

# U\$TEWARD

## FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

UNITED ELECTRICAL, RADIO AND MACHINE WORKERS OF AMERICA • MAY 2022

Ralph and the other officers of the Union were trying to figure out why fewer and fewer members came to the regular monthly meetings. Ralph said, "I asked Rachel why she doesn't come to meetings any more. You know what she said? 'It takes forever for anything to get decided. Last time the meeting went on for 3 hours. Everybody was talking about different things, so nothing ever got settled.' There's got to be a better way to run a meeting." Sarah said, "You know, there's that part of the Leadership Guide that talks about how to run orderly meetings. Maybe we should read up on it."

Except for contract time, it's tough these days to get members to meetings. Members have family obligations, or there's the other part-time job to get to. This makes it even more important to make Union meetings interesting, orderly, and concise.

UE has developed a standard agenda for Union meetings, which is at the end of most UE local constitutions. UE also recognizes that meeting rules have to be flexible and the agenda adaptable to the situation in order to keep the members coming to meetings.

### **Tips on running the meeting**

The agenda does not necessarily have to be in the traditional order. If there is a really pressing issue it may be better to take up that item at the very beginning of the meeting, rather than make everybody wait until the "new business" point comes around. Waiting often makes people edgy, especially new people who have come to their first meeting to discuss a problem.

It is extremely important that the financial report be given at every meeting. This shouldn't be one of the items that is dropped because of pressing business.

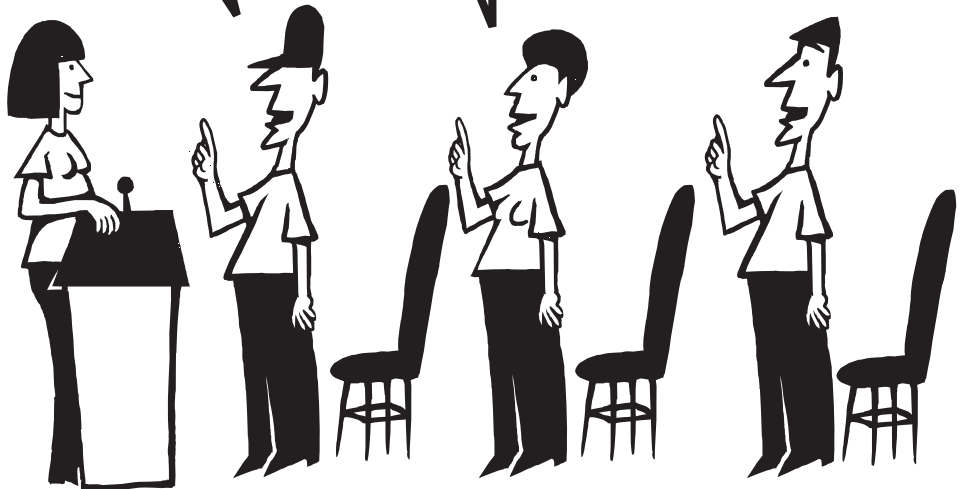
A meeting can be smoothly run without the Chairperson announcing, "We are going

## **BASIC TIPS ON RUNNING A UNION MEETING**

**Can a member raise something new if it isn't on the agenda?**

**What if someone makes a motion to do something no one is interested in? Do you still have to talk about it?**

**How do you end debate when you've heard every argument and are ready to vote?**



to follow Robert's Rules of Order." Most members won't know what this means. Instead the Chairperson can announce some simple rules for the meeting.

- One person will speak at a time. No vulgarities or name calling is allowed.
- If you want to speak, please raise your hand and I will call on you.
- No repeat speakers until everyone has had a chance to speak.
- Speakers must stick to the subject. If you want to talk about something different, please wait until the first issue is dealt with.
- If the members have to make a decision, then there will be a vote on that issue.

Once the vote is taken we will move onto the next issue.

If someone is being obnoxious and disrupting the meeting they can be asked to leave. The Chairperson can take a vote asking the disrupter to be quiet or leave the meeting. This way the disruptive person knows that it is the members that disapprove of their behavior, not just the Chairperson.

