

# ***Robert's Rules & Responsible Governance***



**By Eli Mina, M.Sc., P.R.P.  
Registered Parliamentarian**

## **Brief Introduction for Eli Mina:**

**Name (Variations?)**

**Occupation (Parliamentarian, Chair)**

**Clients (LG's., BOE's, FN's, Unions, NPOs)**

**Also introducing:**

**RONR12**

**Henry, Burke, two Daniels, Shmuel**

**NAP, AIP**

**Greeted with enthusiasm?**

**Councillor Charlie's request**

**Janitor Jim's comment**

***"A loud voice is not a pre-requisite"***

***You've got a friend..., 'The Process' is its name...***

- a. The process is *'Your Best Friend'*
- b. Learn how the process works and follow it, willingly
- c. Ensure others know the process and follow it, willingly
- d. When the process is broken, defend it
- e. If you defend the process, **it will defend you...**

# Agenda

Robert's Rules and the Common Sense Factor

Fundamental rules for debates (The “**OFEEDS**” acronym)

Motions, Amendments, Parliamentary Myths

Shared Decision Making: Goals, Challenges

- a. Handout package, Robert's Rules, Boardroom Problems book
- b. Timing, question periods
- c. Your internal advisor on meeting procedures is \_\_\_\_\_
- d. *Is the agenda acceptable? Any objections?*

# Unanimous Consent **(Handout p. 3)**

- a. Routine, Non-Controversial Decisions
- b. Agenda Approval & Changes
- c. Time management
- d. `Friendly' amendments

***What if there are objections?***

# Introduction

- a. How a parliamentary business was born
- b. RONR and the Registration Exam
- c. NAP Convention & *'parliamentary dizziness'*
- d. *'If the only tool you have is \_\_ everything will look like \_\_'*
- e. **Let us look at two key phrases from Robert's Rules...**



RONR12 p. 427, 47:6: “... *any presiding officer will do well to bear in mind that no rules can take the place of tact and common sense on the part of the chair...*”

RONR12 page 236, 23:4: *“In ordinary meetings it is undesirable to raise points of order on minor irregularities of a purely technical character, if it is clear that no one’s rights are being infringed upon and no real harm is being done to the proper transaction of business.”*

**Examples:** *Minor digressions, tabling versus postponing, as opposed to personal attacks, toxic meeting environment*

**Let us Discuss  
the Common Sense Factor**

# *Common Sense Meeting Goals*

- a. Engagement (**level playing field**)
- b. Sensible use of time (**per issue, per person**)
- c. Informed decision making (**advance notices, no surprises**)

# *Common Sense Governance*

- a. Entrusted to Govern: from an advocate to a learner
- b. Being trust-worthy, judicious, impartial, humble
- c. It's about today's children (our future citizens & leaders)
- d. They need wisdom & tools to cope with a complex reality
- e. Broad focus v. single issue or constituency advocacy?
- f. The **TWO-HATS** dilemma

# The Two Hats Model (Handout page 9)



**Bring Constituency Input**



**Share Constituency Input**



**Listen and Learn**



**Vote**



**Inform**



# *Is Common Sense Present?*

- a. A Mayor's media interview (*T.E.A.M.*)
- b. *'Getting re-elected'* theme versus \_\_\_\_\_?
- c. Is the playing field truly level (*New Member's question*)?
- d. Open mind (v. *pre-meeting promises?*)... *a strange story?*

## ***Is Common Sense Present?*** (continued)

- a. A motion on the fly (***“I’ll move it...”***), **Staff impacts**
- b. What’s the process for reconsidering a motion?
- c. *“Don’t sit next to me nor write our motions for us...”*
- d. *“Learn the rules and you’ll get the vote...”*
- e. **Rights** versus **responsibilities**



# Member's Rights

(RONR12 25:11, *Entitlement focus*)

- a. Attend a Meeting
- b. Make Motions (low bar for new business? RONR 41:27)
- c. Debate Motions
- d. Vote (low bar for pecuniary interest? RONR 45:4)

***Does the community have rights?***

# Is the Community Entitled to:

- a. Thoughtful, informed votes?
- b. Decisions that optimize opportunities?
- c. Decisions that minimize risk and liability?
- d. Everyone working to maximize capacity (no acrimony)?

