

Neighborhood Planning Unit-J

# NPU-J By-Laws

# 2019

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## Adopted By-Laws

for

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING UNIT-J

Adopted: September 26, 2017

Re-adopted: September 28, 2018

Effective: January 1, 2019

(Voted & Amended: May 28, 2019)

**Adopted By-Laws**

for

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING UNIT-J

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**ARTICLE I. NAME**

The name of the organization shall be Neighborhood Planning Unit-J and herein may be interchangeably referred to as “NPU-J”, “NPU”, “Neighborhood Planning Unit” or “Neighborhood Planning Unit -J”.

**ARTICLE II. PURPOSE**

These By-Laws are to serve, organize and define the authority and responsibility of NPU-J. The Neighborhood Planning Unit may recommend an action, policy or comprehensive plan to the City Council or to any City agency on any matter affecting the livability of the neighborhood, including, but not limited to: land use, zoning, housing, community facilities, human resources, social and recreational programs, traffic and transportation, environmental quality, open space, and parks; assist City agencies in determining priority needs for the neighborhood; review items for inclusion in the City budget and make recommendations relating to budget items for our neighborhood improvement; and advise the Office of Planning on the preparation of the fifteen (15), five (5) and one (1) year comprehensive development plans.

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## **ARTICLE III. MEMBERS**

### **SECTION 1**

A member may be any person 18 years or age or older, who is among the classes of individuals and organizations as outlined in SECTION 3, Qualifications. Each *active* member may hold office in only one (1) NPU. An active member is, what is defined in ARTICLE IV. OFFICERS and VOTING PROCEDURES, SECTION 4.

Each active member shall have one (1) vote and shall have the right to exercise that vote on all issues which come before NPU-J.

### **SECTION 2**

All members shall abide by the Rules and Regulations of NPU-J.

### **SECTION 3**

#### **Qualifications**

Membership is open to the following classes of individuals and organizations:

**A. Resident**

Any person whose primary place of residence is located within the geographic boundaries of NPU-J.

**B. Non-Resident**

Any person who is the owner of real property physically located within the geographic boundaries of NPU-J but whose primary residence is physically located outside the geographic boundaries of NPU-J.

**C. Corporate**

Any individual, corporation or organization conducting business or providing a service for profit from a permanent physical office located within the geographic boundaries of NPU-J or Community Development Corporation.

**D. Neighborhood Organization**

Any resident-based condominium, homeowners, tenant association or other type of resident Association located within the geographic boundaries of NPU-J.

**E. Institution**

Any not for profit agency, institution or organization, secular or faith-based, providing services to residents in one or more of the NPU-J neighborhoods from a permanent physical location within the geographic boundaries of NPU-J.

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## **ARTICLE IV. OFFICERS and VOTING PROCEDURES**

### **SECTION 1**

Issues shall be resolved by a simple majority of active members present and voting. Voting can be done by a show of hands or by ballot. The choice will be by the members participating in the vote. Request for voter certification shall be honored at all times.

### **SECTION 2**

Voter certification can be done before any voting during the election of officers, alcohol license applications and zoning matters or at any other time when so requested by a member of the NPU-J body.

### **SECTION 3**

Voter certification may include, but is not limited to a valid GA Driver's License, Identification Card or utility bill in the name of the potential voter. Any exception to this rule must be confirmed by the NPU-J membership.

### **SECTION 4**

Any active member shall be awarded voting privileges and may vote on business matters regarding zoning, alcohol license applications and in the annual elections of officers. An *active* member is defined as a member who has attended three (3) of the regular session meetings in the past 12 months.

### **SECTION 5**

The attendance, maintained by the NPU Planner, shall be the official basis for eligibility to vote or hold office in NPU-J.

### **SECTION 6**

#### **Officers**

Elected officers of NPU-J shall be Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer and Parliamentarian.

### **SECTION 7**

#### **Duties of Officers**

**CHAIR** - shall preside over all meetings, and appoint Standing or Special Committee Chairs, and as many Liaison Officers as necessary to perform the functions of the organization.

**VICE CHAIR** - shall serve in the absence of the Chair and assist with hand counts, ballot tabulations and voter certifications in the regular monthly meetings.

