



Wisconsin Counties Association  
**ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
*& Exhibit Hall* **2023**

**1:00 – 2:00 PM**

**Part 1: Fundamentals of Parli Pro – Are you Ready for the “Lombardi County”  
Board Meeting?**

Speaker: James Braughler, County Supervisor, Jefferson County  
Speaker and Moderator: Andy Phillips, Attorney, Attolles Law, s.c.

# Part 1: Fundamentals of Parli Pro – Are you Ready for the Lombardi County Board Meeting?

2023 WCA Annual Conference

Attorneys Andy Phillips and Jake Curtis

The background features a series of concentric circles in light gray, some solid and some dashed, creating a ripple effect. A large, solid orange speech bubble is centered on the page, pointing downwards. The text is contained within this bubble.

# Running Effective Meetings

Setting the Stage

```
graph TD; A[State Statutes] --> B[Local Ordinances and Rules]; B --> C[Robert's Rules of Order];
```

Sources of  
Procedural  
Rules

**State Statutes**



**Local Ordinances and Rules**



**Robert's Rules of Order**

## Object of Rules of Order

- **To facilitate the smooth functioning of the assembly**
  - Provides order
  - Provides a firm basis for resolving questions of procedure
  - Provides organizational stability
  - Adopt latest edition (12<sup>th</sup>) of RONR

## Henry Martyn Robert (1837-1923)

- Engineering officer in regular army
- Became Brigadier General then Major
- Active in educational work as well as church and civic organizations
- Without warning, he was asked to preside over meeting
- Embarrassment was supreme
- Never again without knowing parliamentary law
- Severe winter tied up on Milwaukee engineering project (Lake Michigan), wrote manuscript

# Principles Underlying Parliamentary Law



Rules based on regard for the rights:

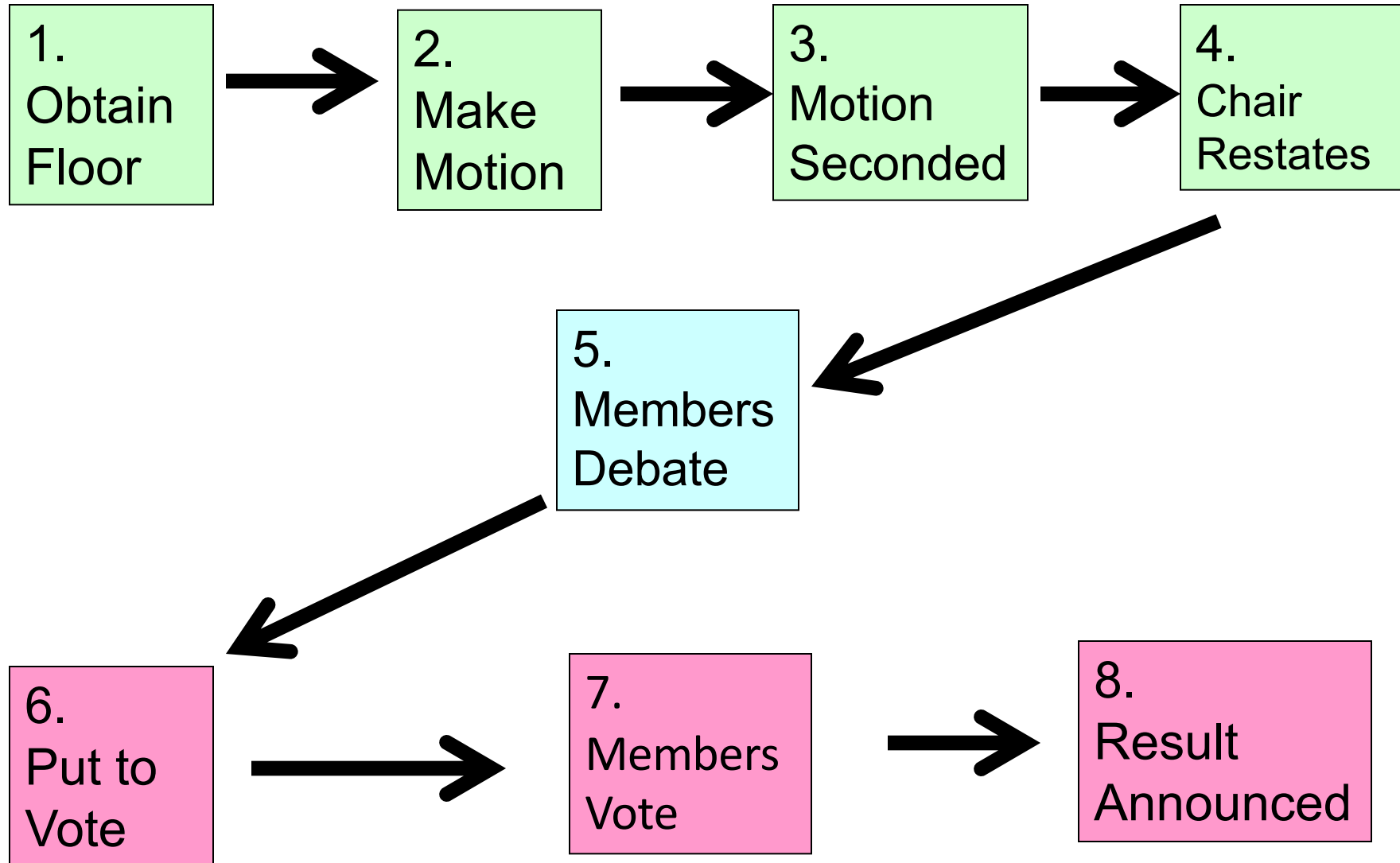
- of the majority
- of the minority, especially a strong minority
- of individual members
- of absentees, and
- of all these together

