

### **Applicability of Modified Parliamentary Rules in Small Boards and in Committees 1:24**

The distinction between a board and a committee must be briefly noted here for an understanding of what follows. A board of any size is a form of assembly as just explained. Committees, on the other hand, are bodies that are often, but not necessarily, very small, and that are subordinate instruments of an assembly or are accountable to a higher authority in some way not characteristic of an assembly. Large boards generally follow parliamentary procedure in the same way as any other assembly. In small boards, and in committees, most parliamentary rules apply, but certain modifications permitting greater flexibility and informality are commonly allowed (see 49:21, 50:25–26). The distinguishing characteristics of boards and committees are discussed in 49 and 50.

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### **49:21 Procedure in Small Boards.**

In a board meeting where there are not more than about a dozen members present, some of the formality that is necessary in a large assembly would hinder business. The rules governing such meetings are different from the rules that hold in other assemblies, in the following respects:

- 1) Members may raise a hand instead of standing when seeking to obtain the floor, and may remain seated while making motions or speaking.
- 2) Motions need not be seconded.
- 3) There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a debatable question.<sup>3</sup> Appeals, however, are debatable under the regular rules—that is, each member (except the chair) can speak only once in debate on them, while the chair may speak twice.
- 4) Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.
- 5) When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion's having been introduced. Unless agreed to by unanimous consent, however, all proposed actions must be approved by vote under the same rules as in larger meetings, except that a vote can be taken initially by a show of hands, which is often a better method in small meetings.
- 6) The chairman need not rise while putting questions to a vote.

7) If the chairman is a member, he may, without leaving the chair, speak in informal discussions and in debate, and vote on all questions.

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### **Adoption of a Motion, or Action Without a Motion, by Unanimous Consent 4:58**

In cases where there seems to be no opposition in routine business or on questions of little importance, time can often be saved by the procedure of unanimous consent, or as it was formerly also called, general consent. Action in this manner is in accord with the principle that rules are designed for the protection of the minority and generally need not be strictly enforced when there is no minority to protect. Under these conditions, the method of unanimous consent can be used either to adopt a motion without the steps of stating the question and putting the motion to a formal vote, or it can be used to take action without even the formality of a motion. 4:59 To obtain unanimous consent in either case, the chair states that “If there is no objection... [or, “Without objection...”],” the action that he mentions will be taken; or he may ask, “Is there any objection to...?” He then pauses, and if no member calls out, “I object,” the chair announces that, “Since there is no objection...,” the action is decided upon. If any member objects, the chair must state the question on the motion, allow any desired debate (unless it is an “undebatable” parliamentary motion—see 6 and pages t46–t47), and put the question in the regular manner. Or—if no motion has been made—the chair must first ask, “Is there a motion to... [stating the proposed action]”; or he must at least put the question, assuming such a motion. If an objection is made with reasonable promptness, even though the chair may have already announced the result as one of “no objection,” he must disregard such an announcement and proceed to state the question in the usual manner. 4:60 “Unanimous consent” does not necessarily imply that every member present is in favor of the proposed action; it may only mean that the opposition, feeling that it is useless to oppose or discuss the matter, simply acquiesces. Similarly, when a member responds to the chair’s inquiry, “Is there any objection...?” with “I object,” he may not necessarily oppose the motion itself, but may believe that it is wise to take a formal vote under the circumstances. In other words, the objection is raised, not to the proposed action, but to the action’s being taken without a formal vote. No member should hesitate to object if he feels it is desirable to do so, but he should not object merely for dilatory purposes. If a member is uncertain of the effect of an action proposed for unanimous consent, he can call out, “I reserve the right to object,” or, “Reserving the right to object,...” After brief consultation he can then object or withdraw his reservation.

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