

**FIRST AMENDED BYLAWS**

**of the**

**SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY**

**Effective September 9, 2021**

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## **PREAMBLE**

These First Amended Bylaws of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency, adopted and effective as of September 9, 2021, amend and supersede the Bylaws adopted and effective as of May 19, 2016, and are pursuant to the First Amended Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (“Agreement”). The Agreement was entered into by and among the Central Water District, the City of Santa Cruz, the County of Santa Cruz, and the Soquel Creek Water District, sometimes referred to herein individually as a “Member Agency” and collectively as the “Member Agencies”.

Unless specifically defined in these Bylaws, all defined terms shall have the same meaning ascribed to them in the Agreement. If any term of these Bylaws conflicts with any term of the Agreement, the Agreement's terms shall prevail, and these Bylaws shall be amended to eliminate such conflict of terms.

## **ARTICLE 1. THE AGENCY**

1.1 NAME OF AGENCY. The name of the Agency created by the Agreement is the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (“MGA” or “Agency”).

1.2 PRINCIPAL OFFICE OF AGENCY. The principal office of the Agency shall be at the Soquel Creek Water District located at 5180 Soquel Drive, Soquel, CA 95073, or at such other location as the Board may designate by resolution.

1.3 POWERS. The powers of the Agency shall be as set forth in Article 4 of the Agreement.

1.4 PARENT AGENCY. Unless and until the Agency adopts its own administrative, management and operations policies and procedures, the administration, management and operation of the Agency shall be in accordance with existing applicable policies and procedures of the Soquel Creek Water District (“Parent Agency”).

## **ARTICLE 2. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

2.1 BOARD OF DIRECTORS. The Agency shall be governed by a Board of Directors (the "Board") as set forth in Article 6 of the Agreement.

2.2 PROCEDURE FOR APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS REPRESENTING PRIVATE WELL OWNERS.

2.2.1 Notification. The Board shall issue formal notification of the opportunity to apply for the appointment to the Board as Directors representing the interests of private well owners (“PWO”).

I. The notification shall include a description of the work of the Agency, the desired characteristics and skills of Directors representing the interests of private well

owners and the screening criteria to be used in evaluating applications received, as well as the timeline for decision-making on appointees.

II. The Board shall use a variety of print media, electronic and other formal and informal communication mechanisms in this notification, and the period of notification will cover, at a minimum, 10 working days.

III. A standardized application will be required as part of each applicant's submittal.

IV. Applications submitted by hand delivery, mail or electronically must be received in the Agency's principal office (the Soquel Creek Water District) by the close of the filing period.

2.2.2 Screening and Interviews. A subcommittee of the Board, with Member Agency staff participation as appropriate, shall screen applications using the set of screening criteria included in the notification described in 2.2.1. The subcommittee shall hold interviews with the top candidates from the screening process and develop recommendations for the full Board's consideration.

2.2.3 Nomination. The subcommittee of the Board involved with screening and interview of candidates shall nominate candidates for appointment to the Director positions representing private well owners.

2.2.4 Appointment. Appointment of Directors representing private well owners shall be made by a majority vote of the Member Agency Directors in compliance with Section 6.3.5 of the Agreement.

2.2.5 Term. The term of appointment shall be four (4) years, unless otherwise established by a majority vote of the Member Agency Directors, and such term shall continue until a successor is duly appointed by the Board. The term effective date shall be determined by resolution of the Board. At the expiration of the term of a PWO Director or Alternate, the Board may (i) elect to initiate the appointment procedure for a PWO Director or Alternate under section 2.2 of the Bylaws; or (ii) appoint a PWO Director or Alternate in an different manner, subject to Board approval by a majority vote of the Member Agency Directors participating in voting. For the purpose of establishing staggered terms, one of the initially-appointed PWO Directors and the Alternate Director will serve an initial term of two years. The three PWO Directors may determine by unanimous decision which Director will serve the initial term of two years; if they are unable to reach a unanimous decision, then as observed by the Board Chair or Vice Chair they shall devise a random selection process through which a PWO Director will be chosen to serve the initial two-year term.

### **ARTICLE 3. BOARD MEETINGS**

3.1 MEETINGS. The Board's regular meeting schedule shall be developed and adopted by the Board at its final regularly scheduled meeting of each calendar year or earlier if desired. Special meetings of the Board may be called by the Chair or a majority of the Board in compliance with Government Code Section 54956. Board meetings shall be conducted in compliance with Article 8 of the Agreement, all applicable laws, and as further specified herein.

3.2 QUORUM. In determining a quorum as defined by Section 9.1 of the Agreement, Alternate Directors attending meetings shall not be counted as part of any meeting quorum unless such Alternate Director is formally representing an absent appointed Director.

3.3 ORDER OF BUSINESS. In general, at the regular meetings of the Board, the following will be the order of business:

3.3.1 Call to Order.

3.3.2 Roll Call.

3.3.3 Oral Communications Related to Items Not on the Agenda.

3.3.4 Approval of Minutes of the previous meeting.

3.3.5 Agenda Items, including any appropriate combination of consent items, regular business items, informational items, or public hearing items.

3.3.6 Oral Updates from Directors and Staff.

3.3.7 Adjournment.

3.4 ACTION BY THE BOARD. Action by the Board on all resolutions or ordinances shall be taken using a roll-call vote and shall be recorded in writing, signed by the Chair, and attested to by the Secretary. All other actions of the Board shall be by motion recorded in written minutes. The Chair shall announce the results of the vote including the names of the Directors, if any, voting in the minority.

3.5 RULE OF ORDER. All rules of order not otherwise provided for in these Bylaws shall be determined, to the extent practicable, in accordance with "Rosenberg's Rules of Order" (Attached as Appendix A); provided, however, that no action of the Board shall be invalidated or its legality otherwise affected by the failure or omission to observe or follow Rosenberg's Rules of Order.

