

# **RULES OF ORDER FOR ST. MARY'S COUNTY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

## **BASIC PRINCIPLES**

1. Parliamentary procedure exists to facilitate the transaction of business and to promote cooperation and harmony.
2. All members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations.
  - The majority has the right to decide.
  - The minority has rights which must be protected.
3. A quorum must be present for the group to act.
4. Full and free discussion of every motion considered is a basic right.
5. Only one question at a time can be considered at any given time.
6. Members have the right to know at all times what the immediately pending question is, and to have it restated before a vote is taken.

## **ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS**

1. The chair shall clearly announce the agenda item and clearly state what the subject is.
2. The chair may request a report on the item from a staff person, committee chair, or other appropriate person.
3. The chair shall ask the members if there are any technical questions for clarification.
4. The chair shall then invite, or open the meeting for, public comment. Prior to commencement of public comment, the chair may limit the time for each public speaker.
5. The chair may then invite discussion among the members or call for a motion followed by debate.

## MOTIONS

### Types of Motions

The following motions may be made:

1. **Basic motion.** A member makes a motion to take a specific substantive action. Another member seconds the motion. Once made and seconded, the motion belongs to the body.

2. **Motion to amend or to substitute a motion.** If any member wants to change a pending motion, that member may move to amend the motion or move a substitute motion. A motion to amend or substitute requires a second, but does not require the consent of the member who made or seconded the basic or pending motion. A motion to amend or to substitute shall be voted on prior to consideration of the pending or proposed motion. No motion (except a non-debatable motion) may be made while a motion to amend or to substitute a motion is on the floor.

A. A motion to amend seeks to retain the basic motion on the floor, but to modify it in some way.

B. A substitute motion seeks to throw out the basic motion on the floor and substitute a new and different motion for it.

C. The decision as to whether a motion is a motion to amend or a substitute motion is left to the chair.

3. **Withdrawal of a motion.** A member who has made the motion on the floor may withdraw the motion. Withdrawal of a motion does not require a second or the consent of any member who seconded the motion on the floor. The motion on the floor is immediately deemed withdrawn although any other member may make the same motion as has been withdrawn.

4. **Non-debatable motions.** The following motions may be made at any time, are not subject to amendment, substitution or withdrawal, and are not debatable. When made and seconded, the chair must immediately call for a vote of the body without debate or discussion, and require a simple majority vote for passage:

A. Motion to recess. The motion, if passed, requires the body to immediately take a recess.

B. Motion to table. The motion, if passed, requires discussion of the agenda item to be halted and to be placed "on hold." The motion may contain a specific time in which the item can come back to the body. Or the motion may contain no specific

time for the return of the item, in which a motion to take the item off the table and bring it back before the body will have to be taken at a future meeting.

C. Motion to take off the table.

D. Motion to adjourn. The motion, if passed, requires the body to immediately adjourn to its next regularly scheduled meeting.

5. Motion for reconsideration. A motion to reconsider may be made by a member who voted in the majority on the original motion (as amended). Any other member may second the motion to reconsider. A motion to reconsider must be made at the meeting where the item was first voted upon or at the next meeting of the body.

### **Consideration of a motion**

1. The members debate the motion (unless no member claims the floor for that purpose).

2. The chair restates the question.

3. The chair takes the vote.

4. The chair announces the result of a vote. A complete announcement should include:

A. Report on the voting itself, stating which side prevailed (and giving the count if a count prevailed).

B. Declaration that the motion is adopted or lost.

C. Statement indicating the effect of the vote or ordering its execution.

5. In lieu of a vote, where it appears that the members are in unanimous agreement, and in the absence of an objection, the chair may announce that any motion is adopted.

## RULES GOVERNING DEBATE

1. Members are not required to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking, which they can do while seated.
2. There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question, and motions to close or limit debate are not allowed. Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.
3. The chair can speak in discussion, make motions, second a motion, and vote on all questions. The chair should strive to be the last to speak at the discussion and debate stage, and should not make or second a motion unless convinced that no other member should do so.
4. Proper decorum in debate must be observed:
  - Remarks must be germane to the question before the group.
  - Speakers should speak loudly and clearly.
  - Speakers should refrain from attacking another member's motives.
  - Remarks should be addressed through the chair.
  - If any member objects, a speaker has no right to read from or to have the secretary read from any paper or book as part of his/her speech, without permission of the assembly.

## VOTING

### Methods of Voting

**Voice vote** A vote by voice is the regular method of voting on any question that does not require more than a majority vote for its adoption.

**Show of hands** As an alternative to the voice vote or as a way to verify an inconclusive result, members show their vote by raising their hand.

**Roll call** A roll call vote has the effect of placing on record how each member votes. Any member has the right to demand a roll call vote.

**Ballot** Voting by ballot is used when secrecy of the member's votes is desired, and shall be used upon a majority vote of the members. Any vote relating to charges or proposed charges against a member or an officer shall be by ballot.

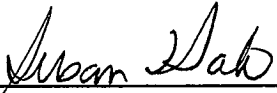
**Majority vote** The basic requirement for approval for action, except where a rule provides otherwise, is a majority vote. The term "majority" means "more than half" of the members present, excluding abstentions, at a properly called meeting with a quorum.

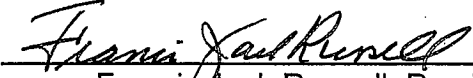
## MINUTES

1. Minutes are the official record of the proceedings of a deliberative assembly, board, or committee.
2. Minutes "should contain a record of what was *done* at a meeting, not what was *said* by the members."
3. The secretary may delegate to a staff member the duty to prepare the minutes.
4. The minutes are the property of the assembly, board, or committee. As such, after the minutes are submitted to the members at a meeting, the members approve the minutes. In lieu of a formal vote, the minutes may be approved by consent on the following call by the chair: "If there are no corrections or objections, then the minutes will be approved as distributed".
5. Each minutes should have the date, time, and place of the meeting, the name of the chair and recorder for the meeting, a record of those attending the meeting, and whether the minutes of the previous meeting was approved (as read or as corrected). The body of the minutes should contain a separate paragraph for each subject matter. Motions and decisions should be clearly stated. The secretary or recorder should sign the minutes.

**ADOPTED** by the Board of County Commissioners for St. Mary's County this 21  
day of June, 2011, to be effective on 1 July, 2011.

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan L. Sabo  
County Administrator

By:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Francis Jack Russell, President

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND  
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
George R. Sparling  
County Attorney