In simple terms, how do I get business  
before the body?





# Get in Motion



# Obtain Floor (1)

- Member obtains the floor – raise your hand, stand, push a button
- Called upon (recognized) by presiding officer
- When authorized to speak you are said to have the floor

# Make a Motion (2)

- Member makes a motion – a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the group take certain action
- A main motion brings business before the body
- There should be no debate on a matter before a motion has been made
- Only one main motion before the body for action at one time

## Make a Motion (2)



- “I move that...”
- Clearly describe the proposal
  - Don’t make negative motions
  - Make positive motions
  - “ So Moved ” - remove these words from your vocabulary

# Motion Seconded (3)

- By another member
  - Shows at least two members want the proposal considered
- Worthy of debate
- Needed to advance
- Call out “second”
  - Do not need to be recognized by the chair

# Chair Restates (4)

- Chair states the question on the motion
  - “It has been moved and seconded that...”
- Necessary for the motion to be properly before the group for consideration
- Transfers ownership of the motion to the body

## Members Debate (5)

- Motion is “on the floor”
- Discussion on the merits of the question – whether the proposed action should or should not be taken
- Typically, the maker of the motion is assigned the floor first
- No member can speak more than twice
  - Cannot speak a second time if a person who has not yet spoken seeks the floor
- No more than 10 minutes each time
- Member cannot yield unused time or save time

# Speaking to the Motion (5)

- Remarks must be germane
- Presiding officer must never interrupt because he/she knows more about the matter than the speaker
- Presiding officer must step down if speaking during debate
- Maker of the motion may vote against it but he/she is not allowed to speak against his/her own motion
- Must avoid personalities and under no circumstances question the motives of another member



## Members Debate (5)

- **Amendments are in order – only 2 at a time**
  - Modify the wording and, within limits, often the meaning of the main motion
  - Exactly where change is to be made and precisely what words to use
  - Secondary amendments allowed (cannot be amended)
  - Must be germane
  - “Settled” Rule – has the issue under consideration been resolved?