**SECRETARY** - shall keep accurate accounts of the proceedings of meetings, handle all correspondence regarding NPU-J transactions and provide approved minutes to the NPU Planner. These duties shall extend to the NPU-J executive meetings.

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**ASSISTANT SECRETARY** - shall serve in the absence of the Secretary and assist with the sign-in of members and guests at the monthly meetings. The Assistant Secretary will assist with hand counts, ballot tabulations and voter certifications when requested. These duties shall extend to meetings of the NPU-J executive committee.

**PARLIAMENTARIAN** - shall advise on issues of parliamentary order, helping improve the governance of NPU-J. Additionally, the parliamentarian must be knowledgeable of Robert's Rules of Order.

**TREASURER** – shall perform all duties incidental to the office of Treasurer and will have custody of, and be responsible for all funds of NPU-J. The signatures of the Treasurer will be required for all financial instruments pertaining to NPU-J. The Treasurer will receive and give receipts for all monies due and payable to NPU-J from any source whatsoever and shall make all deposits of such monies in the name of NPU-J in such banks, trust companies or other depositories. The Treasurer will keep full and accurate accounts and records of all receipts and disbursements, in accordance with standard accounting procedures and make a complete financial report, in writing, on same at each regular meeting of NPU-J. The Treasurer shall perform all other duties required to be performed by the Finance Committee, these By-Laws, or that may be assigned from time to time by the Chairman or the Executive Committee.

**LIAISON** - The Chair shall make recommendations to the membership for approval or make direct appointment of liaison to city government or private entities whose action will have a direct or indirect impact upon the residents of NPU-J. The liaison shall make reports to NPU-J as often as necessary. Such appointments include, but are not limited to:

1. Atlanta Planning and Advisory Board (APAB)

## **SECTION 8**

### **Methods of Nomination**

- A. For annual election of officers, voting shall be closed ballot with poll captains, or by hand count with poll captains. The Nominating Committee will make a recommendation to the general body as to the method of voting.
- B. The Nominating Committee Chair, appointed by the NPU Chair, must present a slate of candidates by the regularly held September meeting. Election of officers shall be held annually at the regular October meeting. Those persons must be present or have submitted in writing acceptance of nomination to the Nominating Committee. These By-Laws shall not prohibit the nomination of candidates from the floor.

## **SECTION 9**

To qualify for holding office in NPU-J, each candidate must be an active member as described under ARTICLE III. Additionally, each candidate for the office must have attended at least fifty (50%) of all monthly meetings held within the year prior to the annual election of offices. Candidates for Chair must be 18 years of age or older whose primary place of residence is within the boundaries of NPU-J.

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## **SECTION 10**

Officers shall be elected for a term of one-year beginning January 1 through December 31. All officers shall be elected annually. The Chair of NPU-J may not succeed himself/herself for more than four (4) consecutive full terms; a full term shall be defined as nine (9) months.

## **SECTION 11**

RESERVED.

## **SECTION 12**

Committee Officers who fail to satisfactorily perform the duties of the committee to which appointed without just and acceptable cause, as defined under ARTICLE VII; Qualifications; Duties, shall be recommended for replacement by the NPU-J Executive Committee or by request of the membership.

### **12.1.1** Removal of Committee Chairs

Any active member of NPU-J may request a review or evaluation of the performance or conduct of a Committee Chair, based upon any of the following criteria:

- a. Violation of these by-laws.
- b. Failure or inability to perform duties.
- c. Violation of the City of Atlanta's Code of Ethics.
- d. Absent from three (3) consecutive Committee meetings chaired, without notification.
- e. Absent from four (4) Committee meetings chaired (within the appointed term), without notification.

### **12.1.2** Notice and Review

The Executive Committee must review all material concerning the removal of a Committee Chair. Removal shall be considered when charges have been presented and found by the Executive Committee to be true.

Notice must be given to the affected chair in writing, and should include the date and time of review. This correspondence should be copied to members of the Executive Committee. The affected chair shall be provided the opportunity to appeal the recommendation for removal from appointment at all stages.

The final decision shall be that of 2/3 vote of the Executive Committee.

