



Bylaws

While you have been busy setting up programs and projects for this club year, it is also really important to examine your bylaws. The bylaws are the cornerstone of your organization and without clear bylaws, you can often run into problems. If you have recently changed the way you do things, changed officer or chairman titles and/or responsibilities, added new positions in the organization, and/or have not reviewed your bylaws in the last two years or so, it's time to do so now.

According to Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, bylaws are the most important rules which an organization must compose for itself. The bylaws should protect the right of a member, present or absent, and must include what control those attending a regular or specially called meeting have to act for the entire membership. If you have a Board of Directors and/or an Executive Committee, their responsibilities and duties must be stated.

Choose a bylaws committee and a chairman. Generally, the committee should be large. The members on this committee should be those members who are most fair, who can see two sides to every question, and who are flexible in their thinking. You will also need at least one person who is capable of writing in the manner of your current bylaws. If you have a qualified parliamentarian, it may be helpful to have her on the committee or to use her as a resource.

The first step is to read the entire bylaws. By doing this, you may see conflicting statements or the same statements in two different places. This should be changed. Do the bylaws reflect your organization as it currently operates? Are only the most important rules included? Don't forget, less important rules can be part of the Standing Rules. Standing Rules are related to details, rather than parliamentary procedure and can be changed at any meeting by a majority vote. Things like meeting time, hostess duties, or the order of business at a meeting belong in Standing Rules.

Things that belong in bylaws, but are often left out:

- *The amount of dues and any other required financial obligation. By having this in the bylaws, the entire membership would have to vote to change it.

- *The number of members that constitute a quorum. While Robert's Rules allows such designations as "majority of members", this chairman recommends a numeral be used. If you have lost and/or gained members, and want to start your meeting, it may be confusing or inaccurate to try to figure out if you have a majority or some percentage of your members present. If you use a numeral, such as 24, all you have to do is count. A rule of thumb when deciding on the correct number for a quorum is to figure out how many members you usually have at a meeting, except in bad weather. Then subtract a few and that can be your quorum. You want a relatively small number.

- *The procedure to be followed in case of the resignation or loss of an officer.

- *How and when special committees are created

- *How/if/when a meeting can be conducted electronically.

Once the amendments to the bylaws have been written up by the committee (and approved by the Board of Directors or Executive Committee if that is the procedure in your organization), then every member must receive a written copy of the proposed amendments with time to read them before a vote is taken. Generally, the written copies are distributed the month before they are voted on., but you may have a different procedure in your current bylaws. A two-thirds affirmative vote by those present and voting is needed to accept an amendment.

Please contact this chairman with any questions you may have.

Deen Meloro

djm808@mac.com

201/314-9083