# Put to Vote (6)

- The chair “puts” the question
  - “Are you ready for the question?”
  - “Is there any further debate?”
- Chair should repeat motion (restate question)
- Chair gives direction
  - Number of votes needed (simple majority, 2/3)
  - States effect of a yes or no vote
  - In favor vote aye, opposed say no



## Put to Vote (6)

- Ending debate
  - “I call the question” = Move the previous question
  - Presiding officer may not end debate on his/her own without first asking/checking if there is any further debate

# Members Vote (7)



- Votes can be taken in a variety of ways
  - Voice vote, roll call
- Ask for votes on both sides

# Result Announced (8)

- Presiding officer announces results
  - Motion carried or failed
  - Number of votes on each side, if known
  - Effect

# Rules of Decorum (Debate)

## Debate on the Question

- Members remarks must be germane to the question before the assembly
- Speakers must address their remarks to the chair, maintain a courteous tone, avoid injecting a personal tone into the debate
- Member has a right to speak twice in the same question
- Can speak no longer than 10 minutes in total

# Address the Chair

- Address all remarks through the chair – not the body, gallery or TV cameras
- Members cannot address one another directly
- Direct questions to other supervisors through the chair



# Avoid Use of Member's Names

- Presiding officer should not be referred to by name
- Presiding officer speaks of himself/herself in the third person
- Avoid mentioning another's name when the person can be described in another way

# Duties of the Chair



- All persons at a meeting have an obligation to obey the presiding officer
- Members using parliamentary procedure for obstructive purposes should not be recognized or ruled out of order
- Enforce the rules relating to debate, order and decorum
- Remind members to confine remarks to the merits of the question

## Duties of the Chair

- **Announces issues and keeps members on track**
- **Restates motion to place before the body and for clarity**
- **Recognizes members**
- **Asks for votes on each side and announces outcome**
- **Responds to requests and rules on points of order**

# Chair Speaking in Debate



- Presiding officer should relinquish the chair if entering the discussion
- Officer should not return until the pending question is disposed of
- Exception with small boards and committees

# Committee-Debate



General rule is to have motion first then discussion



In committee it is recognized and generally acceptable to have discussion first then a motion

# Committee-Debate

Members may raise a hand instead of standing when seeking the floor

Members may remain seated during debate and discussion

Informal discussion is permitted before a motion is pending

Members may generally speak as often and as long as they like, subject to the rule of the chair



# Committee Chair

- The chair may, without stepping down, discuss, debate and vote on all questions
- The chair need not rise when putting a motion to a vote



# Motions and Misconceptions



# Nominations

- Nominations are not necessary
  - Each member is free to vote for anyone eligible
- Need not be recognized by the chair
- May nominate yourself
- No second required
  - Sometimes done to show support
- No requirement to ask three times

# Elections

- Impropriety of limiting voting to the 2 leading candidates
  - Leading candidates may represent 2 different factions
    - division may be deepened
  - May unite members with compromise candidate
- Improper to remove nominee with lowest votes
  - Repeat balloting until you have a winner
  - Nominee with lowest number of votes could be a “dark horse” who all can agree on

# Motion to Lay on the Table



- Temporarily sets aside the matter with intent to take up later in the meeting
- Commonly misused in place of Postpone Indefinitely or Postpone to a Time Certain
- Adopting halts consideration without debate
- Such action violates the rights of the minority and individual members
- Is out of order if no other urgent matter

