

# SPECIAL RULES FOR SMALL BOARDS

## Excerpt from Robert's Rules of Order - 11<sup>th</sup> Edition

“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:

- ◆ Members can simply raise a hand and wait to be called on by the chair and may remain seated while speaking or making motions.
  - ◆ A motion does not need to be on the table in order to have informal discussion of a topic.
  - ◆ Once, there is an obvious need to take action, a member of the board (including its chair) can make a motion.
  - ◆ The chair need not rise while putting questions to a vote.
  - ◆ A motion does not require a second to move forward into further discussion. There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question. \*
  - ◆ When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion 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.
  - ◆ If the chair is a member, they may, without leaving the chair, speak in informal discussions and in debate, and vote on all questions\*\*.
- \* However, motions to close or limit debate, including motions to limit the number of times a member can speak to a question, are in order even in meetings of a small board, although occasions where they are necessary or appropriate may be rarer than in larger assemblies.
- \*\* Informal discussion may be initiated by the chair, which in effect, enables the chair to submit it's own proposals without formally making a motion as described in Roberts Rules. (Although chair has the right to make a motion if chair so chooses).
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### To Limit Debate

When members of the assembly call out informally, “Question! Question!”, it means only that they as individuals are ready to vote on the pending question or motion. This informal “call for the question” by members must be clearly differentiated from the formal motion “to close debate and vote immediately on the pending question”, (or what is exactly the same) the formal “I move the previous question”.

### To Close Debate

“I move the previous Question” is the old, brief way of moving to close debate. The current formal way of closing debate is “I move that we close debate and vote immediately on the pending question”. Requires a second. Is not debatable nor can it have a subsidiary motion to amend. Requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

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NOTE: It is recommended the Chair have a copy of “Parliamentary Procedure at a glance” available at most large book stores.