### **ARTICLE 4. OFFICERS**

4.1 OFFICERS. The Officers of the Agency are the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary ("Elected Officers") and the appointed Treasurer (collectively, "Officers" or "Agency Officers"), as provided for in Article 7 of the Agreement. All Directors are eligible to serve as an Officer. The

Chair, the Vice Chair, and the Secretary must be Directors. The Treasurer shall be appointed consistent with the provisions of Section 7.3 of the Agreement and will not be a Director.

4.2 ELECTION OF OFFICERS. At the first meeting of the Board of each fiscal year, nominations for the Elected Officers will be made by a Director. If more than two (2) Directors are nominated for any one office, voting occurs until a nominee receives a majority of the votes cast. Each Elected Officer shall serve a term of one (1) year and shall hold office until the meeting of the Board held at the expiration of such term or until a successor shall have been elected. An Elected Officer may succeed themselves and may serve any number of consecutive or non-consecutive terms.

4.3 REMOVAL OF ELECTED OFFICERS. An Elected Officer may be removed, with or without cause, by a majority vote of the Board at a regular meeting or a special meeting called in compliance with Section 3.1.

4.4 VACANCIES OF OFFICERS. Any vacancy in the offices because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other cause will be filled for the balance of the vacated term in the manner prescribed in these Bylaws for regular elections to that office; provided, however, that such vacancies are filled at any regular meeting or special meeting called in compliance with Section 3.1.

4.5 RESIGNATION OF OFFICERS. An Elected Officer may resign at any time by giving written notice to the Board Chair or Secretary. Any resignation takes effect at the date of the receipt of that notice or at any later time specified in that notice. Unless otherwise specified in that notice, the acceptance of the resignation is not necessary to make it effective.

4.6 RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELECTED OFFICERS.

4.6.1 Chair of the Board. The Chair of the Board shall preside at meetings of the Board and exercise and perform such other powers and duties as may be assigned to them by the Board or prescribed by these Bylaws.

4.6.2 Vice Chair of the Board. The Vice Chair shall fulfill all the duties of the Chair in their absence and exercise and perform such other powers and duties as may be assigned to them by the Board.

4.6.3 Secretary. The Secretary shall perform, but not be limited to, the following duties:

- I. Book of Minutes. Keep or cause to be kept, at the principal office of the Agency or such other place as the Board may direct, a book of minutes of all meetings and actions of Directors and Committees of the Agency, with the time and place of holding the meeting, whether regular or special, and, if special, how authorized, the notice given, the names of those present and absent at such meetings and the proceedings of such meetings. Minutes will be in the form of action minutes and a meeting summary.

- II. Notices and Other Duties. Prepare, give, or cause to be given, notice of, and agendas for, all meetings of the Board and committees of the Agency.
- III. Exercise and perform such other powers and perform such other duties as may be assigned to him/her by the Board.

4.7 TREASURER. The Treasurer shall be the depository and have custody of all the money of the Agency from whatever source, and shall provide strict accountability of said funds in accordance with Government Code Sections 6505 and 6505.5. The Treasurer shall possess the powers of, and shall perform those functions required by Government Code Sections 6505, 6505.5, 6505.6 and all other applicable laws and regulations, including any subsequent amendments thereto.

4.7.1 Appointment. The Board shall appoint and may remove the Treasurer and the auditor by majority vote of the Board. At present, the Finance Manager of the Soquel Creek Water District holds the office of Treasurer and auditor of the Agency, as authorized by Section 6505.6 of the Government Code, and performs the duties as authorized in Section 6505 et seq. of the Government Code.

4.7.2 Treasurer's Duties. Particularly, the Treasurer shall perform, but not be limited to, the following duties:

- I. Books of Account. Keep and maintain, or cause to be kept and maintained, adequate and correct books and records of accounts of the properties and business transactions of Agency, including accounts of its assets, liabilities, receipts, disbursements, gains, losses, capital, retained earnings, and other matters customarily included in financial statements. The books of account will be open to inspection by any Director at all reasonable times.
- II. Deposit and Disbursement of Money and Valuables. Consistent with the provisions of Article 13 of the Agreement, deposit all money and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Agency within such depository accounts as may be designated by the Board; disburse the funds of the Agency as may be authorized or ordered by the Board; and render to the Board, whenever requested, an account of all of his/her transactions as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the Agency.
- III. Exercise and perform such other powers and perform such other duties as may be assigned to them by the Board.
- IV. Contract for an independent audit to be made by a certified public accountant, or public accountant, in compliance with and as required by Government Code Sections 6505.

## **ARTICLE 5. BOARD COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

5.1 BOARD COMMITTEES. Pursuant to Article 12 of the Agreement, the Board may establish temporary or permanent Board Committees composed entirely of Board Directors to facilitate conduct of its work. No committee or participant on such committee shall have any authority to act on behalf of the Agency except as duly authorized by the Board. Temporary Board Committees will have a specific charge and operational duration not to exceed six months and are not subject to the Brown Act unless they include more than six Directors as Committee members. Permanent Committees will be given a specific role and regardless of the number of Directors appointed shall be subject to compliance with the Brown Act. All Board Committees will provide regular updates to the full Board about their activities and the progress of their work.

5.2 WORKING GROUPS. Informal working groups may be formed from time to time to provide opportunities for a small subset of Directors to work with staff on specific planning, analytical, or community engagement activities. Such working groups will have a defined area as the focus for its work and may function for a duration of up to six months, and may include such membership as needed to accomplish the object for which the working group was created.

5.3 ADVISORY COMMITTEES. Pursuant to Article 12 of the Agreement, the Board may establish one or more advisory committees to assist in carrying out the purposes and objectives of the Agency.

