
APPALACHIAN SEARCH AND RESCUE CONFERENCE

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group, ASRC

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November 1, 1989

To: All AMRG Members

From: Keith Conover, M.D., ASRC Delegate

Subject: Update to Member's Manual

Enclosed is a new version of Parliamentary Procedure for the Uninterested. Please insert it in your Member's Manual and discard the old version.

This new version reflects the new, simpler voting rights of ASRC members.

Thank you.

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FIRST CLASS

APPALACHIAN SEARCH AND RESCUE CONFERENCE

Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group

Member Information Packet

Parliamentary Procedure for the Uninterested

How to Minimize Boredom at AMRG Meetings in a Few Easy Steps

by Keith Conover, M.D.

Version 1.1 October 1989

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*Where there is no law, but every man does what is right
in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty.*

—Gen. Henry M. Robert, USA

*The application of parliamentary law is the best method yet devised
to enable assemblies of any size, with due regard for every member's opinion,
to arrive at the general will on a maximum number of questions of varying complexity
in a minimum time and under all kinds of internal climate
ranging from total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion.*

—Introduction, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*

If you would like to keep AMRG business meetings short (who doesn't?), but still would like to get the necessary business transacted, then read these pages. To take a full and effective part in the business of the Group, you must know just a bit about parliamentary procedure; which little bit is presented here. Usually, we find we are all in agreement, or reach a consensus in a few minutes, and thus we need little parliamentary procedure. But, if there is disagreement, we must fall back on some established procedure to insure that majority rules, while allowing the minority a reasonable opportunity to be heard, all with a minimum of time and effort.

Meetings To have a legitimate business meeting, we must meet four criteria. The meeting must be scheduled or called in a legitimate manner, we must have a Meeting Chair (the Group

Chair or Vice-Chair, or a substitute designated by one of them), and we must have a Secretary (anyone can be temporarily appointed as Secretary if need be). The fourth requirement is for a quorum, which means enough people to transact business. For AMRG, this means one-third of the total Active Members.

Committees Any item of business requiring more discussion than is reasonable in a business meeting should be referred to a committee. (Either a Standing Committee or one created for this particular purpose: an **Ad Hoc Committee**.) Anyone who is truly interested may voice his or her opinions on (or to) the committee without taking up everyone's time at the regular business meetings. The committee discusses the question at its leisure. At the next business meeting, it gives a brief report of its deliberations, presenting

its recommendations in the form of a motion. The committee is responsible for presenting minority opinions along with its motion. Only limited discussion is permitted before a vote on a committee motion. If new information is presented in the general business meeting, the question may be referred back to the committee to reconsider and report again at the next meeting.

That's the whole point of referring something to committee— minimizing debate in the general meeting. The idea is to keep those who are passionately interested in the details from boring the rest of us at the business meeting. And, to give them time to discuss the subject, in the proper depth, without worrying about the time pressure of a regular business meeting.

Standing Committees, such as the Training Committee, have ongoing business and make a general report at each Group meeting. They propose motions related to any questions referred to the committee at the last business meeting. New ideas that a committee generates should be introduced in the new business section of the meeting.

Motions And Order Of Business The building block of parliamentary procedure is the motion, which is a proposal that the Group take a particular action or stand. In strict parliamentary procedure, all discussion is oriented to a particular motion; by stating the motion clearly before any discussion, there is no confusion about exact question.

At the very beginning of the meeting, just after the minutes are read, the Training Officer or his designate makes motions regarding membership matters; this allows newly-voted-in members to

vote on the business during the rest of the meeting.

After membership matters, any **Special Orders for the Day** are considered. These are questions mandated for consideration at this particular meeting. For instance, the Bylaws may state that elections must be held on this date; or, a vote at the previous meeting may have scheduled a particularly important question for this meeting.

During committee reports, committee chairs make motions regarding any questions referred to it at the last business meeting; these are then discussed and we vote on them. **Unfinished business** from the last meeting is taken up next; these are motions that were **tabled** (postponed) at the last meeting. Then, in **new business**, motions are taken **from the floor**: any Active Member may (upon being recognized by the chair) make a motion. Anyone who wishes to speak must first **be recognized** by the chair. Of course, if everyone consents, we may ignore this requirement, but the chair always has the option of taking over whenever necessary (as when the discussion heats up a bit).

A motion must receive a **second** before it may be considered. The member seconding need not be in favor of the motion, but just in favor of talking about it (even if just to soundly defeat it). If needed the chair should then restate the motion clearly. The chair then allows members to speak alternately in favor and against the motion. Members may make two 2-minute speeches each, alternating between positive and negative speakers when possible. (The person who made the motion usually gets to speak first.) If there is

plenty of time, and the entire Group consents, we may use **informal consideration**: the two-minute and **speaking-twice-only** rules are suspended. (Actually, we're in informal consideration most of the time, and only invoke these rules when needed.)

If, however, things start dragging on, it's time to either **call the question** or refer to a committee. Let's suppose that you move to call the question, and it is seconded. Then we must vote on your motion without debate. If your motion to call the question passes, we must vote on the main question without further discussion. When you "call the question," you're really demanding a vote to **close debate** and force a vote on the pending motion. When you "move we call the question" you're saying that you're bored and you think others are, too. Again: if your motion to call the question passes, then we must vote on the main motion without additional debate. If the question is important, but you're still bored or tired, make a motion to **table** it (postpone further debate) until the next meeting, or to refer it to a committee.

In a case where the entire membership seems behind a motion, the Chair may say something like "unless there is dissent, I will accept this motion"; unless someone complains, the motion passes by **unanimous consent**. This doesn't mean that everyone was in favor; just that nobody thought it worthwhile to speak against it.

And that's it! A few rules that are really just good common sense. Remember: do your part to keep meetings from being boring.

Order Of Business

1. **The call to order**
 2. **Introduction of visitors or guests**
 3. **Reading and approval of minutes**
 4. **Membership Matters (e.g., Election of new Members)**
 5. **Special Orders for the Day (e.g., Elections)**
 6. **ASRC, NCRC, and MRA Reports (if any)**
 7. **Reports of Officers and Standing Committees:**
 - a. **Chair (report of actions of Board)**
 - b. **Operations Committee**
 - c. **Training Committee**
 - d. **Information Committee**
 - e. **Treasurer**
 8. **Reports of Ad Hoc Committees and Projects**
 9. **Unfinished Business**
 10. **New Business**
 11. **Adjournment**
 12. **Training Program, if any**
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