*Are the above `rights' referred to in parliamentary manuals?*

*Can **a community** raise **points of order** about `breaches'?*

***If not**, are members duty-bound to help?*

# Duties of Members

## *Cultural Shift: From WIIFM to WIIFT*

- a. Review meeting material and be fully prepared
- b. Arrive on time and be there fully, in body and in spirit
- c. Help make meetings **efficient** and **effective**
- d. **Listen and learn** from debates (**open minds**)
- e. Be prepared to share dissenting views, if needed

*These duties are not referred to in rule books...*

*Question: Will you perform them anyway?*

**Questions?**

# Three Important Themes

- a. You're under the Public Microscope, 24/7
- b. The Process is *'Your Best Friend'*; Defend it !!
- c. Consider 'the Math'

# Theme 1: The Public Microscope

- a. A hug before a hearing (**contentious issue**)
- b. Frowns, eye-rolling
- c. Texting, emailing during a meeting
- d. Nepotism?

# Theme 2: “Defending the Process”

- a. The process is *‘Your Best Friend’*
- b. Learn how the process works and follow it, willingly
- c. Ensure others know the process and follow it, willingly
- d. When the process is broken, defend it
- e. If you defend the process, **it will defend you...**

**Example:** From 7 to 14 ‘Trustees’... Who must say **no**?

**Example:** The **green banana** story (two versions)

# Theme 3: It's About the Math

- a. The number FOUR
- b. Math of Intellectual Capacity (time limits enforced?)
- c. Rambling citizen or **invited** guest speaker
- d. Extra meetings OK? Impacts on potential candidates?
- e. Public insults of internal or external experts **or citizens**



**Questions?**

# *Having fun with Numbers*

- a. Do we need '50% plus one' to adopt a motion?
- b. Does a tie vote mean we're stuck?
- c. Can the Chair only vote if there is a tie?
- d. Can I abstain if I don't know enough about an issue?  
**Options:** seek needed info, propose delay, vote **NO**
- e. Is it OK to rush a vote? (*'Pay me a little now, or \_\_\_\_\_'*)
- f. Are we being bullied? (**12 v. 3**)

# *Truth or Myth?*

- a. Must the Chair be **vacated** in order to debate an issue?
- b. Can a motion be changed only with a mover's consent?
- c. Is it your role to do your own research or draft policies?
- d. Is it rude to share feedback? (*Talk about...* v. *talk to...*)

**Questions?**

# Scenarios to Consider

## Group 1:

A Committee is like a `social club': jovial, loose, often no quorum.

## Group 2:

30 motions are dealt with over 1 hour by dedicating 2 minutes to each.

## Group 3:

A Member is quiet, then she is the only one who votes no.

*Is there a procedural issue here? Common sense issue? Remedy?*

**Time for  
a Break**

## **Part 2:**

# **The OFEEDS Acronym & Meeting Procedures**

# Story: What to do about \_\_\_\_?

1. Talking about them v. Talking to them?
2. A `bad person' or a weak system?



*Have you ever witnessed  
important rules being broken  
in a meeting, such as...*

# Typical Meeting Problems

- a. Mid sentence interruptions?
- b. Off topic remarks?
- c. Rambling? Too much time spent on an item?
- d. Domination?
- e. Personal attacks?
- f. Toxic environment?

*So, what can be done about these problems and by whom?*

*“If things go badly in a meeting,  
we have no option but to suffer,  
and then we can blame the \_\_\_\_\_  
for not enforcing the rules.....”*

**Right?**

*1. Suffering is Optional...*

*2. Finger pointing (1 v. 3)?*

*3. Everyone `defends the process`*

# Defending the Process

- a. The process is *'Your Best Friend'*
- b. Learn how the process works and follow it, willingly
- c. Ensure others know the process and follow it, willingly
- d. When the process is broken, defend it
- e. If you defend the process, **it will defend you...**

*How can a Chair or a Member defend the Process?*

*Raise a Point of Order (see later)*

.

