cannot be brought up again during the same meeting, except by way of the motion to [Reconsider \(S5.3.5\)](#).
31. There are only two possible ways that a meeting can properly end:
  - a. A motion to [Conclude \(S5.3.4\)](#). Such a motion is ordinarily the last item on an agenda, though it can be moved any time that a lower ranking motion is on the floor.
  - b. The loss of [quorum \(S2.15\)](#) immediately ends a formal meeting, though the meeting may continue informally if those present wish. Should members return to the meeting in sufficient numbers to restore quorum then the meeting may resume official business from the point on the agenda where quorum was lost.
32. After a motion has been decided at a previous meeting, the members on the minority side who wish to reverse the decision must lobby behind the scenes to change the minds of enough members on the prevailing side to change the outcome of the vote. If they believe they have done so they may re-submit the issue as a main motion to [Reconsider \(S5.3.5\)](#), in accordance with [Agenda Transparency \(S4.2\)](#). Doing so must be based on the reasonable belief that the former minority now holds the majority view, in accordance with the [Democratic Contract \(S2.1\)](#). The original prevailing side should test the strength of the claim by moving to delete the motion to [Reconsider \(S5.3.5\)](#) from the proposed agenda prior to ratification of the agenda. If the former minority cannot muster enough votes to keep the motion on the agenda then revisiting the motion would be a waste of time and energy.

**Copying and Licensing:**

The Solon Academy is a small, independently run consulting and publishing business. We feel passionately about our mission to restore the lost art of participatory democracy, and we hope you find the D2.0 system useful to your organization.

To show our support for democracy in your organization we allow *The Voting Member's Handbook*© to be shared using the honour system. The PDF form of this book may be shared with others in your organization so your group can try the system out in one of your meetings. If your group adopts the system we simply ask each individual who keeps a copy of the PDF to contribute a small licensing fee that goes directly to support the author's work and the continued development of the D2.0 system. Please visit the following webpage or click on the button below:

[www.solonacademy.com/democracy20/](http://www.solonacademy.com/democracy20/)

Donate

Thank you for your honesty and financial support!