## Motion to Postpone

Motion by which pending action can be delayed

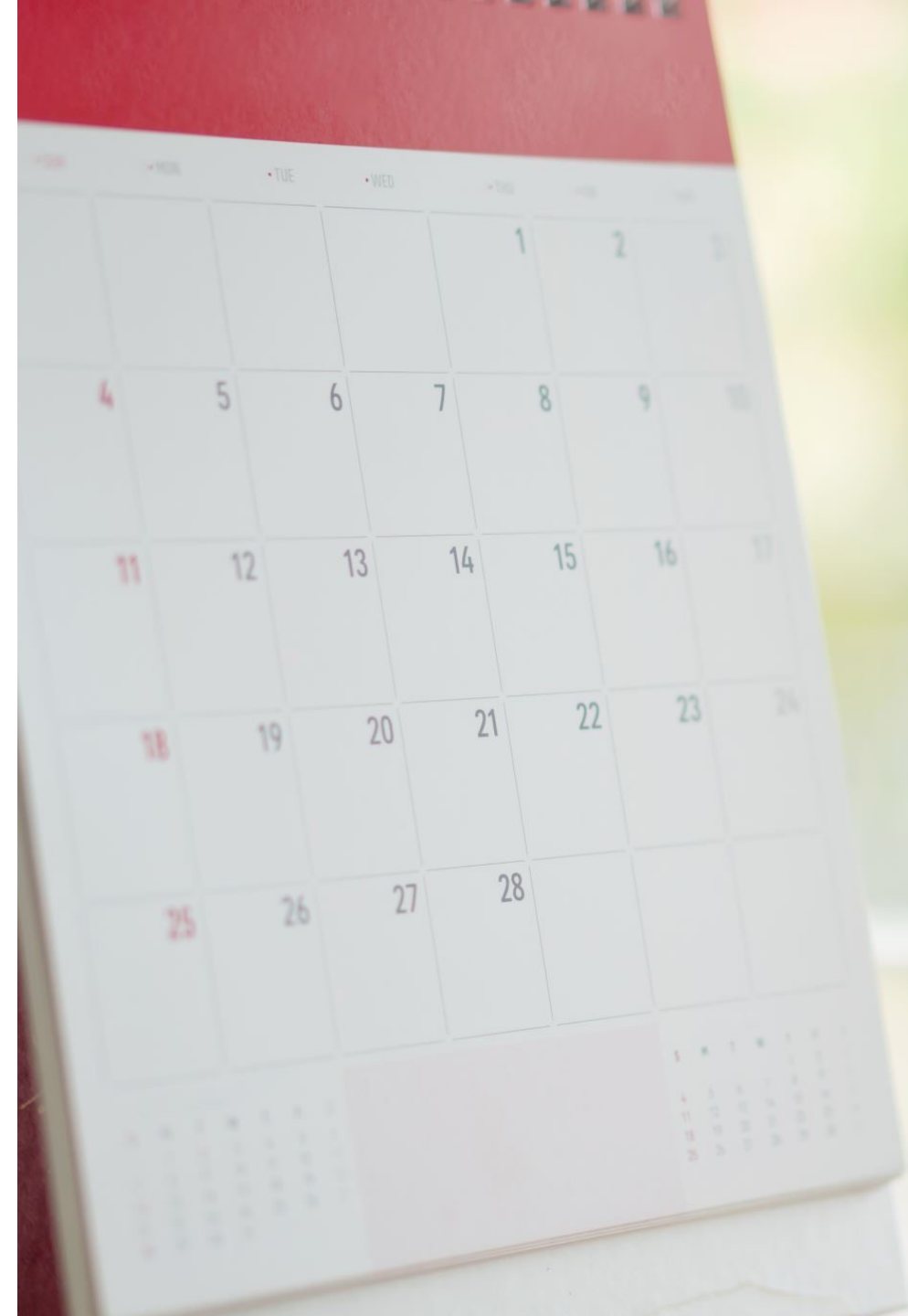
Must be to a time specific (time certain)

Definite day, meeting, hour or until after a certain event

Motion is debatable

Motion to just postpone is out of order

Role of the chair to clarify member's intent



# Motion to Postpone Indefinitely

- Motion used when the body declines to take a position
- Motion is debatable
- Adoption kills the motion
- Avoids a direct vote on the question
- Useful in disposing of a badly chosen main motion that cannot be either adopted or rejected without undesirable consequences

# Move the Previous Question



**Motion used to bring the assembly  
to an immediate vote - non-  
debatable**



**Requires 2/3 vote**



**Often mistaken for a “Call for the  
Question”**

No one person can close debate  
Not proper to shut off debate against the will of  
even one member who wishes to speak and has  
not exhausted his/her right to debate

# Motion to Adopt Entire Report

Seldom wise except when it is to be issued or published in the name of the organization

An affirmative vote has the effect of the body endorsing every word of the report

Expressions *adopt*, *accept* & *agree to* are all equivalent

A common error is to move that a report “be received” or “accepted” - implies that the body has endorsed the complete report

