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Basic Parliamentary Procedure for 4-H Clubs

Donna Carter, 4-H Extension Agent

The 4-H club model provides an excellent forum for youths to experience, practice, and effectively use life skills that will allow them to be successful in living productive and satisfying lives. Leading or participating in a club business meeting gives members an opportunity to plan, evaluate, discuss ideas, and set goals—all important life skills. However, for these skills to be gained, the club leader needs to foster an inclusive environment, where all members have a voice in their club and adult leaders support members in choosing, rather than dictating, the club's direction.

Parliamentary procedure provides a framework that encourages all members to have an equal voice in their club. Robert's Rules of Order is the standard reference for business meetings and is commonly used in both small and large organizations. Taken to the extreme, strict adherence to Robert's Rules of Order in a 4-H club setting can be used more as a tool to intimidate and silence those less skilled in its use. However, at its most fundamental level, parliamentary procedure is a valuable resource to ensure each member has a say and to make certain the meeting is conducted efficiently.

Responses from surveys conducted in 2004 and 2007 indicated that most Salt Lake and Weber County 4-H clubs did not conduct club business meetings, and consequently missed a key opportunity to help children develop important life skills. One common reason cited was that club leaders had not been trained on how to lead a club business meeting.

The following fill-in-the-blank meeting script has been used extensively by the author to teach club members and their adult leaders the basic steps in conducting a club business meeting. Equipped with this easy to use script, and following basic orientation for the club as a whole, most youth officers become quite adept in conducting a business meeting in just a few sessions. Keep in mind that the business meeting should be short and appropriate for the age of the club members (10 to 15 minutes is typical). Also keep in mind that fostering youth involvement in the decision making process is much more important than strictly adhering to proper parliamentary procedure language and format.

Basic Parliamentary Procedure Terms

Agenda	<p>The order of the business meeting. The typical order for a 4-H meeting is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call to Order • Pledges • Welcome Guests • Roll Call • Minutes • Treasurer’s Report • Committee Reports • Old Business • New Business • Announcements • Adjourn Business Meeting • Educational Program or Project Experience • Social Time (Songs, Games and/or Refreshments)
Aye	When a vote is called, the members who agree with the motion will say, “Aye.”
Floor	Only one person is allowed to speak at a time during the meeting. The person who has been given permission to speak by the presiding officer “has the floor” or the right to speak. To obtain the floor, a member raises their hand and the presiding officer will call on that member.
Majority	One more than half of the voting members. This is the minimum number of votes needed to pass most motions.
Motion	A suggestion that a member wants the group to consider. A motion is stated in the form, “I move that ...”
Nay	When a vote is called, the members who disagree with the motion will say, “Nay.”
Parliamentary Procedure	A set of guidelines that describes the proper way to conduct a business meeting.
Presiding Officer	The person in charge of conducting the business meeting, typically the president or the chairperson.
Second	Once a motion has been made, the president will ask for a “second.” This is like asking if there is another member who agrees that the group should consider the suggestion. To second a motion a member will say, “I second that motion” or “Second.”

A motion is an idea or a suggestion that a member or committee wants the group to consider. In most instances, there are five steps in bringing a motion to the floor and having it voted upon by the group.

Five Steps of a Motion		
Steps	Who Speaks After being recognized by the presiding officer.	What Is Said In this example the club is considering participating in a parade.
1. A member makes a motion.	Any Member	“I move that our club enters a float in this year’s Thanksgiving parade.”
2. Another member seconds that motion.	Any Other Member	“I second that motion.”
3. The presiding officer states the motion and it is discussed.	Presiding Officer	“It has been moved and properly seconded that our club enters a float in this year’s Thanksgiving parade. Is there any discussion?”
	Member 1	“I think this would be a great way to promote 4-H.”
	Member 2	“In the past my grandfather has been willing to let our club use his trailer for the float. I would be willing to ask him again.”
	Member 3	“We still have lots of supplies left over from last year’s float, so it would not cost a lot of money to make a float.”
	Member 4	“I don’t think we have enough time to get a float ready for the parade.”
	Presiding Officer	“Is there any further discussion?”
4. A vote is taken. A voice vote is most commonly used; however, a vote can also be taken by a show of hands, standing up, or by ballot.	Presiding Officer	“All in favor say ‘Aye’. All opposed say ‘Nay’.”
5. The outcome is announced.	Presiding Officer	“The motion carries. Our club will enter a float in this year’s Thanksgiving parade.”

Teaching youth officers to lead a business meeting is quite easy by providing them with a basic script that explains what to say and what to do, such as the one below.