*So what is the process  
to debate issues and  
have tough conversations?*

# The OFEEDS Formula

(Handout Package page 2)

**O**der

**F**ocus: on current agenda item, on core mandate

**E**fficiency: per agenda item, per person

**E**quality: for fairness & informed voting

**D**ecorum

**S**afe Meeting Environment

# Implementing the `OFEEDS`

- a. Cheat sheet (handout package **page 6**).
- b. Cue cards.
- c. Stories: Messy meetings, “*I need your help*”.
- d. Stories: Value of feedback (`**Side Talk?**`).
- e. Stories: Value of public education, pre-meeting argument.
- f. Raising points of order.



# Raising a Point of Order

- a. The Chair or a Member interrupts another Member
- b. The interrupted member stops talking
- c. The procedural concern is stated
- d. The concern is addressed

*Why is it hard to raise needed points of order?*

*Is the quest for **perfection** advisable?*

## **A caution about raising Points of Order:**

*RONR12 23:4: “In ordinary meetings it is undesirable to raise points of order on minor irregularities of a purely technical character, if it is clear that no one’s rights are being infringed upon and no real harm is being done to the proper transaction of business.”*

*A minor digression versus indecorum or a toxic environment...*

# Time Wasting Habits

- a. Rambling, going in circles (“*I must match him/her*”).
- b. Rebuttals (*YES, BUT... Can shut down input*)
- c. Motions on the fly (*no staff input*)
- d. Motions to receive a letter or report: *Required? Voting no?*
- e. Public delegations not timed (*‘They are our bosses...’*)
- f. No allocation of time for agenda items (*monitoring?*).
- g. Questions (?) with long preambles (*complimentary? scolding?*)

# A Clearly Flowing Comment

- a. A `sandwich' approach: Clear, well flowing, **brief**.
- b. *`Tell them what you'll tell them, tell them, conclude.'*
- c. For example, the **P.R.E.P.** Formula:
  1. My **P**oint of view is \_\_\_\_\_. Let me tell you why.
  2. My first **R**eason is \_\_\_\_\_. An **E**xample is \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. My second **R**eason is \_\_\_\_\_. An **E**xample is \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. Therefore, my **P**oint of view is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Questions?**

# Scenarios to Consider

## Group 1:

A Member prefaces a question to an outside presenter or a citizen with an insulting comment.

## Group 2:

A Member is super argumentative, persistent and unwavering ('Yes, *BUT*'), always has supplemental questions. Meetings run late because of it.

## Group 3:

A Chair is very nice and always tries to accommodate dissenters, strongly encouraging unanimity.

**What's the potential damage? How would you intervene?**

**Break**

**Part 3:**  
**Motions,**  
**Amendments,**  
**Voting Issues**



# Main Motions

(RONR12 Sections 4, 10, Handout page 4)

- a. Main Motion = A formal proposal to take action
- b. Should be concise, unambiguous, complete, **written**
- c. Notices of motion are preferable (**RONR low bar, 41:27**)
- d. Input from staff and professional advisors is important
- e. OK for have informal discussion? (**RONR `frowns', 4:7**)

# 6 Steps for Processing Motions

1. A Member is recognized and says: “*I move that \_\_\_\_.*”

2. Another Member seconds the motion: “*Second!*”



3. Chair States the motion (if it is clear and in order)



4. Debate, amendments

5. When debate ends, the Chair takes a vote

6. Chair announces the result

# Processing Amendments

(RONR12 Section 12, Handout page 5)

**Main Motion:** *“To hold an awards reception in February”*

**Amendment:** *“I move to add `with spouses included.’”*

The amendment is debated and voted on **first**.