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## **SECTION 13**

Elected Officers who fail to satisfactorily perform the duties of such office without just and acceptable cause shall be replaced by a majority vote of members. The interim person(s) will be expected to serve until such term expires. An officer may be removed at any regular or special meeting of NPU-J.

### **13.1.1** Removal of Elected Officers

Any active member of NPU-J may request a review or evaluation of the performance or conduct of an officer based upon any of the following criteria:

- a. Violation of these by-laws.
- b. Failure or inability to perform duties.
- c. Violation of the City of Atlanta's Code of Ethics.
- d. Absent from three (3) consecutive NPU-J meetings without notification to a member of the Executive Committee.
- e. Absent from four (4) regular NPU-J meetings (within the elected term) without notification to a member of the Executive Committee.

### **13.1.2** Notice and Review

The Executive Committee must review all material concerning the removal of an officer. Removal shall be considered when charges have been presented and found by the Executive Committee to be true.

Notice must be given to the affected officer in writing, should include the date and time of review, and be brought before the full body. This correspondence should be copied to members of the Executive Committee. The affected officer shall be provided the opportunity to appeal the recommendation for removal from office at all stages.

The final decision shall be that of 2/3 vote of the active membership present and voting.

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## **ARTICLE V. MEETINGS**

### **SECTION 1**

NPU-J shall meet no less than **ten** months per year in regular sessions on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM. All meetings shall begin at 7:00 PM and end by 9:00 PM unless noted and voted upon by the NPU-J body to extend the meeting. The meeting date and time may be changed by the body at a regular constituted meeting. Committees shall meet upon the call of the committee chairman. **No meeting will be scheduled for the month of November and the last General Body meeting will be scheduled for the second Tuesday of December.**

### **SECTION 2**

The Chair may call special meetings when he/she deems it necessary and in the best interest of NPU-J. Notices of such meeting shall be mailed to all members at their addresses as they appear in the membership roll book at least five (5) days before the scheduled date of the special meeting. Such notice shall state the reasons that such meeting has been called, the business to be transacted at such meeting and by whom called. No other business but that specified in the notice may be transacted at such meeting without the unanimous consent of the members present.

### **SECTION 3**

A minimum of ten (10) members may be present to achieve a quorum at any duly constituted meeting of the membership of NPU-J in order to conduct official business.

### **SECTION 4**

The Chair in consultation with the Executive Committee and the NPU Planner shall determine the agenda for the meeting. The Office of Planning shall distribute the agenda to NPU-J members prior to each meeting.

### **SECTION 5**

The procedure and rules governing the meeting of NPU-J shall be those prescribed by the current edition of "Robert's Rules of Order". The Chair shall be delegated a limited time for reports and comments at the beginning of each meeting and/or motion.

### **SECTION 6**

All meetings of NPU-J and its committees shall be open to the public and NPU-J membership.

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## **ARTICLE VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DUTIES**

- The Executive Committee shall assist NPU-J in formulating policies and recommendations as set forth in the duties and definition of the committees in Article VII of the By-Laws.
- To appoint auditors, and the Alternate Delegate to the Atlanta Planning Advisory Board.
- To assist in the development of the agendas for regular meetings, along with the chairperson.
- To monitor the work of the committees.
- To develop policy and procedures.
- To ensure all members have access to By-Laws by February. Copies of By-Laws may be distributed electronically to members at the discretion of the Executive Committee and/ or posted on website.

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## **ARTICLE VII. COMMITTEES**

NPU-J shall have standing committees to fulfill the purpose of the NPU in coordination with the appropriate Municipal, State and Federal agencies.

Committee chairpersons are appointed by the NPU-J Chair. The Chair is an ex-officio member of every committee, except the Nominating and the Finance and Budgeting Special Committee(s).

### **Qualifications**

Committee chairpersons should be knowledgeable or willing to learn, in the area in which they serve and must be a member of NPU-J.

### **Duties**

- Present a plan of work to the Executive Committee for approval.
- Maintain a procedure book with amendments and present a meeting schedule that meets or exceeds a quarterly minimum.
- Research and seek information in the content area.
- Attend NPU, city and community meetings pertinent to their work area whenever possible.
- Respond promptly to correspondence or requests and keep accurate files.
- Make reports at executive and general meetings when requested.
- Give records, reports, procedure books and other materials promptly to successors.

