

## HOW TO RUN AN ORDERLY MEETING

In general, there are two types of a people gathering which have a leader, a purpose for being there and majority rules. They are called meetings and riots. The main difference between a meeting and a riot is that while both may have majority rules, **ONLY** the meeting protects the minority. The information below will assist you in preventing your meetings from becoming riots.

First, in any meeting order is a necessity. One person at a time has the floor while others allow that person to speak. This is the job of the Chair. In our case, the Commander. All remarks are addressed to the Chair. Those in the body of the meeting address the Chair as Commander or by appropriate rank. At Squadron meetings the power is in the body, not the Chair. The Chair acts as a traffic cop such as stopping one person from interrupting and/or allowing another to take their turn speaking. A traffic cop needs to know the law in order to enforce it; so does the Chair need to know the rules of order or parliamentary procedure as it is often called. That topic was covered in the Ensign's April 2001 issue called "**Parliamentary Procedures Is it Necessary?**"

One of the main impressions a person makes as a leader is how well they maintain the order of business. Among these is a very important habit of starting the meeting **ON TIME**. It is not acceptable to be discourteous to the people who arrived on time by waiting for those who don't. If you start your meeting 5 minutes late, there will be those who come 10 minutes late at the next meeting and so on. Make it the responsibility of those who do come late to find out what transpired before they arrived.

The order of business is important whether it a small or large meeting. While this example is based on a 50+ member meeting, the basic principle should be applied to ALL meetings – no matter how small. The number of members and the circumstances of the meeting should determine the degree of formality needed. Small board meetings are less formal and rarely have an opening ceremony while large meetings usually do have such a ceremony. If you have an invocation, it goes first followed by the National Anthem, if used, and the Pledge of Allegiance is last. That is called the opening ceremony of the meeting. Calling the meeting to order by announcing for the record, name of the Squadron, what kind of meeting it is, regular, annual or special and the date. The secretary is asked if there is a quorum. Quorums differ

from one Squadron to another and should be found in each Squadron's Bylaws. If there is no mention of a quorum, then it is a majority of the entire membership. You might ask, "What happens if there is no quorum, what can you do?" There are three procedures that you can carry out: First, continue the meeting, but do not vote on any matters where you would need a quorum, hoping that more members will come in. Next, you could recess the meeting, assuming you need a quorum for voting immediately for some business matter. When the late members come in, you reconvene and continue. Finally, if all else fails, due to a snowstorm etc. and it doesn't look like there is going to be any others arrivals, select another date for the meeting. There is, however, an exception. If a matter must be handled that night and cannot wait till the next meeting, then vote as if you had a quorum and make a note to have that action ratified at the next meeting to make it legal. If anyone complains that they didn't get a chance for input to the decision, you may inform them that matters had to be handled that night by those who did attend and couldn't wait until a future meeting. Also that notation should be in the minutes of the meeting. However, such action should be used sparingly.

Assuming that a quorum is reached, the next business is the approval of the previous meeting's minutes. If they have been posted or distributed to members, there is no reason to read them aloud. The Chair would ask, "*Are there any questions, corrections or additions to the minutes of the previous meeting?*" After which the Chair announces "*If there are no objections, the minutes will stand approved as: read, distributed or posted.*" This is called "uncontested consent," and it saves time instead of a motion to accept, second and then a vote.

Next comes the Treasurer's report. Again after the report, the Chair asks, "*Are there any questions to the Treasurer's report? Hearing none, the Treasurer's report will be placed on file for the annual audit.*" Notice that you do not accept the Treasurer's report without an audit. The body has no idea how accurate that report is until an independent audit is performed.

From here on there are reports from the Officers followed by different committees, and then "unfinished business" **not old** business. The difference is unfinished business needs to be completed, where old business is any business in the past that has or has not been completed. After the unfinished business has been dealt with, the chair asks: "*Is there any New Business?*" As you can guess, that is business, which is being considered for the first time by the membership.

When all matters are finished one way or another, (i.e. they could be approved or postponed until another meeting), then the Chair will ask if there is anything “*good for the order?*” This means the floor is open for any subject that has to do with the membership. That finished, the next action is important-how to legally adjourn the meeting. Remember, the body adjourns the meeting **not** the Chair. The form to use is “*If there are no objections, this meeting is adjourned, and hearing none, it is so ordered.*” One rap of the gavel and the meeting is over by uncontested consent. Most meeting should be no longer then 1 to 2 hours. If longer, find out the cause and correct it.

The reason for convening the meeting should determine your basic agenda. If minutes of the previous meeting are mailed to members prior to your meeting date, you may wish to include the agenda if it has been finalized. If this is not possible then the agenda should be distributed to member when they arrive. The members who attend your Squadron’s meeting come for two basic reasons, information and socializing. Run your meeting successfully and there will be more time for both. Also, the membership will look to you as a good and knowledgeable leader.

P/C Benjamin H. Sooy, AP  
Certified Parliamentarian, AIP

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