

## **“RULES OF ORDER”**

### **The Most Common Guidelines for Running an Effective Meeting**

Based on Excerpts from  
“Cannon’s Concise Guide to Rules of Order”  
Author: Hugh Cannon

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Many of our student chapter members requested a handbook that explains, in straight forward terms, the basic rules of order for running effective meetings (*Robert’s Rules Of Order*). In a literary review, the AIBL staff found Hugh Cannon’s “Concise Guide To Rules of Order” the most basic and fundamental information available on parliamentary procedure.

The following information provides only the key parliamentary rules to assist AIBL Chapter Presidents and members in running effective AIBL meetings. (Note: *For an in-depth explanation of the terms or conditions listed in this handbook, please refer to the resource book written by Hugh Cannon.*)

#### **ROLE & RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHAIR:**

The role of the Chairman or Chair of the meeting will generally be the AIBL Chapter President. When the President is unavailable, then whoever is designated by the AIBL Chapter by-laws to run the meeting in the President’s absence becomes the Chair of the meeting.

The Chairperson is advised to follow the subsequent suggestions to run an effective meeting:

1. **Prepare, Disseminate and FOLLOW AN AGENDA:** Unless otherwise stated in the by-laws, it is generally the President’s responsibility to prepare and disseminate the meeting agenda. It is imperative that all agenda items are reviewed prior to any new business discussion. This maintains order and ensures that the people who took the time to submit an agenda item will receive their allocated time to speak or present.
2. **Maintain Focus:** A key principle to remember is that there may be major issues that will need to be discussed and/or decided upon during the meeting. However, it is highly recommended that the Chairperson maintains his/her focus and make sure that the “smaller” agenda items do not get overlooked during the meeting.
3. **Ensure Basic Fairness:** In order for the meeting to be effective, a Chairperson must maintain impartiality at all times. If a certain issue becomes debatable, the chair must not be drawn into the debate to avoid the appearance of taking one side over the other. If the chair feels strongly about a certain issue and wishes to participate in the debate, then he/she must withdraw his/her position as chair while the issue is up for debate. The Chair responsibility is handed to the individual next in line for acting in this capacity (i.e., Vice-President).
4. **Avoid Confusion:** In order to avoid confusion when a motion has been made, it is the Chair’s responsibility to **always re-state** the motion verbally before a vote is conducted. This

will allow the general membership to seek clarification if they do not understand the motion. Each motion must be written, as stated, in the meeting minutes.

5. **Admit Mistakes:** Everybody at one time or another can and will make a mistake, especially in parliamentary procedure. Therefore, if you as the Chair make a procedural mistake, then you should acknowledge it immediately. Then you can take the necessary steps to correct the mistake. This helps avoid confusion and maintains the general membership's trust.

**GENERAL RULE #1:** Always prepare and follow an AGENDA. Make sure all members have a copy prior to the meeting.

**GENERAL RULE #2:** Whoever is leading the AIBL meeting, be it the President or appropriately designated individual, is to be addressed by the group as Madam Chair or Mr. Chairman.

**GENERAL RULE # 3:** If an issue that is being debated cannot be decided upon, the Chair or another person can make the motion to "table" the discussion until the next meeting or at another specified date.

**GENERAL RULE # 4:** A motion can be amended by anyone in the general membership by simply stating, "I motion to amend (motion) by changing it to read such and such." The Chair would then pick up the procedure asking for discussion, calling for the question, and then calling for the vote. This can also be done in the form of a "friendly amendment". A Friendly Amendment is an amendment proposed by a member whose suggestion supports the motion that was just made. If the amendment to the motion does not change or harm the original motion then it can be accepted by the general membership without having to go through the formal motioning procedure. To accept a friendly amendment the Chair asks the general membership whether they will accept the amendment, without objection and without debate and formal vote.

**GENERAL RULE # 5:** Any member, who may be indifferent to an issue that is being voted on may abstain his/her vote. To abstain is the refusal or declining of a member to vote when the vote is being taken. Because an abstention is not a vote, in need not be announced unless there is a special reason for noting abstentions.

**GENERAL RULE #6:** The definition of a quorum is the number or percentage (AIBL requires 2/3 to equal a quorum) of members required in the by-laws to be present at the meeting of a group in order for it to legally conduct business. This means that you can still hold a meeting, however if 2/3 of your membership is not in attendance at the meeting, you cannot vote on any one particular issue, until you have a quorum established.

**GENERAL RULE #7:** Please note that your by-laws are considered your basic governing document. The by-laws normally state agreement among the members with reference to the purpose of the group; defines membership; finances; and other matters concerning governance. The by-laws will also define how many members consist of a quorum.

**GENERAL RULE #8:** Depending on how in-depth and well the general membership uses Parliamentary Procedure, the group may want to create the position of Parliamentarian. Once created the membership may want to appoint or request that someone step forward and accept this position. The Parliamentarian is a person who advises the Chair on matters concerning parliamentary procedure.

**A VERY BASIC FORMAT FOR PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE:**

- Action 1:** Chair calls the meeting to order. This action, the date, and time are recorded in the meeting minutes.
- Action 2:** Chair calls for approval of prior meeting minutes. Minutes are read by the Secretary or designated individual.
- Action 3:** The Chair then asks for discussion of the meeting minutes. Any one, who may see the need to change or correct the prior meeting minutes, must provide this information during the discussion period.
- Action 4:** A motion must be made by a general member to approve or disapprove the meeting minutes; The individual should state – “I move that the prior meeting minutes of January 15, 1998 be approved.”
- Action 5:** The Chair calls for a second. An individual from the general membership would state – “I second the motion.” The Chair acknowledges that the motion has been seconded by (name of individual).
- Action 6:** The Chair will call for the question – this means he/she is placing the motion before the general membership for a vote. Someone from the general membership must state, “I call for the question.”
- Action 7:** The Chair then acknowledges that the question has been called by stating, “There has been a call for the question, and all in favor of approving the minutes say aye, all who are not in, favor say no.
- Action 8:** The Chair recognizes the vote by saying, “Please let the record show that # was in favor of the motion and # was opposed to the motion.”
- Action 9:** The Chair then moves to the next agenda item and goes through the whole process over again.