### **The Standing Committees shall be:**

**Executive Committee** - Shall be comprised of elected officers, appointed officers, Committee Chairs, and the immediate-past Chair of the NPU-J. Additionally the committee shall consist of not more than two members from each constituent neighborhood organization that has been designated in writing from said organization within the existing calendar year.

**Land Use & Zoning** - To identify, study issues and concerns, review applications and ensure neighborhood input, which pertain to Land Use and Zoning and become familiar with the City's one (1), five (5) and fifteen (15) year Comprehensive Development Plans and make necessary recommendations to NPU-J.

**Human Development and Education** - To identify and bring to the attention of all residents of NPU-J educational and human service needs. This committee may sponsor supplementary educational programs and may make recommendations to the NPU, the Atlanta Board of Education, the Mayor of the City of Atlanta or his/her designated educational and social services liaison.

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**Code Enforcement, Housing and Public Safety** - To identify and study issues and concerns, and make necessary recommendations to NPU-J which will assist the residents in becoming active in the improvement of the condition in their neighborhood and such areas as housing rehabilitation, housing code enforcement, law enforcement and the public well-being.

**Parks and Recreation** - To assess and report on parks and recreation activities within NPU-J and liaison with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs on issues that affect NPU-J.

**Transportation** - To identify and satisfy issues and concerns pertaining to transportation (i.e., Marta) and make recommendations to the NPU.

**Finance and Budgeting Committee** - Shall work with the Treasurer to maintain full and accurate accounts and records of all receipts and disbursements, in accordance with standard accounting procedures and make a complete financial report in writing on the same, at each regular meeting of NPU-J. The committee shall work with the Treasurer to perform all other duties required to be performed as the Finance and Budgeting Committee, these By-Laws, or that may be assigned by the Chairman or the Executive Committee.

**Economic Development** - To gather significant data and communicate neighborhood development plans, business plans, issues and concerns. Moreover, to review applications and ensure neighborhood input, which pertain to comprehensive development plans on any matter effecting economic transformation and development inside and around NPU-J neighborhoods; Assist city agencies in determining priority needs for the neighborhood; Review items for inclusion in the city plan(s) budget; Make recommendations relating to budget items for our neighborhood development and improvement; And to become familiar with the City's one (1), five (5) and fifteen (15) year Comprehensive Development Plans.

**Greenspace and Historic Preservation** - To assess, monitor, properly document and report on greenspace, community gardens and historical sites within NPU-J and liaison with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs on issues that affect NPU-J as it relates to preserving and maintaining its history.

**Public Health** - To gather, consolidate and report public health data collected from community leaders, residents, and other interrelated institutions. To present the community's foremost input when identifying looked-for services in advanced areas of public health and that address issues and concerns of NPU-J residents. To provide a platform for natural deliberation and group focus into public health discourse as it relates to Prevention; Maintenance; Acute; and Hospice care - inside and around NPU-J neighborhoods. To be the intermediary agent of communication between any of the following: NPU-J; Fulton County; Public and Private Stakeholders; or, the City of Atlanta - during negotiations, strategy developments or other discussions of advancing neighborhood Public Health.

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**By-Laws Review Committee** - shall be appointed annually by the NPU-J Chair to review and make a report of recommendations to be voted upon and approved by a simple majority of the membership of NPU-J. Notice that By-Laws are to be discussed and possibly amended shall be either oral or written. The By-Laws committee shall consist of eight (8) persons.

## **ARTICLE VIII. PALIMENTARY AUTHORITY**

The current edition of "*Robert's Rules of Order*" shall govern all matters not covered by these By-Laws, and a copy of such shall be present at every meeting.

## **ARTICLE IX. BY-LAWS REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS**

### **SECTION 1**

Adopted By-Laws shall be delivered to the Office of Planning no later than September 30 of each year and become effective January 1 of the upcoming year.

