

call to order

The Main Motion

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During the course of a meeting we may hear reports, hold public hearings, listen to presentations and conduct business. In order to bring business before the assembly, a member of the assembly is required to make a motion. A motion is a formal proposal by a member to take certain action.

There are many parliamentary motions that can be offered during a meeting but there is only one that brings business before the assembly and that is the main motion. Motions to *Amend, Lay on the Table, Refer*, etc. are procedural in nature and cause a certain action to take place, but it is the main motion that brings business before the assembly.

A main motion is in order when no other question is pending; it is out of order when another member has the floor, or a motion must be seconded, is debatable, is amendable and requires a majority vote unless otherwise specified.

There are four steps by which a motion is brought before the assembly. The first is to obtain the floor. This can be done in a variety of ways depending on the circumstances. It may involve raising your hand, standing, pushing a button or

in some cases catching the chair's eye. A member has not obtained the floor until recognized by the chair.

Once the member is recognized by the chair, the member then states the motion, "I *Move to adopt the resolution to increase supervisor's salaries by 10% or Move to adopt resolution...*"

A second to the motion is now in order. A member does not need to be recognized or obtain the floor to second the motion – you can just shout out, "I *second the motion.*" If no one volunteers to second then the chair should ask, "Is there a *second to the motion?*" A member does not have to support the motion to second, but may second to allow the matter to be debated. If there is no second, the motion dies.

After receiving a second, the chair then restates the motion, "The motion before the body is to *Adopt resolution...to increase supervisor's salaries by 10%.*" Neither the making nor the seconding of a motion places it before the assembly; only the chair can do that by restating the motion. The question (motion) is now said to be "pending" or "ready for debate." If the assembly votes in the affirmative, the motion is said to be "approved," "adopted" or "carried." If the assembly votes

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to deny, the motion it is said to be “denied,” rejected” or “lost.”

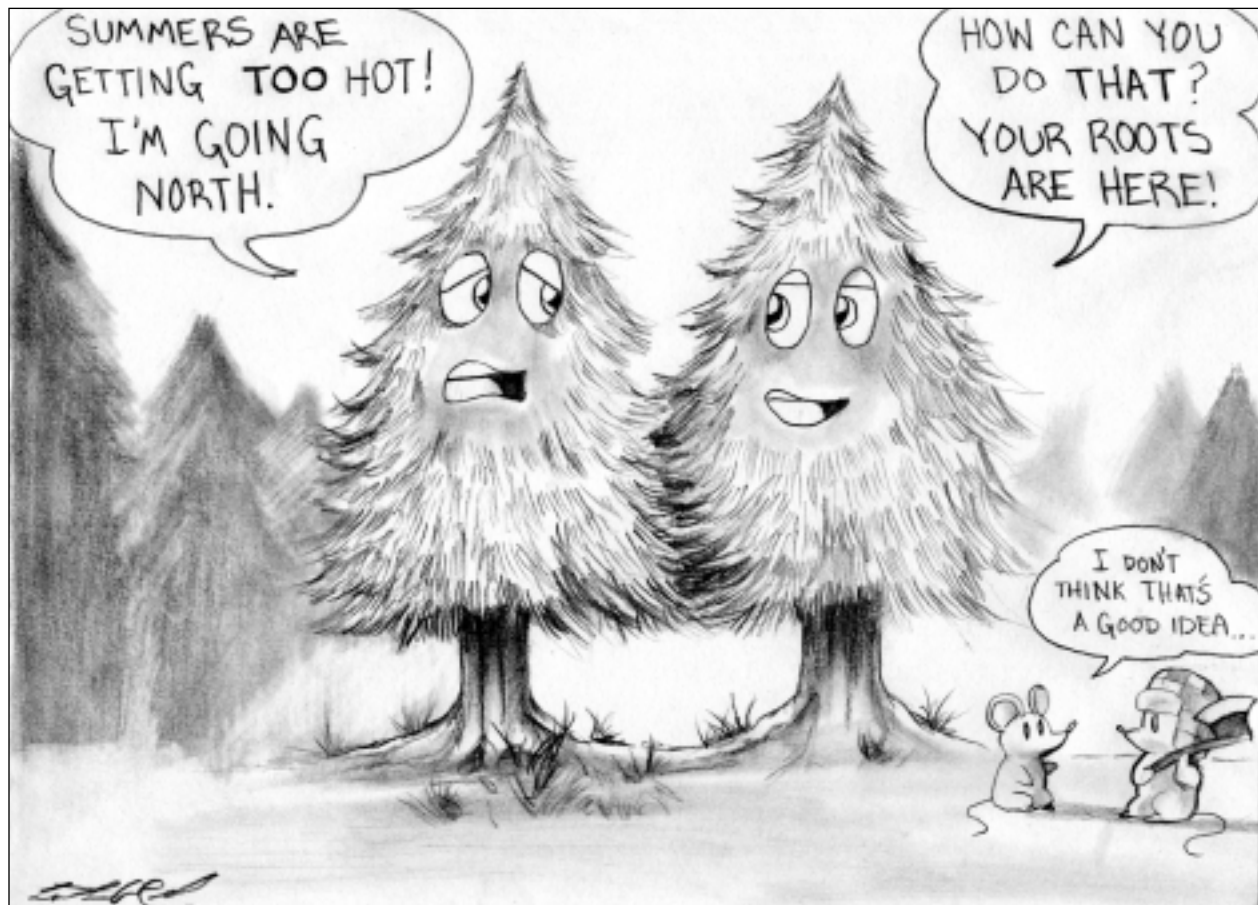
Members should avoid negative statements in a motion where the effect is calling for a position to be taken; a negative statement may confuse members as to the effect of voting *for* or *against* the motion. For example, instead of moving the county take a position *not in support of the assembly bill to eliminate county government*, move to *oppose the assembly bill...* It should be noted that if the motion is voted down then no opinion has been expressed.

Sometimes during debate the maker of the motion realizes the motion was in poor taste or

was not what was intended. Can the maker of the motion withdraw the motion? No, because it no longer belongs to the member that made the motion. Once the chair restates the motion, it becomes the property of the assembly. However, if the chair feels the body supports withdrawal, the chair can state, “If there are no objections to withdrawal” and there are no objections, the chair then states, “the motion is withdrawn.” You can always take action with unanimous consent, which will be discussed in more detail in a future article.

The (main) motion before the readership is, *keep reading Call to Order.*

Source: Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 11th Edition



Christian O'Connell