

# PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE: HOW MEETINGS ARE CONDUCTED

Advisory Council to the Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging

**Parliamentary procedure** describes the way we reach group decisions. The rules allow orderly deliberation of issues and recognition of the will of the majority. Meetings of the Advisory Council to the Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging are conducted in accordance with:

- **Robert's Rules of Order**, a widely used manual on parliamentary procedure, and
- **The Brown Act**, a California "sunshine" law that guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies.

## ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER

A **quorum** is required in order to conduct substantive business in Council or standing committee meetings. The Advisory Council defines a quorum as a majority of the current membership.

The **Chairperson** ("Chair"):

- Presides at meetings, enforces rules and designates who is to speak at any given time.
- Those desiring to speak must wait to be recognized by the Chair.
- Facilitates meetings in a manner that allows for the presentation of diverse points of view.
- Ensures that Council members and other meeting attendees stay on topic and that issues on the agenda are addressed in a timely fashion.

Making group decisions:

- **Motion**: a proposal to take action. "I move that \_\_\_\_\_."
- A Motion requires a "Second," to confirm that more than one person is interested. An amendment to a motion requires another second.
- **Debate**: after a motion is seconded, it is "on the floor" to be considered by the Council. The Chair asks, "Is there any discussion?" Members address comments to the Chair.
- **Vote**: after debate, the Chair restates the motion (or asks that the Minutes be read by Staff) and asks for a vote by raised hand. Members can vote yes, no, or abstain (decline to take a position). The Chair declares whether the motion is "carried" or "lost."
- Meeting minutes should reflect the exact wording of the motion and the results of the vote.

## THE BROWN ACT

California's Ralph M. Brown Act ("The Brown Act") requires public councils to make decisions openly with an opportunity for public input.

Meetings of the Advisory Council and its standing committees are open to the public. At least 72 hours before a regular meeting, AAA staff post an agenda on the AAA website and in a place freely accessible to the public.

Agendas:

- Contain a brief general description of each item of business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting.
- Specify the time and location of the meeting.
- Include a time for public comment.

Council action and discussion are limited to items on the agenda.

A quorum of Council members may not discuss Council business with each other outside of an open and public meeting. This means:

- Do not "reply all" to an email that was sent to all Council members.
- Do not have serial conversations with other Council members that result in a quorum coming to consensus outside of a meeting.

Additional information about parliamentary procedure is available from AAA staff or the Council Chair.