5.3.1 In establishing an Advisory Committee, the Board shall provide specific direction to the Committee as to its charge, expected duration for completion of its charge, and a summary of the resources, including staff or consultant support available to the Committee in performing its work.

5.3.2 Advisory committee membership and appointments shall be at the Board's discretion based on the membership needed to meet the purpose for which the Advisory Committee was created.

5.3.3 Any advisory committee shall exercise such powers as may be delegated to it, except that no committee may:

- i. Take any final action on matters which, under the Agreement, require approval by a majority vote of the Board;
- ii. Amend or repeal the Bylaws or adopt new Bylaws;
- iii. Amend or repeal any resolution of the Board; or
- iv. Appoint any other committees of the Board or the members of these committees.

5.3.4 Advisory committees shall meet at the call of their respective Board Director(s) serving as the committee chair(s). All advisory committee meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act (California Government Code sections 54950 et

seq.). Minutes of committee meetings shall be documented and upon approval shall be distributed to the Board.

## **ARTICLE 6. AGENCY ADMINISTRATION, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING**

6.1 COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT. Except for the Agency's Treasurer function, Agency administration and management will be conducted using a collaborative staffing model in which the professional and technical staff of the Member Agencies work together to provide staff leadership, management and administration of the Agency.

6.1.1 Staffing Support for Agency Officers and Board Members. Each Member Agency shall delegate a senior level executive staff member to the Agency's Executive Team (referred to as the "Executive Team" or "Executive Staff"). While at the discretion of each Member Agency, senior level executive staff is intended to include staff positions such as: General Manager, District Manager, Water Director, Deputy Water Director, Division Director, Program Manager or other senior level management positions. Executive Staff will work together to provide staff support for the Agency Officers and Directors. Board agenda and meeting materials will generally be prepared by or reviewed by one or more members of the Executive Staff prior to being finalized. Should Executive Staff not be in agreement on any topic, the Chair and Vice Chair will be consulted to provide the necessary direction. Any issue not resolvable by Executive Staff and the Chair and Vice Chair will be referred to the full Board for decision.

6.1.2 Staffing Support for Implementation of the Agency Work Plan as Aligned with the Annual or Multi-year Budget. Both senior level Executive Staff from the Member Agencies and other professional and technical staff from the Member Agencies will be involved in providing staff support for the Agency. Staffing support includes In-Kind Contributions and Reimbursable Contribution of Staff as presented below.

6.1.2.1 In-Kind Contribution of Staff. Unless otherwise specified in the Agreement or these Bylaws, Member Agency staff contributions will be in the form of "in-kind" contributions. The Agency will not budget for or reimburse Member Agencies for the work contributed by their staff to the administration, management, or operation of the Agency. This work is different from staff implementing or supporting the implementation of Agency programs and projects as described in Section 6.1.2.2 (Reimbursable Contribution).

6.1.2.2 Reimbursable Contribution of Staff. If an MGA activity requires a substantial and disproportionate amount of involvement of Member Agency staff in implementing or supporting the implementation of Agency programs and projects that support the MGA as a whole such that the Executive Staff is in unanimous agreement that the In-Kind Contribution of Staff (Section 6.1.2.1) is not applicable or equitable, then the Member Agency may be compensated via

reimbursement commensurate with the work performed. Consideration of a reimbursable contribution should typically occur as part of the Agency's annual budget development and approval process. If it does not occur during the annual process, any reimbursable compensation to a Member Agency requires approval by a majority of the Member Agency Directors. Compensation is to be via reimbursement in arrears for the work performed and invoiced to the MGA by the Member Agency.

6.1.2.3 Reimbursable Contribution of Treasurer and Finance Staff. The Agency will reimburse the Member Agency of the appointed Treasurer and auditor for their services and related services of finance staff in support of the Agency. Reimbursement will include necessary staff time for these roles as well as the purchase and maintenance of any necessary materials and/or equipment required by the Treasurer in order to complete the work.

6.1.3 Administrative Support Staff. The Executive Staff will recommend to the Board an approach to acquire and maintain administrative staff support to perform the administrative tasks necessary for the business and operations of the Agency.

## **ARTICLE 7. FINANCES**

7.1 DEPOSIT AND DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS. All funds of the Agency shall be deposited in one or more depository accounts as may be designated by the Board. Such accounts shall be independent of any account owned by or exclusively controlled by any of the Member Agencies. No disbursements of such funds shall be made unless the same shall have been approved in the annual operating budget, or otherwise specifically authorized or approved by the Board. All disbursements shall be by check. Disbursements of not more than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) may be issued pursuant to the Treasurer's sole signature. Disbursements in excess of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) may only be issued upon the signature of the Treasurer, and one of the following; the Chair, the Vice Chair or any of the Member Agency Executive Staff. The Treasurer may establish and implement a protocol allowing for electronic signatures by the approved signatories to facilitate efficient operation of the Agency.

7.2 BUDGET. The Agency shall operate pursuant to an operating budget to be adopted prior to the beginning of each new fiscal year. The Agency shall endeavor to operate each year pursuant to an annually balanced budget so that projected annual expenses do not exceed projected annual revenues. Budget adjustments to the annual budget shall be reviewed and acted upon by the Board at a regularly scheduled Board meeting or at other times if circumstances require more immediate action.

## **ARTICLE 8. DEBTS AND LIABILITIES**

8.1 DEBTS, LIABILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE AGENCY. The debts, liabilities and obligations of the Agency are not and will not be the debts, liabilities or obligations of any or all

of the Member Agencies. However, nothing in this Article or in the Agreement prevents, or impairs the ability of, a Member Agency or Member Agencies, from agreeing, in a separate agreement, to be jointly and/or severally liable, in whole or in part, for any debt, obligation or liability of the Agency, including but not limited to, any bond or other debt instrument issued by the Agency.