# Friendly Amendment

- Often used to describe an amendment offered by someone who is in sympathy with the purpose of the main motion
- Regardless of whether or not the maker of the main motion “accepts” the amendment it must be opened to debate and voted on (unless adopted by unanimous consent)
- Is handled under the same rules as amendments generally



# Point of Order

- Member states when he/she feels rules of the assembly are being violated
- Takes precedence over pending question
- In order when another has the floor
- Does not require a second
- Is not debatable
- Ruled upon by the chair

# Appeal the Ruling of the Chair

Any two members have the right to appeal from the ruling of the presiding officer – one makes the Appeal the other seconds

The question is taken from the chair and vested in the assembly

No member is allowed to speak more than once except the presiding officer who is not limited and need not leave the chair



# Some Advanced Concepts

# Five Types of Motions

- **Main Motions:** Introduce a unique, substantive proposal. A main motion which is not described in *Robert's Rules* is called an **Original Main Motion**.
- **Subsidiary Motions:** Assist the body in handling some other motion. A motion to amend the current motion is a subsidiary motion.
- **Privileged Motions:** Deal with immediately pressing questions that are not directly relevant to the motion being considered. For example, the motion to take a recess.
- **Incidental Motions:** Affect how the body considers the current motion, usually by enforcing or changing the rules of order. For example, the motion to suspend a rule is an incidental motion.
- **Restorative Motions:** Allow the body to reverse or reconsider the decision previously made on some other motion. For example, the motion to reconsider a main motion is a restorative motion.



# Subsidiary Motions

Subsidiary motions are secondary motions that help dispose of other motions during a meeting. There are seven subsidiary motions:

1. **Postpone Indefinitely:** This motion avoids uncomfortable decisions. Adopting this motion means that the body has agreed to not cast a vote on the motion to which this is applied. Requires a majority.
2. **Amend:** Amend is the most commonly used subsidiary motion. The motion to amend is used to offer a substantive change to the motion that is being considered. Requires a majority.

## Subsidiary Motions (cont.)

3. **Commit or Refer:** This motion sends a motion to a committee, special or standing. That way, the committee can research or take some action, and report back at a later meeting. Requires a majority.
4. **Previous Question:** The previous question is used to immediately end debate and vote on one or more of the motions being considered. Requires a two-thirds vote, since it affects the rights of members.

## Subsidiary Motions (cont.)

5. **Postpone Definitely:** This motion reschedules the consideration of the pending motion to another time during the present session or the next regular session. Requires a majority.
6. **Limit or Extend Limits of Debate:** This motion is used to change the amount of time members have to speak, the number of times they may speak, or to set a time to end debate. Requires a two-thirds vote.
7. **Lay On the Table:** This motion temporarily sets aside the pending motion in order to handle pressing business. If it is not taken from the table by the end of the next session, it dies. Requires a majority.

## Privileged Motions

Privileged motions are secondary motions that are used to address issues not directly related to the business or how it is conducted. There are five privileged motions:

1. **Call for Orders of the Day:** Used to keep the meeting on schedule with the meeting's agenda. This is required on demand of a single member. A two-thirds vote is required to reject this call.
2. **Raise a Question of Privilege:** Used when a member asks for consideration of a request or a motion relating to the rights of the body or some members. The chair rules whether it is a valid question of privilege, and if it is, either rules on the request or puts the motion before the body.





# Privileged Motions (cont.)

3. **Recess:** The motion to recess provides a short break in the proceedings. This allows the members to have some time to take care of personal business without disrupting the meeting. Requires a majority.
4. **Adjourn:** The motion to adjourn is a proposal to end the meeting. Requires a majority.
5. **Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn:** This motion sets the time for an adjourned meeting. This is used to schedule another meeting that is a continuation of the current one. Requires a majority.

# Incidental Motions

Incidental motions are motions that rise out of a current question at hand and must be taken care of before business can proceed. There are 15 incidental motions:

- 1. Point of Order:** A point of order is called when there is a breach of the rules and requires the issue be immediately considered. No vote is taken on this motion, the chair simply states the ruling .

