

# 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 may raise a hand rather than standing when seeking to obtain the floor, and may remain seated while making motions or speaking
  - ◆ Motions need not be seconded.
  - ◆ There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a debatable question.  
\*Appeals, however, are debatable under regular rules - that is, each member can speak only once on debate on them.
  - ◆ Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.
  - ◆ When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion's 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.
  - ◆ The chairman need not rise while putting questions to a vote.
  - ◆ If the chairman is a member, he 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 himself, which in effect, enables the chairman to submit his own proposals without formally making a motion as described in Roberts Rules. (Although he has the right to make a motion if he 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 Chairman have a copy of “Parliamentary Procedure at a glance” available at most large book stores.