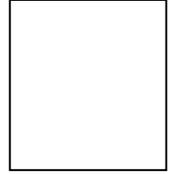


# Presbytery of Riverside Assembly Parliamentary Rules & Procedures



## Introduction

The *Book of Order* designates the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (RONR) shall be the parliamentary authority for all meetings of the Presbytery Assembly. As RONR also allows us to adjust those rules with ones which are more suitable for our Assembly, the rules within this document take precedent over rules stated in RONR. In instances where the *Book of Order* is in conflict with RONR or these procedures, the *Book of Order* shall prevail. (G-3.0105). Commissions, Committees and Teams (hereafter referred to as committees, except in the Virtual Meetings section) may follow relaxed rules such as Respectful Communications Guidelines (RCG), Conocimientos, Mutual Invitation and other adjustments, as agreed upon by their committee's members. However, minutes of all meetings are required, which must include motions in writing.

Virtual meeting rules for Presbytery Assembly meetings and Committee meetings are also included, beginning on page 6.

## Pre-Assembly Meeting

- **Committee Preparation:** Committees who have conducted work since the prior meeting of the Presbytery Assembly should prepare a written report and submit it to the Stated Clerk. They may request their report be included in the consent agenda, particularly if it contains routine motions they believe would be quickly approved. The Stated Clerk may instruct the committee to verbally present motions which he or she believes are best processed by normal deliberation. If the committee wishes to verbally highlight sections of the report, they should request docket time from the Stated Clerk.

## Assembly Meeting

- **Prayer:** All Presbyterian meetings are opened and closed with prayer.
- **Orders of the day:** Generally announced or specified in the docket.

### **Committee Reports & Docketed Presentations**

- **Wait to be recognized:** The Moderator will call the various committees and speakers according to the docket. Committee reports or speaker's comments are

addressed to the membership, unless they are making a motion, at which time they will address the Moderator.

## **Deliberations**

- **Making a motion:** A committee may make a motion during their report. Other members may make a motion at an appropriate time. Once the motion has been made (and seconded, if necessary), and the moderator states it, **it then becomes the main motion and belongs to the Assembly** and shall be processed by the Moderator. The Moderator may allow time for information from the committee or person who made the motion or for information questions from the floor before debate begins. A main motion is debatable, is amendable, and requires a majority vote to pass. See also “Withdrawing a Motion” below.
- **Seconding a Motion:** All motions require a second, with the exception of a motion that comes from a committee, commission, or team, which then does not require a second. Such a motion already comes from more than one person and can be assumed that it has "already" been seconded.

## **Discussion**

- **Gaining recognition by the moderator:** A person wishing to speak to the motion should approach one of the microphones designated for that purpose and wait to be recognized by the Moderator. Comments and amendments should be addressed to the Moderator.
- **Limits of Debate:** The docket has allocated a specific amount of time per agenda item, so in order to be able to process all our business in one meeting, the standard amount of time per speaker will be **5 minutes**. If all wishing to speak have done so, and there is still time on this docket allocation, a person may speak a second time. Additional 5-minute time allocations are allowed with permission of a majority of the Assembly, until the overall time allocation on this docket item is reached. Time for informational questions and answers do not count towards the speaker’s time allocation. One member may not yield their unused time to another member. When a speaker is repeating points previously made, the Moderator may interrupt and ask the speaker to limit remarks to new information.

## **Motions During Discussion**

- **Call the Previous Question(s):** Anyone wishing to make a motion to end debate should stand and be recognized by the Moderator, particularly if there is still active debate on the subject. In order to make it clear for the Moderator to know what is intended, the preferred wording is “I make a motion to end debate on the main motion and/or the amendment(s) under discussion”. This must be seconded, then put to an immediate vote, with two-thirds majority required for acceptance. If debate is winding down, and the last speaker recognized has finished, the Moderator may choose to recognize the person who calls out "Call the Question" even if that person is not at a microphone.
- **Motions to defer to a later time:** Motions to defer discussion can get complex, so the Moderator may ask questions of the person making the motion to clarify intent and may offer a suggested form of the motion.
  - **Motion to lay on the table:** Can be made only on the item under consideration and is not debatable. The item can be brought back with a motion to bring back from the table, but if not done within 1 calendar quarter, the motion dies, so this is a non-preferred method to postpone action.
  - **Postpone:** This motion can be used to postpone an item to a future time or meeting, or postpone indefinitely, and is debatable. This is a good motion for a temporary deferral to allow for order of the day or another time-critical matter to be discussed. It is not preferred if the intent is to gather more information about the subject before further discussion. Postponing indefinitely is also non-preferred.
  - **Refer to a committee:** This is the preferred method to defer a motion until we can gather more information in order to make an informed decision. It is also referred to as a motion to commit. The motion must specify the committee to which referral is being made. The committee can be a standing committee or it can be a special committee, specifying the makeup of the committee or, alternatively, it could say "to be appointed by the Moderator" or something similar. The motion could include additional requirements such as "to be reported at the next meeting".
- **Limit or extend limits on debate:** A motion may be made to limit or extend debate. This motion requires a second but is not debatable. The motion may be amended to adjust the proposed time. The main motion must be voted on without debate, and requires a two-thirds majority to pass.