If it appears that there is not much business to be done at a meeting, think about inviting in a speaker to briefly address an issue, like some pending legislation that the members should know about. Another possi-

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## ***The Basics to Robert's Rules of Order***

UE, like most membership organizations, has adopted "Robert's Rules of Order" as our "parliamentary procedure," or the set of rules on how to run a fair and orderly meeting.

Why have rules? The basic idea is for everyone to have their say, without anyone dominating the meeting. There is a procedure to ensure that questions can be handled in a democratic manner, but if people start to repeat themselves, any member can make a motion to end debate and "call the question." The Chairperson's job is to balance keeping things moving while allowing full discussion.

People only speak after they are recognized by the Chairperson. Only one person at a time speaks.

People must stick to the issue that is being discussed. If the discussion is on whether to arbitrate a grievance, then Joe can be ruled out of order if he starts talking about when the Negotiating Committee should be elected. (This should be done diplomatically though.)

- The motion - A motion is made by raising your hand to get recognized by the Chairperson. After being recognized, rise and say, "I move that we hold a special Union meeting if the management tries to implement mandatory overtime." A motion asks the group to take action: to send a letter; spend money to arbitrate a case; send delegates to the UE Convention.
- Second to a motion - A person different from the maker of a motion must second the motion. No discussion can take place without this. If there is no second, the motion "dies for lack of a second" and the Chairperson moves on to the next order of business. If there is a second to a motion, then the Chair opens the floor for discussion.
- Amendment to a motion - An amendment to a motion is made in the same way as a motion. Amendments must basically agree with the motion but want to add some clarification to the original motion. "I move to amend the motion on the special Union meeting to state that we hold the meeting within 2 days after management tells someone they must work overtime." An amendment to a motion must also be seconded. When it comes time to vote, the amendment to a motion is voted on first, then a vote is taken on the original motion (as amended, if the amendment passes).
- Speaking on a Motion or Amendment - One person at a time speaks after being recognized by the Chairperson. Once a motion is on the floor the only discussion allowed is on the motion or the amendment. The Chairperson can set time limits on how long people may speak or may call for a motion to end debate if the same people keep repeating themselves.
- Ending Debate - A motion to end debate means that people want to vote on the issue. Once someone makes a motion to end debate and it is seconded, then a vote is immediately taken on ending debate, without any debate. A motion to end debate must pass by two-thirds of the people voting.

There is a more detailed explanation of parliamentary procedure in the UE Leadership Guide, in Chapter 6.

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bility is showing a labor video. Many videos are available on the UE YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/UEtube>.

### ***Tips for Running a Meeting Online***

Many UE locals have shifted to holding their membership meetings online through platforms like Zoom. Doing so has the advantage of allowing members to join from anywhere and removes the challenge of finding a meeting space for locals that don't have their own hall. However, not everyone has access to the same technology, which creates barriers for participation. Additionally, because members are not in a room together, it can be easy to get distracted by things occurring in the member's home (or from wherever they are joining).

Here are some tips to keep online meetings running smoothly.

- Keep as many practices of in-person meetings as possible, such as the agenda.
- At the beginning of the meeting, briefly orient members to the technology, pointing out things like reaction buttons and the chat box. Remind members to put themselves on mute unless they are addressing the meeting.
- Make sure everyone understands how to be recognized by the Chairperson in order to address the meeting. Popular options include writing something in the chat box, such as "I'd like to speak," or using a "Raise Hand" reaction button.
- If a topic has a lot of people looking to speak, it is a good idea to keep a list of who would like to speak so that the meeting stays orderly. This can be kept by the Chair or someone else, such as the Recording Secretary. The Chair should periodically read the list of speakers so that people know they have been seen and have a sense of when it will be their turn to talk.
- Make sure everyone understands how votes will happen. Will members use reaction buttons to vote, and the Chair will observe who participates? Will you use a poll? Will there be a roll call?
- If the meeting will consider written documents that ordinarily would have been distributed at an in-person meeting, such as a resolution, someone should be prepared to screenshare the documents.