### **SECTION 2**

- A. Proposed amendments shall be introduced and discussed at one meeting of NPU-J and shall automatically be tabled until the next meeting of NPU-J. Amendments shall require a majority vote of members present.
- B. Amendments not specifically addressed in these By-Laws shall become effective at the subsequent general body meeting.
- C. The By-laws Committee must have all proposed changes to the by-laws completed and ready for distribution at the August NPU-J General Meeting. The body will have one month to propose additional changes, if any, to the by-laws. The final version of the by-laws will be completed and voted on at the September NPU-J meeting.

### **SECTION 3**

These By-Laws shall be approved annually by a majority of the members of the NPU-J in attendance where the By-Laws are voted upon. At said meeting, there shall be no restrictions upon a member's right to vote on the approval or disapproval of the By-Laws.

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## **ARTICLES X. SUPERCESSION OF AUTHORITY**

These By-Laws shall suspend all previous By-Laws of NPU-J

*September 28, 2018*

OFFICE OF PLANNING

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## APPENDIX

### The Basic Format for an Agenda Item Discussion

- First, the Chair shall clearly announce the agenda item number and shall clearly state what the agenda item subject is. The Chair shall then announce the format (which follows) that will be followed in considering the agenda item.
- Second, following that agenda format, the Chair shall invite the appropriate committee(s) then civic association(s) to report on the item, including any recommendation that they might have.
- Third, the Chair shall 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 committee chair, civic association representative, or applicant, and that person or persons should be given time to respond.
- Fourth, the Chair shall 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 to ten minutes per side. 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). Time for public comments may be extended by motion and 2/3 vote of the body.
- Fifth, the Chair shall invite a motion. The Chair shall announce the name of the member of the body who makes the motion.
- Sixth, the Chair shall determine if any member of the body wishes to second the motion. The Chair shall 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 with it to ensure 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, the Chair shall 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. (3) The Chair can ask the secretary or the clerk of the body to repeat the motion.
- Eighth, the Chair shall now invite discussion of the motion by the body. If there is no desired discussion, or after the discussion has ended, the Chair shall announce that the body will vote on the motion and the motion shall be re-read by the Secretary.
- Ninth, the Chair takes a vote.
- Tenth, the Chair should announce the result of the vote and should announce what action (if any) the body has taken. In announcing the result, the Chair shall 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 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 . . ." So, 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 by either:

- Inviting the members of the body to make a motion. "A motion at this time would be in order."
- 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."
- 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 5-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 which 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 by 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 that 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.

## **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.
- When there are two or three motions on the floor (after motions and seconds) at the same time, the vote should proceed on the motion that is made.

### **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):

#### A Motion to Adjourn

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

#### A 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.

#### A 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.

#### A 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. 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.

#### A 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 simply "question." (As a practical matter, when a member calls for the "question" the chair can expedite things by simply asking the body if anyone wishes to continue discussing the underlying matter.
- If no one wishes to discuss it further, the chair can proceed to a vote on the underlying matter -without having to vote on the "question". On the other hand, if even one member of the body wishes further

discussion and debate on the underlying matter, then the chair has to treat the call for the "question" as a motion and proceed accordingly.)

- When a member of the body makes such a motion for the "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 2/3 vote of the body. Note: that 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 2/3 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 2/3 vote.

### **Majority and Super-Majority Votes**

- In a democracy, a simple majority vote determines a question. A tie vote means the motion 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 2/3 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 2/3 vote to pass.

#### Motion to Extend Public Comment

- At the conclusion of the time for public comment, a member may move to extend public comment by a set motion. This requires a 2/3 vote to pass.

#### Motion to Close Nominations

- When choosing officers of the body (like 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 2/3 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 2/3 vote to pass.

#### Motion to Suspend the Rule

This motion is debatable, but requires a 2/3 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**

- 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 "abstain" 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 "abstain" votes both in establishing the quorum and on the motion. In this event, the abstention votes act just like "no" votes.
- And, how, exactly, 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 to vote neither "yes" nor "no" on the pending motion may be treated by the chair as an abstention. And 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" is an 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. o 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.
- 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, "Let's 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:
  1. Rule One: Tell the public what the body will be doing.
  2. Rule Two: Keep the public informed while the body is doing it.
  3. Rule Three: When the body has acted, tell the public what the body did.