- **Withdraw a Motion:** A person who made a motion may only withdraw their motion before it is seconded and stated by the Moderator, but not after, as it is then owned by the Assembly. If it is too late for this simple withdraw, and since they cannot speak against their own motion, then that person may make a new motion to withdraw their previous motion. This new motion must be seconded and approved by the Assembly for it to be withdrawn.
- **Parliamentary Inquiry:** A person who is unsure about the current parliamentary situation, or has a question, may interrupt the current speaker, if necessary, and say “M. Moderator, parliamentary inquiry please.” The Moderator would normally stop the speaker and allow you to ask your question. The Moderator may try to clarify the situation, give an opinion on the subject, or ask for guidance from the Stated Clerk. This is, at times, similar to a point of order.
- **Point of order:** This point is used to raise a question about what is seen to be a violation of the rules or an error in procedure. The Moderator may rule on the point raised or ask guidance from the Stated Clerk before making the ruling. After the Moderator has ruled, a member may appeal the decision.
- **Appeal a ruling by the moderator:** Once the Moderator has made a ruling, that ruling may be challenged by a member by immediately rising and saying “M. Moderator, I appeal the decision of the moderator.” This motion requires a second and is generally debatable, with each member being able to speak only once. The Moderator is able to speak at the beginning and at the end of the debate, after which they shall pose the question “Shall the decision of the moderator be sustained?”
- **Raise a question of privilege:** Two examples of this occasional happening: 1) If a person is uncomfortable because it is too warm/cold/noisy in the room, that can be brought to the Moderator's attention as a question (or point) of personal privilege, or 2) If someone during debate incorrectly describes your position on an issue AND refers to you by name, you may request a question of privilege in order to respond. This point is dealt with as the Moderator sees fit.
- **A motion to divide the question:** If a motion contains two or more parts, each of which could be a complete motion, it is permissible to request that the motion be divided – that is, the parts be considered separately. The motion requires a second and is not debatable. The separation can be complete or only one or more parts may be divided out. The motion must specify how the division is to be made. An amendment to change the way the motion is divided is allowed. The Moderator may declare the motion divided without a vote, or call for a vote, where a majority can then approve/disapprove the motion.

- **A motion to amend or offer a substitute motion:** The main motion may be amended multiple times, with each amendment being voted upon. Once all amendments are handled, then the revised main motion is voted upon. However, if a person recognizes that the motion as stated is not quite right for the intention, they may offer a substitute motion on the floor, and this too may be amended. This can get confusing, so the Moderator will do their best to get clarity on the motion actually up for discussion.

## **Voting**

- **General voting:** When it is time for a vote, the Moderator should clearly state what the motion is before proceeding to the vote. When such a vote is inconclusive, the next step is to request a show of hands, or at the Moderator's discretion, move to a standing vote where yeas and nays can be counted if the outcome is not obvious. A member who may not agree with the interpreted results of a voice vote may stand and loudly request a "Division of the Assembly", after which the Moderator must call for a standing vote, with or without counting the yeas and nays.
- **Voting by ballot:** Voting by ballot is required where there are:
  - a) Elections where there are more candidates than positions to fill.
  - b) Any dismissal action of a congregation or a Minister of the Word and Sacrament.
  - c) Voting requirements handed down from the General Assembly or Synod.
  - d) At the discretion of the Moderator.

--- End Parliamentary Rules and Procedures ---

## **Virtual Meetings\* Rules**

**The Presbytery Commission is empowered by its Charter to update this portion of this document.**

Within this section, the term “Chair” refers to the Commission, Committee or Team’s Chairperson or Co-Chair. The term “Moderator” refers to the person actually moderating a particular meeting, which may be someone other than the chairperson.

**A. Our Bylaws allow for virtual meetings of the Presbytery Assembly. The following rules restate and augment those found in the Bylaws.**

**1. (Excerpted from Bylaws, 3.05A):**

Meetings of the Presbytery Assembly may be held by electronic means, as established by the Presbytery Assembly as recommended by the Presbytery Commission. Such meetings shall provide “opportunity for simultaneous aural communication among all participating members...The notice of an electronic meeting must include an adequate description of how to participate in it.” (RRO, NR, 11th Edition, p. 97) Standard quorum requirements shall apply, from the total members and commissioners in attendance at all locations. The Moderator, Vice Moderator, Presbytery Leader for Mission and Vision/Stated Clerk and Minute Clerk shall be together in one location. The Moderator may appoint meeting assistants at each location, as desired. Such meeting assistants will help with matters designated by the Moderator and related to the conduct of the meeting. Motions made from the floor shall be emailed to the Presbytery Leader for Mission and Vision/Stated Clerk before they are acted upon.