# Processing Amendments (Continued)

**Chair:** *“The amendment is adopted. The Main motion reads:  
‘To hold an awards reception in February with Spouses Included.’ “*

**Or:**

**Chair:** *“The amendment is defeated. We are back to the  
original main motion ‘To hold an awards reception in February.’ “*

*“Is there any further debate on the main motion?”*

# Multiple Level Amendments

**Main Motion:** *“To hold an awards reception in December”*

**Primary amendment:** *“To add **with spouses included.**”*

**Secondary amendment:** *“To insert **or significant others’** between **spouses’** and **included.’**”*

The **secondary amendment** is debated and voted on **first**.

The **primary amendment** is debated and voted on **next**.

Then we’re back to the **main motion (Hurray!!)**.

# General Procedural Tips (as per RONR12)

- a. Unanimous consent for `friendly amendments' (12:91)
- b. On small Boards, RONR does not require seconding (49:21)
- c. A motion to receive a report is not needed (51:15)
- d. A motion that needs work can be **referred** (Sec. 13)
- e. Non-urgent decisions can be **postponed** (Sec. 14)

# Parliamentary Myths

- a. Does a mover own the motion? **For a limited time**
- b. Must a mover vote in favor of their motion? **No**
- c. Must a mover speak in favor of their motion? **??**
- d. Is a seconder required to support the motion? **No**
- e. Does the Chair only vote to break a tie? **Not unless...**
- f. Is it Ok for the Chair to debate a motion? **Yes, BUT**
- g. Majority: Is it '50% plus 1'? **No**

# Parliamentary Myths (continued)

- h. How are abstentions counted? **It depends**
- i. Can I call 'point of order' if I disagree with someone? **No**
- j. Once I get the floor, can I talk with no limits? **No**
- k. Does calling 'question' end the debate? **Not quite**
- l. Is there a right to 'set the record straight'? **Not really**
- m. Can my comments be included in the minutes? **No**
- n. Can a decision be changed by altering the minutes? **No**



**Questions?**

**Part 4:**

**Shared Decision Making  
(The `Jigsaw Puzzle`)**

# Let's go Through some Decision Making Myths

**(Handout package page 10)**

# Have you Ever Gotten M.A.D.?

a. M

b. A

c. D

# Have you Ever Gotten M.A.D.?

.  
a. Monarchy

b. A

c. D

# Have you Ever Gotten M.A.D.?

•  
a. Monarchy

b. Anarchy

c. D

# Have you Ever Gotten M.A.D.?

- a. Monarchy
- b. Anarchy
- c. Democracy

# Board Decision Making: Goals

## Substantive Goals:

Judicious, Thoughtful, Informed Decisions

Optimizing Benefits, Minimizing Risks

## Process Goals:

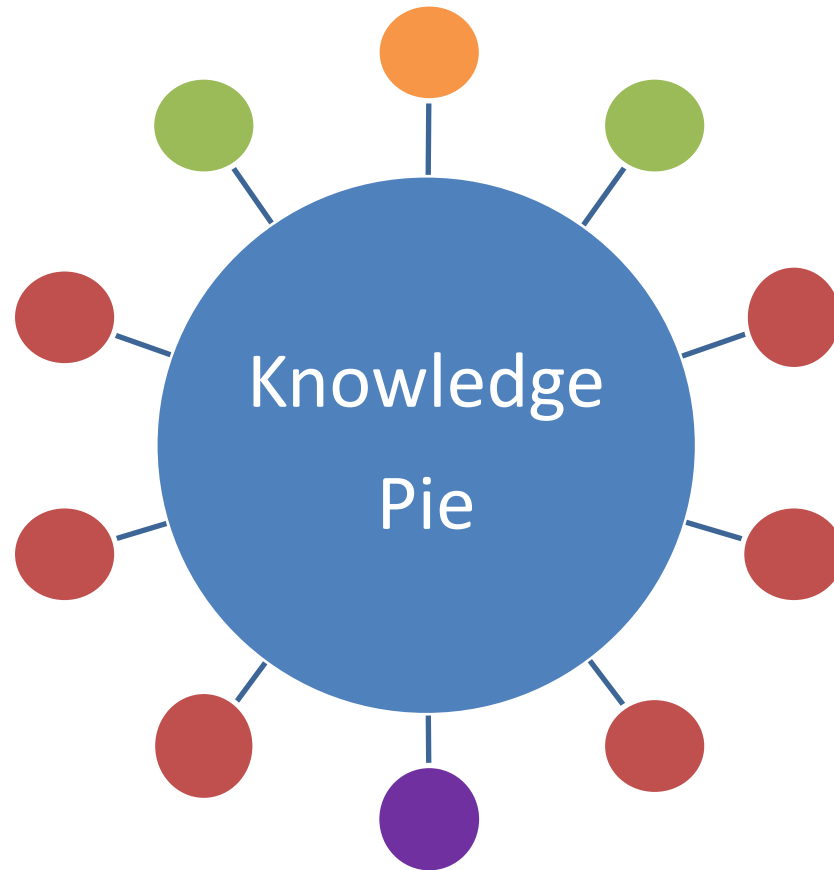
Participants: Engagement of Brainpower (**A Jigsaw Puzzle**)