## **ARTICLE 9. RECORDS RETENTION**

9.1 MAINTENANCE OF THE AGENCY RECORDS. The Agency will keep:

9.1.1 Adequate and correct books and records of account; and of the Board.

9.1.2 Minutes in written form of the proceedings of its Board, and committees, and advisory committees, if any.

9.1.3 All such records will be kept at the Agency's principal office.

9.2 RECORDS RETENTION POLICY AND SCHEDULE. On May 18, 2017, the Board adopted a Records Retention Policy and Schedule that specifies the retention period of different categories of materials. Implementation of this Policy will be the responsibility of Agency staff.

9.3 INSPECTION RIGHTS.

9.3.1 Any Member Agency may inspect the accounting books and records and minutes of the proceedings of the Board and committees of the Board, at any reasonable time, for a purpose reasonably related to such person's interest.

9.3.2 Any inspection and copying under this Section may be made in person or by an agent or attorney or the entity entitled thereto and the right of inspection includes the right to copy.

9.4 MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION OF AGREEMENT AND BYLAWS. The Agency will keep at its principal office the original or copy of the Agreement and these Bylaws as amended to date, which will be open to inspection by the Agency or any Member Agency at all reasonable times during office hours.

9.5 INSPECTION BY DIRECTORS. Every Director has the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect all non-confidential books, records, and documents of every kind for a purpose related to the Agency's business and the physical properties of the Agency. This inspection by a Director may be made in person or by an agent or attorney, and the right of inspection includes the right to copy and make extracts of documents. There shall be no right to review records if the disclosure would violate the privacy rights of others, would result in or be in furtherance of a conflict of interest, or would be inconsistent with information protected by the attorney-client privilege, attorney work product, or privileged information under the Public Records Act.

## **ARTICLE 10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND ETHICS**

10.1 CONFLICT OF INTEREST. The Agency shall be subject to the conflict of interest rules set forth in the Political Reform Act (commencing with Section 81000 of the Government Code of the State of California) and Sections 1090 et seq. of the Government Code of the State of California. The Agency adopted a Conflict of Interest Code as required under the implementing regulations of the Political Reform Act and reviews the Conflict of Interest Code as required by law.

10.2 ETHICS. Each Director is subject to compliance with the ethics requirements of the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) for elected and appointed local officials. A status report on Board FPPC compliance shall be submitted annually to the Board. Each Member Agency Director is governed by the ethics policy of the Member Agency it represents. Directors representing private well owners are governed by the Ethics Policy of the Parent Agency.

## **ARTICLE 11. AMENDMENT**

These Bylaws may be amended from time to time by resolution of the Board, duly adopted by a majority of the Board at a regular or special meeting of the Board; provided, however, that no such amendment shall be adopted unless at least thirty (30) days written notice thereof has previously been given to all members of the Board. Such notice shall identify the Article to be amended, the proposed amendment, and the reason for the proposed amendment.

## **ARTICLE 12. DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION**

Unless the context or reference to the Agreement requires otherwise, the general provisions, rules of construction, and definitions in the California Civil Code will govern the construction of these Bylaws.

# APPENDIX A



# Rosenberg's Rules of Order

REVISED 2011

*Simple Rules of Parliamentary Procedure for the 21st Century*

*By Judge Dave Rosenberg*



## MISSION AND CORE BELIEFS

To expand and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians.

## VISION

To be recognized and respected as the leading advocate for the common interests of California's cities.

### About the League of California Cities

Established in 1898, the League of California Cities is a member organization that represents California's incorporated cities. The League strives to protect the local authority and autonomy of city government and help California's cities effectively serve their residents. In addition to advocating on cities' behalf at the state capitol, the League provides its members with professional development programs and information resources, conducts education conferences and research, and publishes Western City magazine.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Rosenberg is a Superior Court Judge in Yolo County. He has served as presiding judge of his court, and as presiding judge of the Superior Court Appellate Division. He also has served as chair of the Trial Court Presiding Judges Advisory Committee (the committee composed of all 58 California presiding judges) and as an advisory member of the California Judicial Council. Prior to his appointment to the bench, Rosenberg was member of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors, where he served two terms as chair. Rosenberg also served on the Davis City Council, including two terms as mayor. He has served on the senior staff of two governors, and worked for 19 years in private law practice. Rosenberg has served as a member and chair of numerous state, regional and local boards. Rosenberg chaired the California State Lottery Commission, the California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board, the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District, the Yolo County Economic Development Commission, and the Yolo County Criminal Justice Cabinet. For many years, he has taught classes on parliamentary procedure and has served as parliamentarian for large and small bodies.



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## INTRODUCTION

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The rules of procedure at meetings should be simple enough for most people to understand. Unfortunately, that has not always been the case. Virtually all clubs, associations, boards, councils and bodies follow a set of rules — *Robert's Rules of Order* — which are embodied in a small, but complex, book. Virtually no one I know has actually read this book cover to cover. Worse yet, the book was written for another time and for another purpose. If one is chairing or running a parliament, then *Robert's Rules of Order* is a dandy and quite useful handbook for procedure in that complex setting. On the other hand, if one is running a meeting of say, a five-member body with a few members of the public in attendance, a simplified version of the rules of parliamentary procedure is in order.

Hence, the birth of *Rosenberg's Rules of Order*.

What follows is my version of the rules of parliamentary procedure, based on my decades of experience chairing meetings in state and local government. These rules have been simplified for the smaller bodies we chair or in which we participate, slimmed down for the 21st Century, yet retaining the basic tenets of order to which we have grown accustomed. Interestingly enough, *Rosenberg's Rules* has found a welcoming audience. Hundreds of cities, counties, special districts, committees, boards, commissions, neighborhood associations and private corporations and companies have adopted *Rosenberg's Rules* in lieu of *Robert's Rules* because they have found them practical, logical, simple, easy to learn and user friendly.