# Incidental Motions (cont.)

2. **Appeal:** An appeal brings the chair's ruling into consideration by the Body. Majority required to overturn the chair's ruling.
3. **Suspend the Rules:** Used to temporarily set aside rules governing the body. Requires a two-thirds vote. This motion cannot be used to suspend any rules contained in ordinance.

# Incidental Motions (cont.)

4. **Objection to the Consideration of a Question:** Objecting to the consideration of the question is used to prevent an original main motion from being considered and discussed. Requires a two-thirds vote.
5. **Division of a Question:** This motion is used to separate one motion into two or more motions to be considered separately. It can only be applied to main motions or amendments. Requires a majority.

# Incidental Motions (cont.)

6. **Consider By Paragraph (Seriatim):**  
Used to separate a lengthy motion into parts for debate and vote on each piece separately before a vote on the whole.  
Requires a majority.
7. **Division of the Assembly:** Used to question the result of a voice vote. This is required on demand of a single member.

# Incidental Motions (cont.)

8. **Motions Related to Method of Voting and the Polls:** These motions are used to propose a vote be taken by ballot, roll call, or counted standing vote. It also includes motions to open or close ballot polls. These typically require majority votes, but there are a few special cases that require two-thirds votes.
9. **Motions Related to Nominations:** These motions designate a method for taking nominations or open or close nominations. These typically require majority votes, but there are a few special cases that require two-thirds votes.

# Incidental Motions (cont.)

10. **Request to Be Excused from a Duty:** A member may make this motion to shed oneself, or another member, of a compulsory obligation of membership or office. Requires a majority.
11. **Parliamentary Inquiry:** Used to pose a question about parliamentary rules. There is no vote as the chair answers the question or refers it to another member.

## Incidental Motions (cont.)

- 12. Point of Information/Request for Information:** Used by a member wanting information about the pending motion. There is no vote, the chair answers the question or refers it to another member.
- 13. Request for Permission to Withdraw or Modify a Motion:** This is used by the maker of a motion to withdraw or change a motion. If it has already been stated by the chair, a majority is required. If it has not yet been stated, the maker can withdraw or change their motion without permission.



## Incidental Motions (cont.)

- 14. Request to Read Papers:** This motion is a request to read something to the body. Requires a majority.
- 15. Request for Other Privilege:** Used to make any request not defined by another incidental motion, such as a member requesting to speak or make remarks when no business is pending. Requires a majority.

# Restorative Motions

Restorative motions are motions made to bring a motion back into consideration or change the decision, usually as a result of the body changing its mind on the matter or new information being available. There are five (5) restorative motions:

# Restorative Motions (cont.)

1. **Rescind:** Also known as repeal, this motion is used to nullify an adopted resolution, motion, section, or paragraph. Requires a majority with previous notice, or a two-thirds vote. (OML considerations...)
2. **Amend Something Previously Adopted:** This motion is similar to rescind, except it amends the adopted motion rather than nullifying it. Requires a majority with previous notice, or a two-thirds vote. (OML considerations...)

# Restorative Motions (cont.)

3. **Reconsider:** This motion allows the body to bring back into consideration a motion previously voted on, during the same session. This can only be made by someone who voted on the winning side of the original motion. Requires a majority.
4. **Take from the Table:** This motion is used to bring a motion previously laid on the table back into consideration. Requires a majority.
5. **Discharge a Committee:** This motion proposes to take a matter out of a committee's hands and allows the body to deal with the motion. Requires a majority with previous notice, or a two-thirds vote. (OML considerations...)

# We have to stop meeting this way



- Ukrainian Parliament-April 26, 2010  
Source: nytimes.com “Ukraine Passes Deal Under Hail of Eggs”



Questions? Comments?

# Contact Information



**Attolles Law, s.c.**

**222 E. Erie Street, Suite 210**

**Milwaukee, WI 53202**

**414-279-0962**

**[www.attolles.com](http://www.attolles.com)**

**ATTOLLES**  
**LAW, s.c.**