

Lacey Historical Commission

Parliamentary Procedures

Parliamentary procedure provides the process for proposing, amending, approving and defeating legislative motions. Following these procedures potentially reduces Commission actions being declared illegal or challenged procedurally. The Lacey City Council has adopted and will follow *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised* unless the same is superseded by provisions of the Lacey Municipal Code; the Historical Commission will do the same.

Order of Discussion

The presiding officer, usually the Chair, should follow the prepared agenda as much as possible. However, for those occasions when deviations are necessary or convenient, the presiding officer will clearly announce that the Commission has decided to rearrange the agenda. When changing the order of discussion, it must be done so as not to prevent or deny any member of the public the opportunity to listen to the discussion of any agenda item.

Obtaining the Floor

A Commissioner shall address the presiding officer and gain recognition prior to making a motion or engaging in debate. The presiding officer will recognize Commissioners by their last name, such as "Commissioner Jones." Commissioners will address each other as Commissioner, followed by last name, such as "Commissioners Jones." Cross-exchange between Commissioners and the public should be avoided. This is to prevent general conversation and to keep the order necessary to maintain decorum and accomplish the business of the Commission.

After a member has concluded comments and yielded the floor, if two or more members are trying to obtain the floor at the same time, the general rule is that the person who addresses the chair first is entitled to be recognized. When a motion is open to debate, however, there are three instances in which the presiding officer should assign the floor to a person who may not have been the first to address the Chair. These are:

1. The Commissioner who made the motion currently under debate is entitled to be recognized in preference to other members if that individual is claiming the floor and has not already spoken on the question.
2. No member is entitled to the floor a second time in the meeting on the same motion as long as another member who has not spoken on the motion desires the floor.
3. In instances where the person to be recognized is not determined by (1) or (2) above, and where the presiding officer knows that members who are seeking the floor have opposite opinions on the motion, the chair should let the floor alternate as much as possible between those favoring and those opposing the motion.

Questions to Staff

A Commissioner may, after recognition by the presiding officer, address questions to staff members.

Interruptions

Once recognized, a Commissioner should not be interrupted while speaking, except to make a point of order or personal privilege. If a Commissioner is called to order while speaking, the individual shall cease speaking until the question order is determined. Upon being recognized by the presiding officer, members of the staff shall hold the floor until completion of their remarks or until recognition is withdrawn by the presiding officer.

Discussion Limit

A Commissioner should not speak more than once on a particular subject until every other Commissioner has had the opportunity to speak. Commissioners are encouraged to discuss items during the decision-making process.

Basic Steps to Conducting Business

Specific requests or proposals that are presented to Commissioners for consideration and possible action must be introduced in the form of a motion. For the proper presentation and disposition of most motions, certain steps are generally required. The basic steps to conducting business include:

The Presiding Officer (Chair)

- Introduces the item to be considered as presented on the agenda, and if appropriate, asks for a staff presentation
- If the agenda calls for a public hearing, opens a public hearing
- Closes the public hearing after receiving comments (if any) from the public
- Calls for discussion

A Commissioner

- Addresses the Chair
- Is recognized by the Chair
- Proposes the motion

A second Commissioner

- Seconds the motion

The Presiding Officer (Chair)

- States the motion
- Calls for any further discussion or debate
- Restates the motion and puts the motion to a vote

Recording Secretary (Staff)

- Records the vote

Making a Motion

Under parliamentary procedure, there are three steps required to bring a motion before the Commission for its consideration:

- A Commissioner makes a motion;
- Another Commissioner seconds the motion, and
- The Chair states the motion.

Unless the motion can interrupt a speaker as explained in *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised* a member must obtain the floor to make a motion. Once the chair has recognized a Commissioner, the individual makes the motion by saying, "I move that..." or "I move to..." and announcing what is proposed.

Commissioners should attempt as much as possible to state motions in the positive form---that is, "I move to..." rather than "I move not to..." Motions where one must vote "yes" to vote against a proposal are confusing not only for Commissioners, but also for staff and citizens.

If a proposal has only minimal support, a Commissioner might state "I make this motion in order to put it on the floor for discussion. I am not sure of my position on it at the present time."

Seconding a Motion

After a motion has been made, and if it requires a second, another Commissioner who wishes to see the motion considered says, without obtaining the floor, "I second the motion," or simply, "Second." A second merely implies that the member agrees the motion should come before the meeting, not necessarily that the member favors it. If another member of the Commission does not second the motion, the chair normally asks, "Is there a second to the motion?" If there is no second, the chair should say, "Since there is no second, the motion is not before this meeting." If seconded, the maker of the motion should then be regarded as having the refusal of the floor in preference to all other members.

The purpose of a second is to prevent time being spent on motions that only one person wants to discuss. After the Commission makes a motion, no person shall address the Commission without first securing the permission of the Chair or Commission to do so.

Stating the Question

Under parliamentary procedure, making and seconding a motion does not put it before the Commission for consideration. This can be done only when the presiding officer repeats the motion and indicates that the motion is open for debate by stating: "It has been moved and seconded that ... Is there any discussion?"