This treatise on modern parliamentary procedure is built on a foundation supported by the following four pillars:

1. **Rules should establish order.** The first purpose of rules of parliamentary procedure is to establish a framework for the orderly conduct of meetings.
2. **Rules should be clear.** Simple rules lead to wider understanding and participation. Complex rules create two classes: those who understand and participate; and those who do not fully understand and do not fully participate.
3. **Rules should be user friendly.** That is, the rules must be simple enough that the public is invited into the body and feels that it has participated in the process.
4. **Rules should enforce the will of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority.** The ultimate purpose of rules of procedure is to encourage discussion and to facilitate decision making by the body. In a democracy, majority rules. The rules must enable the majority to express itself and fashion a result, while permitting the minority to also express itself, but not dominate, while fully participating in the process.

### Establishing a Quorum

The starting point for a meeting is the establishment of a quorum. A quorum is defined as the minimum number of members of the body who must be present at a meeting for business to be legally transacted. The default rule is that a quorum is one more than half the body. For example, in a five-member body a quorum is three. When the body has three members present, it can legally transact business. If the body has less than a quorum of members present, it cannot legally transact business. And even if the body has a quorum to begin the meeting, the body can lose the quorum during the meeting when a member departs (or even when a member leaves the dais). When that occurs the body loses its ability to transact business until and unless a quorum is reestablished.

The default rule, identified above, however, gives way to a specific rule of the body that establishes a quorum. For example, the rules of a particular five-member body may indicate that a quorum is four members for that particular body. The body must follow the rules it has established for its quorum. In the absence of such a specific rule, the quorum is one more than half the members of the body.

### The Role of the Chair

While all members of the body should know and understand the rules of parliamentary procedure, it is the chair of the body who is charged with applying the rules of conduct of the meeting. The chair should be well versed in those rules. For all intents and purposes, the chair makes the final ruling on the rules every time the chair states an action. In fact, all decisions by the chair are final unless overruled by the body itself.

Since the chair runs the conduct of the meeting, it is usual courtesy for the chair to play a less active role in the debate and discussion than other members of the body. This does not mean that the chair should not participate in the debate or discussion. To the contrary, as a member of the body, the chair has the full right to participate in the debate, discussion and decision-making of the body. What the chair should do, however, is strive to be the last to speak at the discussion and debate stage. The chair should not make or second a motion unless the chair is convinced that no other member of the body will do so at that point in time.

### The Basic Format for an Agenda Item Discussion

Formal meetings normally have a written, often published agenda. Informal meetings may have only an oral or understood agenda. In either case, the meeting is governed by the agenda and the agenda constitutes the body's agreed-upon roadmap for the meeting. Each agenda item can be handled by the chair in the following basic format:



**First**, the chair should clearly announce the agenda item number and should clearly state what the agenda item subject is. The chair should then announce the format (which follows) that will be followed in considering the agenda item.

**Second**, following that agenda format, the chair should invite the appropriate person or persons to report on the item, including any recommendation that they might have. The appropriate person or persons may be the chair, a member of the body, a staff person, or a committee chair charged with providing input on the agenda item.

**Third**, the chair should ask members of the body if they have any technical questions of clarification. At this point, members of the body may ask clarifying questions to the person or persons who reported on the item, and that person or persons should be given time to respond.

**Fourth**, the chair should invite public comments, or if appropriate at a formal meeting, should open the public meeting for public input. If numerous members of the public indicate a desire to speak to the subject, the chair may limit the time of public speakers. At the conclusion of the public comments, the chair should announce that public input has concluded (or the public hearing, as the case may be, is closed).

**Fifth**, the chair should invite a motion. The chair should announce the name of the member of the body who makes the motion.

**Sixth**, the chair should determine if any member of the body wishes to second the motion. The chair should announce the name of the member of the body who seconds the motion. It is normally good practice for a motion to require a second before proceeding to ensure that it is not just one member of the body who is interested in a particular approach. However, a second is not an absolute requirement, and the chair can proceed with consideration and vote on a motion even when there is no second. This is a matter left to the discretion of the chair.

**Seventh**, if the motion is made and seconded, the chair should make sure everyone understands the motion.

This is done in one of three ways:

1. The chair can ask the maker of the motion to repeat it;
2. The chair can repeat the motion; or
3. The chair can ask the secretary or the clerk of the body to repeat the motion.

**Eighth**, the chair should now invite discussion of the motion by the body. If there is no desired discussion, or after the discussion has ended, the chair should announce that the body will vote on the motion. If there has been no discussion or very brief discussion, then the vote on the motion should proceed immediately and there is no need to repeat the motion. If there has been substantial discussion, then it is normally best to make sure everyone understands the motion by repeating it.

**Ninth**, the chair takes a vote. Simply asking for the “ayes” and then asking for the “nays” normally does this. If members of the body do not vote, then they “abstain.” Unless the rules of the body provide otherwise (or unless a super majority is required as delineated later in these rules), then a simple majority (as defined in law or the rules of the body as delineated later in these rules) determines whether the motion passes or is defeated.

**Tenth**, the chair should announce the result of the vote and what action (if any) the body has taken. In announcing the result, the chair should indicate the names of the members of the body, if any, who voted in the minority on the motion. This announcement might take the following form: “The motion passes by a vote of 3-2, with Smith and Jones dissenting. We have passed the motion requiring a 10-day notice for all future meetings of this body.”

## Motions in General

Motions are the vehicles for decision making by a body. It is usually best to have a motion before the body prior to commencing discussion of an agenda item. This helps the body focus.

