

Budget Committee Rules of Order

AGENDA = Sent out by the chair in advance. May be modified by the chair if necessary.

QUORUM = 8 members must be present. If numbers drop below 8, it's no longer a quorum.

PUBLIC COMMENT = The public is welcome to address the Budget Committee during public comment, but each speaker will normally be held to no more than 4 minutes, at the discretion of the chair. If speakers have longer comments or more information to share, they may mail or email them to the chair who will then distribute them to the committee members. Comments must be germane to the Budget Committee and its purview.

SPEAKING IN A MEETING = Raise your hand to be recognized by the chair.

MOTIONS =

Making them: Anyone can make a motion, but the motion must be accepted by the chair. If the chair does not accept the motion, the chair should state her/his reason(s). When a motion is accepted, the chair will state the motion and may help clarify the motion if there is any possibility of confusion.

Seconding: Motions require a second. Motions may be seconded for discussion as long as this procedure is not abused.

Speaking to the motion: Both the person who made the motion and the person who seconded it will be given the right to speak to the motion before general discussion begins.

Debate/Discussion: Anyone wishing to speak should raise their hand and the chair will call on them in order or put them on the list if several people want to speak. The chair may call on people out of order in an attempt to finish one line of discussion before starting another or to follow a thread of discussion in a coherent fashion. People may raise their hands while other members are speaking but should do so as unobtrusively as possible and not disrupt or distract from the speaker. Members are allowed to speak more than once.

Town/school officials: Those not serving as appointed members of the Budget Committee may speak on a limited basis and only if recognized by the chair. They should raise their hand if they feel they have highly pertinent information, but the chair reserves the right to ignore them, as they are NOT members of this committee. When a motion is on the floor, their comments must be limited to providing factual information; they are not permitted to argue their case while the Budget Committee is considering a motion, although they may do so before a motion is on the floor during the general discussion period. The Budget Committee reserves the right to ask questions of town/school officials at any point during deliberations, particularly if the intention is to establish factual information relevant to the motion under consideration.

Amendments: Only one amendment at a time will be considered, but there is no limit on the total number of amendments considered for any motion. In other words, no nested amendments. Amendments must be germane to the main motion.

Points of order: If there is a violation of the rules laid out here, if the discussion is not germane, or if a member makes rude comments or personal attacks, other members may draw the chair's attention by calling out "point of order."

Tabling motions: Tabling motions require a second and are debatable, but debate must be limited to the issue of tabling.

Untabing motions: Untabing motions require a second and are debatable, but debate must be limited to the issue of untabling. The only people who can make a motion or second a motion to untable an issue must have voted with the majority to table it in the first place.

Calling the question: A member may call the question if the discussion is becoming repetitive or dragging on too long. Calling the question requires a second, but debate is not permitted. After the vote on calling the question, members whose names have already been listed on the chair's list will be permitted to speak on the main motion before the main motion is voted on.

Voting: Voting is done by a show of hands. A majority vote is all that's required (no two-thirds votes). If several members abstain from voting, a majority of votes will determine the outcome, even if a majority of the committee is not voting. There is no secret balloting for the Budget Committee. Proxy voting is not allowed, although members may phone in to participate in meetings and may vote by voice.

Recording the vote: The chair will count the vote, and the names of those in the minority will be specified for the record. Anyone who abstains has the right to briefly state his/her reason.

Motions to reconsider: These motions can only be proposed by those who vote in the majority on the original motion; hopefully, motions to reconsider will be used sparingly. The committee doesn't want to spend time reconsidering the same matter over and over.

Withdrawing motions: A motion may be withdrawn if both the person who proposed it and the person who seconded it agree to withdraw it.

Restricting reconsideration of motions: These motions can be made on individual motions or can bundle several motions together. In practice, the Budget Committee uses these motions very sparingly and only if there's a specific concern that the original vote of the committee may be challenged.

RECUSALS: Refer to the Town's code of conduct for information about recusals.

EMAILS: Budget Committee members may distribute emails to the committee for the purpose of sharing information only. If anyone has questions or comments via email, please transmit them to the chair only. As all Budget Committee meetings must allow public access, we cannot hold discussions via email.

May 15, 2014