Right to Withdraw or Modify a Motion

Until the Chair has stated the question, the maker has the right to modify or withdraw the motion. After the motion has been stated, however, it can be withdrawn only with the Commission's consent. If any objection is made, it will be necessary to obtain leave to withdraw by a motion for that purpose. When a motion is withdrawn, the effect is the same as if it had never been made.

Pending Motions

When the Chair has stated a motion, it is said to be *pending*. When several motions are pending, the last one stated by the chair, and the first to be disposed of, is called the *immediately pending question*. Thereafter, other pending motions are considered in descending order of rank.

Amendment of the Main Motion

When the main motion does not exactly suit the members of the Commission, it may be changed by means of amendment *before* it is finally voted upon. Once recognized by the Chair, a Commissioner may

make the motion to amend by stating, "I move to amend the motion by..." ---adding, striking out, inserting, or substituting. An amendment to the main motion requires a second; it is debatable, requires a majority vote, and must be germane---that is, closely related to or having bearing on the subject of the motion to be amended. If the motion on the amendment passes, the Chair puts the main motion, as amended, to a vote. If the motion on the amendment fails, the chair puts the main motion, as originally presented, to a vote.

The member, who offers the motion, until it has been stated by the chair, can modify the motion, or withdraw it entirely; after it is stated, he/she can do neither without the consent of the Commission (majority). For example, the mover may state, "With the consent of the Commission, I will modify my motion to state as follows..." If no one objects, it shall be deemed that he/she has the consent of the body to modify his/her motion. When the mover modifies his/her motion, the one who seconds it can withdraw his/her second.

Postponement of Business

Postpone to a Time Certain

The Commission may delay action on a pending question by making a motion to postpone the item either indefinitely or to a time certain. This motion can be made regardless of how much debate has taken place. The question may be postponed either so that it may be considered at a more convenient time or because debate has shown reasons for delaying a decision.

Postpone Indefinitely

The Commission may decline to take a position on a pending question by moving to postpone the item indefinitely. Voting to postpone indefinitely kills the main motion and avoids a direct vote on the question. This motion is useful for disposing of a badly expressed main motion that cannot be either adopted or expressly rejected without possibly undesirable consequences.

Table

Commonly misused in place of a motion to postpone, the Commission may lay the pending question aside temporarily when some other issue of immediate urgency has arisen. *Lay on the Table* is out of order if the evident intent is to kill or avoid dealing with an item. This motion requires a majority vote and halts consideration of a question immediately and without debate. After a question has been laid on the table, it can be taken from the table by a majority vote as soon as the interrupting business is disposed of and when no other question is pending.

Voting Procedures

Each Commissioner shall vote on all questions put to the Commission, unless a conflict of interest under State law or appearance of fairness question is present. Unless a member of the Commission states that he or she is not voting, his or her silence shall be recorded as an affirmative vote.

If it is determined by majority vote of the Commission as a whole, plus one, that a Commissioner has a conflict of interest under state law or would violate the appearance of fairness doctrine by participating in, and/or voting on, a matter coming before the Commission, then the member determined to have the

conflict of interest or appearance of fairness doctrine violation shall not participate in or vote on said matter. In the event a challenged member or members requests additional time prior to the challenge having been voted on by the Commission in order for the Commissioner to present further information to the Commission, then the Commission's determination with respect to the challenge shall be continued to the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission, at which time the member or members requesting the additional time shall present such additional information. At the conclusion of the presentation, the Commission shall make its determination as provided above. When the debate appears to be over and if no one indicates a desire to continue discussion, the Chair puts the motion to a vote by stating, "If there is no further discussion, cast your votes."

Only those motions that receive an affirmative vote by the majority of the present and voting members of the Commission who also constitute a quorum shall be passed or become effective unless other voting requirements are provided by Washington State law.

A conflict of interest shall be declared whenever appropriate and in compliance with state law. The affected Commissioner will not participate in the discussion and will abstain from the voting process by leaving the meeting location until such time as consideration of the item has been concluded.

Affirmative Vote

Affirmative votes will be cast in an audible tone of voice.

Abstention from Voting

Any member may abstain from voting on any question; provided, at the time of declaring his/her abstention, he/she shall state the reason.

Tie Vote

A tie vote results in the motion having failed. The presiding officer may publicly explain the effect of the tie vote for the audience.

Reconsideration

Reconsideration of an item will be considered by a majority vote of the Commission. A member of the prevailing majority must make a motion for reconsideration when the previous vote was taken, and can be made no later than the next regular meeting after which the previous vote was taken.

Right of Protest

A Commissioner is never required to state reasons for a dissenting vote; provided, however, that any member of the Commission shall have the right to have the reasons for his or her dissent from, or protest against, any action of the Commission entered on the minutes.

Parliamentarian

The Chair, or in the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair, shall serve as parliamentarian for the Commission and as such shall decide all questions of parliamentary procedure in accordance with the parliamentary rules contained in *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised*.