Motions are made in a simple two-step process. First, the chair should recognize the member of the body. Second, the member of the body makes a motion by preceding the member’s desired approach with the words “I move . . .”

A typical motion might be: “I move that we give a 10-day notice in the future for all our meetings.”

The chair usually initiates the motion in one of three ways:

1. **Inviting the members of the body to make a motion**, for example, “A motion at this time would be in order.”
2. **Suggesting a motion to the members of the body**, “A motion would be in order that we give a 10-day notice in the future for all our meetings.”
3. **Making the motion**. As noted, the chair has every right as a member of the body to make a motion, but should normally do so only if the chair wishes to make a motion on an item but is convinced that no other member of the body is willing to step forward to do so at a particular time.

## The Three Basic Motions

There are three motions that are the most common and recur often at meetings:

**The basic motion.** The basic motion is the one that puts forward a decision for the body’s consideration. A basic motion might be: “I move that we create a five-member committee to plan and put on our annual fundraiser.”

**The motion to amend.** If a member wants to change a basic motion that is before the body, they would move to amend it. A motion to amend might be: “I move that we amend the motion to have a 10-member committee.” A motion to amend takes the basic motion that is before the body and seeks to change it in some way.

**The substitute motion.** If a member wants to completely do away with the basic motion that is before the body, and put a new motion before the body, they would move a substitute motion. A substitute motion might be: “I move a substitute motion that we cancel the annual fundraiser this year.”

“Motions to amend” and “substitute motions” are often confused, but they are quite different, and their effect (if passed) is quite different. A motion to amend seeks to retain the basic motion on the floor, but modify it in some way. A substitute motion seeks to throw out the basic motion on the floor, and substitute a new and different motion for it. The decision as to whether a motion is really a “motion to amend” or a “substitute motion” is left to the chair. So if a member makes what that member calls a “motion to amend,” but the chair determines that it is really a “substitute motion,” then the chair’s designation governs.

A “friendly amendment” is a practical parliamentary tool that is simple, informal, saves time and avoids bogging a meeting down with numerous formal motions. It works in the following way: In the discussion on a pending motion, it may appear that a change to the motion is desirable or may win support for the motion from some members. When that happens, a member who has the floor may simply say, “I want to suggest a friendly amendment to the motion.” The member suggests the friendly amendment, and if the maker and the person who seconded the motion pending on the floor accepts the friendly amendment, that now becomes the pending motion on the floor. If either the maker or the person who seconded rejects the proposed friendly amendment, then the proposer can formally move to amend.

### Multiple Motions Before the Body

There can be up to three motions on the floor at the same time. The chair can reject a fourth motion until the chair has dealt with the three that are on the floor and has resolved them. This rule has practical value. More than three motions on the floor at any given time is confusing and unwieldy for almost everyone, including the chair.

When there are two or three motions on the floor (after motions and seconds) at the same time, the vote should proceed *first* on the *last* motion that is made. For example, assume the first motion is a basic “motion to have a five-member committee to plan and put on our annual fundraiser.” During the discussion of this motion, a member might make a second motion to “amend the main motion to have a 10-member committee, not a five-member committee to plan and put on our annual fundraiser.” And perhaps, during that discussion, a member makes yet a third motion as a “substitute motion that we not have an annual fundraiser this year.” The proper procedure would be as follows:

**First**, the chair would deal with the *third* (the last) motion on the floor, the substitute motion. After discussion and debate, a vote would be taken first on the third motion. If the substitute motion *passed*, it would be a substitute for the basic motion and would eliminate it. The first motion would be moot, as would the second motion (which sought to amend the first motion), and the action on the agenda item would be completed on the passage by the body of the third motion (the substitute motion). No vote would be taken on the first or second motions.

**Second**, if the substitute motion *failed*, the chair would then deal with the second (now the last) motion on the floor, the motion to amend. The discussion and debate would focus strictly on the amendment (should the committee be five or 10 members). If the motion to amend *passed*, the chair would then move to consider the main motion (the first motion) as *amended*. If the motion to amend *failed*, the chair would then move to consider the main motion (the first motion) in its original format, not amended.

**Third**, the chair would now deal with the first motion that was placed on the floor. The original motion would either be in its original format (five-member committee), or if *amended*, would be in its amended format (10-member committee). The question on the floor for discussion and decision would be whether a committee should plan and put on the annual fundraiser.

### To Debate or Not to Debate

The basic rule of motions is that they are subject to discussion and debate. Accordingly, basic motions, motions to amend, and substitute motions are all eligible, each in their turn, for full discussion before and by the body. The debate can continue as long as members of the body wish to discuss an item, subject to the decision of the chair that it is time to move on and take action.

There are exceptions to the general rule of free and open debate on motions. The exceptions all apply when there is a desire of the body to move on. The following motions are not debatable (that is, when the following motions are made and seconded, the chair must immediately call for a vote of the body without debate on the motion):

**Motion to adjourn.** This motion, if passed, requires the body to immediately adjourn to its next regularly scheduled meeting. It requires a simple majority vote.

**Motion to recess.** This motion, if passed, requires the body to immediately take a recess. Normally, the chair determines the length of the recess which may be a few minutes or an hour. It requires a simple majority vote.

**Motion to fix the time to adjourn.** This motion, if passed, requires the body to adjourn the meeting at the specific time set in the motion. For example, the motion might be: “I move we adjourn this meeting at midnight.” It requires a simple majority vote.

**Motion to table.** This motion, if passed, requires discussion of the agenda item to be halted and the agenda item to be placed on “hold.” The motion can contain a specific time in which the item can come back to the body. “I move we table this item until our regular meeting in October.” Or the motion can contain no specific time for the return of the item, in which case a motion to take the item off the table and bring it back to the body will have to be taken at a future meeting. A motion to table an item (or to bring it back to the body) requires a simple majority vote.