Sample Business Meeting Script for a 4-H Club	
CALL TO ORDER	
President	<i>Taps gavel.</i> “The meeting of the _____ 4-H Club will please come to order.”
PLEDGES	
President	“Will _____ and _____ please come forward and lead us in our Pledge of Allegiance and 4-H Pledge?” <i>The president asks two members to lead pledges before the meeting begins.</i>
Any Member	“Please stand and join me in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.” <i>Member leads pledge.</i>
Any Member	“Please remain standing and join me in reciting the 4-H Pledge.” <i>Member leads 4-H Pledge.</i> “You may be seated.”
INTRODUCE NEW MEMBERS/GUESTS	
Vice President (or other officer assigned this responsibility)	“We are pleased to introduce _____ who is a (<i>new member, guest, etc.</i>) to our club. Thank you for joining us.” <i>It would be great for the vice president to meet any new members or guests prior to the meeting and learn a little bit of information about them to make their introduction to the group more special.</i>
ROLL CALL	
President	“The secretary will now call roll.”
Secretary	<i>Calls roll and records attendance.</i>
READING OF THE MINUTES	
President	“The secretary will read the minutes of the last meeting.”
Secretary	<i>Reads the minutes from the last meeting.</i>
President	“Are there any corrections or additions to the minutes?” <i>PAUSE. If a member notices a mistake, the member will raise his hand. When called on by the president, he or she will explain the mistake.</i> <u>IF CORRECTIONS:</u> “The secretary will please make the correction. Are there any other corrections or additions?” <i>PAUSE.</i> “If not, the

	minutes stand approved as corrected.” <u>IF NO CORRECTIONS:</u> “If not, the minutes stand approved as read.”
TREASURER’S REPORT	
President	“Will the treasurer give the treasurer’s report?”
Treasurer	<i>Reports on the balance on hand and explains any money paid out or received since the last club business meeting.</i>
President	“Are there any questions regarding the treasurer's report?” <i>PAUSE. If a member has a question about the report, he or she will raise his/her hand, and when recognized by the president, will ask the question.</i> <u>If questions:</u> <i>The treasurer will answer any questions about the report. After all questions have been answered say, “If there are no further questions, the treasurer’s report will be filed for audit.”</i> <u>If no questions:</u> “If not, the treasurer’s report will be filed for audit.”
COMMITTEE REPORTS	
Committee Chairperson	<i>Committees are small groups that have been appointed or elected to discuss or investigate a specific topic and make a recommendation to the group. Some of the committees your 4-H club might have are: activity committee, community service committee, fund raising committee, parade committee, etc. Committee chairman should report back to the club to inform them of what their committee has been working on and their suggestions for the club. The club may have to vote on something that the committee suggests.</i>
OLD BUSINESS	
President	<i>As the agenda is prepared before the meeting, the president will refer to the minutes of the last meeting to list unfinished business, which is business that was discussed at a previous meeting that still has unfinished details or decisions to be made.</i> “Our first item of unfinished business is...” <i>The president, leader, or another member will help lead the discussion about each business item. Who will lead the discussion is generally identified on the agenda.</i>

NEW BUSINESS	
President	<i>As the agenda is prepared before the meeting, the president or leader will identify new issues for the club to discuss.</i> <i>“Our first item of new business is...” The president, leader or another member will help lead the discussion about each business item. Who will lead the discussion is generally identified on the agenda. If a decision needs to be made for any business item, the president will accept a motion from the floor and a vote will be held.</i>
President	<i>After all listed new business listed on the agenda has been discussed, “Is there any other new business to bring before the club?”</i>
Any Member	<i>After receiving the floor from the president, any member may bring up new business. If the business requires a decision to be made, the member will say, “I move that...”</i>
President	<i>“Is there a second to this motion?”</i>
Any Member	<i>“I second that motion.”</i>
President	<i>“The motion has been made and properly seconded to _____. Is there any discussion?”</i>
Any Member	<i>Any member may raise their hand and share their views about the issue when the president calls on them.</i>
President	<i>“If there is no further discussion, then we will vote. All in favor say ‘Aye.’ All opposed ‘Nay’.” The motion carries (or fails depending of the vote).”</i>
ANNOUNCEMENTS	
President	<i>Your club leader may prepare a list of announcements or prepare a take-home list for each member with important dates and reminders.</i> <i>“Here is a list of announcements and reminders” or “Are there any announcements?”</i>
Any Member	<i>After receiving the floor from the president, any member or leader may make announcements.</i>
ADJOURNMENT OF BUSINESS MEETING	
President	<i>“If there is no further business, is there a motion that we adjourn the business meeting?”</i>

Any Member	<i>Raises hand. After receiving the floor from the president the member will say, "I move that this meeting be adjourned." This particular motion does not need a second.</i>
President	"This meeting is adjourned."

This concludes the business portion of the 4-H club meeting, which is typically followed by educational activities, then social activities and refreshments. By incorporating a youth led business meeting into each 4-H club meeting and equipping members with the basic skills needed to actively participate in making decisions, children gain valuable life skills. They learn to plan and make sound decisions, improve their public speaking skills, and take greater ownership of their club.

Resources:

Hendricks, Patricia A. (1996). *Developing Youth Curriculum Using the Targeting Life Skills Model*. Iowa State University Extension.
 Robert III, Henry M. (2000). *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 10th edition.

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