2. The technology for the virtual meetings may include combinations of audio conference calls, video calls, and other web-based systems which allow for simultaneous aural or video communication. At each virtual meeting of the Assembly, instructions for participation will be distributed and must include how a speaker is to request the floor (equivalent to approaching the microphone at an in-person meeting), how to vote, and how to email motions not already submitted.

**B. Our Bylaws allow for virtual meetings of the Commissions, Committees and Teams of the Presbytery Assembly. The following rules restate and augment those found in the Bylaws.**

**1. (Excerpted from Bylaws, 3.05B):**

Every effort should be made for commissions, committees and teams of the Presbytery to deliberate in one location. When the Chair determines that is not

practical, other alternatives may be employed that must allow for simultaneous aural communication among the members of the group. Telephone conference call, GoToMeeting, Zoom or Skype are current examples of such options. Deliberations should be conducted as follows:

- i. Matters to be voted on must be recommended by an official Presbytery entity or session and be submitted to the moderator of the voting entity in writing;
- ii. The moderator of the voting entity will determine whether the matter is suitable for remote deliberation;
- iii. If one-third of the current members of the voting entity request a face to face discussion on the topic then the matter will not be decided by remote deliberation;
- iv. In order for a motion to pass, it must be approved by a majority of the voting members present;
- v. The decision reached by remote deliberation will be immediately reported to the members of the voting entity and will be entered into the minutes of the voting entity, in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.
- vi. Each entity choosing to use electronic means must follow rules established by the Presbytery Assembly or Presbytery Commission, which may specify: provider of technology; manner of determining quorum, obtaining "the floor", how voting will occur, and whether there is conflict of interest.
- vii. As in all other meetings, if quorum is reached at the beginning of the meeting, it will be assumed for the rest of the meeting.
- viii. If it is a special called meeting, the moderator of the entity will notify all members of the matter to be acted upon, the time and date of the electronic meeting, and the details of how to participate at least 48 hours in advance of the event.

2. Virtual Commission, Committee, & Team Meeting Procedures:

- i. A quorum shall be determined by roll call, taken by the moderator or a designated minute taker. If non-committee members are present, either by themselves or with a committee member, they must be identified and not be allowed to vote.
- ii. The moderator shall proceed at a deliberate, measured pace, ensuring all participants have every opportunity to gain the floor, make a motion, speak to each motion, and vote. Pausing often to solicit comments will ensure all have an opportunity to participate as they desire.

- iii. Voice vote is allowed at the moderator's discretion. However, if there are both yea and nay votes cast, and it is not clear which side has the required majority, or if there is a division of the house requested, then the moderator shall call for a roll call vote.
- iv. If a virtual meeting technology is used which allows for electronic votes to be submitted, then the moderator may use that voting method as part of a roll call vote. Such technology may also be used to obtain the floor.
- v. The moderator shall use standard techniques to determine any conflicts of interest and use the Conflict of Interest Policy as guidance as necessary.

### **C. Meetings of the Committees and Teams of the Presbytery via Email:**

#### **1. (Excerpted from Bylaws, 3.05C):**

From time to time a matter of routine business needs to be acted on between meetings of a Committee or Team. At the discretion of the Chair of the entity, it may be determined reasonable to provide for a vote by e-mail by the members of the entity in the interest of time and efficiency. This procedure is not intended to be used casually, but rather as a means of conducting non-controversial or routine business expeditiously when necessary. If one-third of the members of the voting entity request a face to face or electronic discussion on the topic then the matter will not be decided by email vote. A quorum of the members will have to vote and the votes of these responding members will have to be unanimous in order for the business to be approved. All members of the voting entity shall be allowed 48 hours to make their responses. The business approved will be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the Committee or Team. Email meetings shall never be allowed for such items as Budget Revisions or spending money above a certain preset limit. When in doubt of what is appropriate, contact the Stated Clerk. **Email meetings shall not be available for use by the Presbytery Assembly or Presbytery Commissions.**

- 2. The Moderator of the entity shall use other means to attempt contact of all entity members who have not cast a vote to determine if they are unable to participate. Those who may not be able to participate may request a face-to-face or electronic discussion of the topic, subject to the one-third rule.

\*Virtual Meetings – The term “Virtual Meetings” is used within our Bylaws, and is therefore used within this document. It refers to meetings “... at which, rather than all participating members being physically present in one room or area as in traditional (face-to-face) meetings, some or all of them communicate with the others through electronic means such as the Internet or by telephone.” (RONR, 11th ed., pp.81-82)