**Motion to limit debate.** The most common form of this motion is to say, “I move the previous question” or “I move the question” or “I call the question” or sometimes someone simply shouts out “question.” As a practical matter, when a member calls out one of these phrases, the chair can expedite matters by treating it as a “request” rather than as a formal motion. The chair can simply inquire of the body, “any further discussion?” If no one wishes to have further discussion, then the chair can go right to the pending motion that is on the floor. However, if even one person wishes to discuss the pending motion further, then at that point, the chair should treat the call for the “question” as a formal motion, and proceed to it.

When a member of the body makes such a motion (“I move the previous question”), the member is really saying: “I’ve had enough debate. Let’s get on with the vote.” When such a motion is made, the chair should ask for a second, stop debate, and vote on the motion to limit debate. The motion to limit debate requires a two-thirds vote of the body.

**NOTE:** A motion to limit debate could include a time limit. For example: “I move we limit debate on this agenda item to 15 minutes.” Even in this format, the motion to limit debate requires a two-thirds vote of the body. A similar motion is a *motion to object to consideration of an item*. This motion is not debatable, and if passed, precludes the body from even considering an item on the agenda. It also requires a two-thirds vote.

## Majority and Super Majority Votes

In a democracy, a simple majority vote determines a question. A tie vote means the motion fails. So in a seven-member body, a vote of 4-3 passes the motion. A vote of 3-3 with one abstention means the motion fails. If one member is absent and the vote is 3-3, the motion still fails.

All motions require a simple majority, but there are a few exceptions. The exceptions come up when the body is taking an action which effectively cuts off the ability of a minority of the body to take an action or discuss an item. These extraordinary motions require a two-thirds majority (a super majority) to pass:

**Motion to limit debate.** Whether a member says, “I move the previous question,” or “I move the question,” or “I call the question,” or “I move to limit debate,” it all amounts to an attempt to cut off the ability of the minority to discuss an item, and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

**Motion to close nominations.** When choosing officers of the body (such as the chair), nominations are in order either from a nominating committee or from the floor of the body. A motion to close nominations effectively cuts off the right of the minority to nominate officers and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

**Motion to object to the consideration of a question.** Normally, such a motion is unnecessary since the objectionable item can be tabled or defeated straight up. However, when members of a body do not even want an item on the agenda to be considered, then such a motion is in order. It is not debatable, and it requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

**Motion to suspend the rules.** This motion is debatable, but requires a two-thirds vote to pass. If the body has its own rules of order, conduct or procedure, this motion allows the body to suspend the rules for a particular purpose. For example, the body (a private club) might have a rule prohibiting the attendance at meetings by non-club members. A motion to suspend the rules would be in order to allow a non-club member to attend a meeting of the club on a particular date or on a particular agenda item.

## Counting Votes

The matter of counting votes starts simple, but can become complicated.

Usually, it’s pretty easy to determine whether a particular motion passed or whether it was defeated. If a simple majority vote is needed to pass a motion, then one vote more than 50 percent of the body is required. For example, in a five-member body, if the vote is three in favor and two opposed, the motion passes. If it is two in favor and three opposed, the motion is defeated.

If a two-thirds majority vote is needed to pass a motion, then how many affirmative votes are required? The simple rule of thumb is to count the “no” votes and double that count to determine how many “yes” votes are needed to pass a particular motion. For example, in a seven-member body, if two members vote “no” then the “yes” vote of at least four members is required to achieve a two-thirds majority vote to pass the motion.

What about tie votes? In the event of a tie, the motion always fails since an affirmative vote is required to pass any motion. For example, in a five-member body, if the vote is two in favor and two opposed, with one member absent, the motion is defeated.

Vote counting starts to become complicated when members vote “abstain” or in the case of a written ballot, cast a blank (or unreadable) ballot. Do these votes count, and if so, how does one count them? The starting point is always to check the statutes.

In California, for example, for an action of a board of supervisors to be valid and binding, the action must be approved by a majority of the board. (California Government Code Section 25005.) Typically, this means three of the five members of the board must vote affirmatively in favor of the action. A vote of 2-1 would not be sufficient. A vote of 3-0 with two abstentions would be sufficient. In general law cities in

California, as another example, resolutions or orders for the payment of money and all ordinances require a recorded vote of the total members of the city council. (California Government Code Section 36936.) Cities with charters may prescribe their own vote requirements. Local elected officials are always well-advised to consult with their local agency counsel on how state law may affect the vote count.

After consulting state statutes, step number two is to check the rules of the body. If the rules of the body say that you count votes of “those present” then you treat abstentions one way. However, if the rules of the body say that you count the votes of those “present and voting,” then you treat abstentions a different way. And if the rules of the body are silent on the subject, then the general rule of thumb (and default rule) is that you count all votes that are “present and voting.”

Accordingly, under the “present and voting” system, you would **NOT** count abstention votes on the motion. Members who abstain are counted for purposes of determining quorum (they are “present”), but you treat the abstention votes on the motion as if they did not exist (they are not “voting”). On the other hand, if the rules of the body specifically say that you count votes of those “present” then you **DO** count abstention votes both in establishing the quorum and on the motion. In this event, the abstention votes act just like “no” votes.

*How does this work in practice?*

*Here are a few examples.*

Assume that a five-member city council is voting on a motion that requires a simple majority vote to pass, and assume further that the body has no specific rule on counting votes. Accordingly, the default rule kicks in and we count all votes of members that are “present and voting.” If the vote on the motion is 3-2, the motion passes. If the motion is 2-2 with one abstention, the motion fails.

