

Voting Techniques

and Robert's Rules of Order

One Person / One Vote

Most Neighborhood Associations make decisions using a show of hands or a verbal vote. When members want to preserve privacy, it is common to write votes on slips of paper to be tallied/counted by an officer or unbiased observer.

Light Voting

When multiple choices are available, “light voting” provides a method to help establish priorities. The following are steps to follow in “light voting”.

1. The group decides how many options should be included in the list of priorities. For example, if a group is identifying their top ten objectives, then ten items would be selected. If the group wants the top three, then three items would be selected.
2. Every option to be voted on is listed and displayed on the wall (or easel or chalk board). Members will go to each item & write their vote beside it.
3. There are different ways that you can then vote. Here are three possibilities:

Weighted Votes: Each member independently ranks the options, placing the highest number next to their highest priority working down to the lowest number on their lowest priority. (If ten items are being selected then a “10” will be given to their 1st/highest priority and a “1” to their 10th priority. Priorities in

between will be ranked consecutively (i.e. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

Multiple Votes (allow multiple votes per item): Each member is allocated a set number of equally ranked votes. They may choose to vote more than once on any item, up to the maximum number of votes that were allocated to them.

Multiple Votes (one vote per item): Process is the same as above but members may place only one vote on any single item.

4. Votes are tallied & items ranked by their sums (highest sum/highest priority).

Inclusive Voting

This type of voting ensures individual “buy in” for all group decisions. In “inclusive voting”, votes may be taken by a show of hands, however, a great technique is to use three color coded voting cards (green = yes; yellow = “I can live with it”; red = no).

These are easily made for each member with colored paper and can greatly facilitate decision making and encourage discussion. This is how voting works:

- A “No” Vote (Red): If anyone votes against an action, then a decision cannot be made until that person does not object to the group decision.

- An “I Can Live With it” Vote (Yellow): If anyone is not against a decision but has some concerns, then the group should discuss these concerns to seek solutions. If solutions cannot be found, this vote will not stop the decision from being made.
- A “Yes” Vote (Green): The majority of votes should be yes/green to move forward with an action.

Modified “Robert’s Rules of Order” for Motions

The following are procedures based on “Roberts Rules of Order” (RRO) for making & handling a motion in a meeting. (These have been modified to serve the more common “informal” Neighborhood Association (NA) meetings typical in Santa Ana.)

Obtaining and Assigning the Floor

1. Members generally raise their hands to be acknowledged and “obtain the floor.” In a more formal setting, a member may stand.

A member should only raise their hand or stand up when no one else “has the floor” (i.e. has been acknowledged by the chair and is speaking).

A member should keep their hand raised (or remain standing) and await recognition by the chair before speaking.

2. The chair recognizes the member by announcing their name or, in a small group by nodding to the member.

Brining a Motion Before the Association

1. A member makes the motion: “I move that (or ‘to’)...”. (Note: RRO indicates that a person making a motion is standing and then sits after the motion is made.

In most meetings, standing is not necessary, but a person making a motion should make sure that they have the attention of the group before stating the motion. Otherwise, some members might not be clear about what is being “moved”.)

2. Another member, (without rising), seconds the motion: “I second the motion” or “I second it” or even “second.”
3. The chair states the motion: “It is moved and seconded that ... Are you ready for the question?”

Consideration for the Motion

1. Members debate/discuss the motion.

Before speaking, a member should obtain the floor as stated above.

The maker of the motion has first right to the floor if they claim it.

According to RRO, remarks should be addressed to the chair. Typically in meetings, the discussion is much less formal. However, to maintain order and avoid side conversations, a chair may wish to initiate this procedure in particularly controversial discussions.)

Debate or discussion should be confined to the merits of the motion.

Debate can be closed by the chair if no one seeks the floor for further debate or by a 2/3 vote of the Association.

2. The chair puts the motion to a vote.

The chair asks: “Are you ready for the question?” If no one raises a hand

(or rises) to claim the floor, the chair proceeds to take the vote.

The chair says: "The question is on the adoption of the motion that... As many as are in favor, say aye (or raise your hand, etc)." (See pages 1-2 for voting methods) "Those opposed, say no (or raise your hand, etc.)." (Use of red/yellow/green cards or "light voting" doesn't require this dual process.)

3. The chair then announces the result of the vote.

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