Assume a five-member city council voting on a motion that requires a two-thirds majority vote to pass, and further assume that the body has no specific rule on counting votes. Again, the default rule applies. If the vote is 3-2, the motion fails for lack of a two-thirds majority. If the vote is 4-1, the motion passes with a clear two-thirds majority. A vote of three “yes,” one “no” and one “abstain” also results in passage of the motion. Once again, the abstention is counted only for the purpose of determining quorum, but on the actual vote on the motion, it is as if the abstention vote never existed — so an effective 3-1 vote is clearly a two-thirds majority vote.

Now, change the scenario slightly. Assume the same five-member city council voting on a motion that requires a two-thirds majority vote to pass, but now assume that the body **DOES** have a specific rule requiring a two-thirds vote of members “present.” Under this specific rule, we must count the members present not only for quorum but also for the motion. In this scenario, any abstention has the same force and effect as if it were a “no” vote. Accordingly, if the votes were three “yes,” one “no” and one “abstain,” then the motion fails. The abstention in this case is treated like a “no” vote and effective vote of 3-2 is not enough to pass two-thirds majority muster.

Now, exactly how does a member cast an “abstention” vote?

Any time a member votes “abstain” or says, “I abstain,” that is an abstention. However, if a member votes “present” that is also treated as an abstention (the member is essentially saying, “Count me for purposes of a quorum, but my vote on the issue is abstain.”) In fact, any manifestation of intention not to vote either “yes” or “no” on the pending motion may be treated by the chair as an abstention. If written ballots are cast, a blank or unreadable ballot is counted as an abstention as well.

Can a member vote “absent” or “count me as absent?” Interesting question. The ruling on this is up to the chair. The better approach is for the chair to count this as if the member had left his/her chair and is actually “absent.” That, of course, affects the quorum. However, the chair may also treat this as a vote to abstain, particularly if the person does not actually leave the dais.

## The Motion to Reconsider

There is a special and unique motion that requires a bit of explanation all by itself; the motion to reconsider. A tenet of parliamentary procedure is finality. After vigorous discussion, debate and a vote, there must be some closure to the issue. And so, after a vote is taken, the matter is deemed closed, subject only to reopening if a proper motion to consider is made and passed.

A motion to reconsider requires a majority vote to pass like other garden-variety motions, but there are two special rules that apply only to the motion to reconsider.

First, is the matter of timing. A motion to reconsider must be made at the meeting where the item was first voted upon. A motion to reconsider made at a later time is untimely. (The body, however, can always vote to suspend the rules and, by a two-thirds majority, allow a motion to reconsider to be made at another time.)

Second, a motion to reconsider may be made only by certain members of the body. Accordingly, a motion to reconsider may be made only by a member who voted in the majority on the original motion. If such a member has a change of heart, he or she may make the motion to reconsider (any other member of the body — including a member who voted in the minority on the original motion — may second the motion). If a member who voted in the minority seeks to make the motion to reconsider, it must be ruled out of order. The purpose of this rule is finality. If a member of minority could make a motion to reconsider, then the item could be brought back to the body again and again, which would defeat the purpose of finality.

If the motion to reconsider passes, then the original matter is back before the body, and a new original motion is in order. The matter may be discussed and debated as if it were on the floor for the first time.

## Courtesy and Decorum

The rules of order are meant to create an atmosphere where the members of the body and the members of the public can attend to business efficiently, fairly and with full participation. At the same time, it is up to the chair and the members of the body to maintain common courtesy and decorum. Unless the setting is very informal, it is always best for only one person at a time to have the floor, and it is always best for every speaker to be first recognized by the chair before proceeding to speak.

The chair should always ensure that debate and discussion of an agenda item focuses on the item and the policy in question, not the personalities of the members of the body. Debate on policy is healthy, debate on personalities is not. The chair has the right to cut off discussion that is too personal, is too loud, or is too crude.

Debate and discussion should be focused, but free and open. In the interest of time, the chair may, however, limit the time allotted to speakers, including members of the body.

Can a member of the body interrupt the speaker? The general rule is “no.” There are, however, exceptions. A speaker may be interrupted for the following reasons:

**Privilege.** The proper interruption would be, “point of privilege.” The chair would then ask the interrupter to “state your point.” Appropriate points of privilege relate to anything that would interfere with the normal comfort of the meeting. For example, the room may be too hot or too cold, or a blowing fan might interfere with a person’s ability to hear.

**Order.** The proper interruption would be, “point of order.” Again, the chair would ask the interrupter to “state your point.” Appropriate points of order relate to anything that would not be considered appropriate conduct of the meeting. For example, if the chair moved on to a vote on a motion that permits debate without allowing that discussion or debate.

**Appeal.** If the chair makes a ruling that a member of the body disagrees with, that member may appeal the ruling of the chair. If the motion is seconded, and after debate, if it passes by a simple majority vote, then the ruling of the chair is deemed reversed.

**Call for orders of the day.** This is simply another way of saying, “return to the agenda.” If a member believes that the body has drifted from the agreed-upon agenda, such a call may be made. It does not require a vote, and when the chair discovers that the agenda has not been followed, the chair simply reminds the body to return to the agenda item properly before them. If the chair fails to do so, the chair’s determination may be appealed.

**Withdraw a motion.** During debate and discussion of a motion, the maker of the motion on the floor, at any time, may interrupt a speaker to withdraw his or her motion from the floor. The motion is immediately deemed withdrawn, although the chair may ask the person who seconded the motion if he or she wishes to make the motion, and any other member may make the motion if properly recognized.

## Special Notes About Public Input

The rules outlined above will help make meetings very public-friendly. But in addition, and particularly for the chair, it is wise to remember three special rules that apply to each agenda item:

**Rule One:** Tell the public what the body will be doing.

**Rule Two:** Keep the public informed while the body is doing it.

**Rule Three:** When the body has acted, tell the public what the body did.