Timing: Comfortable pace, not too quick nor too slow



**Safe learning environment**

**Knowledge based decisions**



# The Jigsaw Puzzle Analogy

How Does it Work?

A constructive or combative process (**Yes, but !!**)?

Does it matter where the puzzle pieces come from?

Is newness an Issue? (**Learn quickly, participate fully**)

# Typical Boardroom Problems

Silence: Is it `golden`?

Boss's presence causes anxiety?

An overly enthusiastic group? (investment story)

*“Is it OK for me to ask her to speak up?”*

# More Boardroom Problems

No preparation: Too much trust? 1000 pages?

Defensive presenter or subject matter expert

A rush at the end of the meeting

Electronic distractions: texts, emails, social media

*“Playing field is not level”* (access to information)

**The two-hats dilemma**

# The Two Hats Model (Handout page 9)



**Bring Constituency Input**



**Share Constituency Input**



**Listen and Learn**



**Vote**



**Inform**



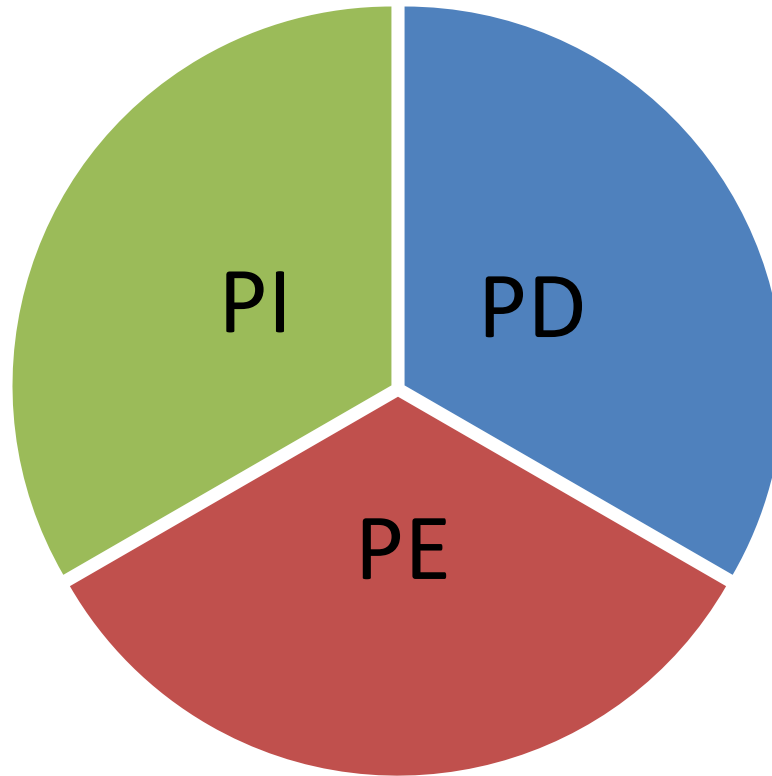
# Two-Hats Examples

- a. NPO: *“My hands are tied”*
- b. Regional Board v. Municipality
- c. `Advocate for special needs children’
- d. Proposed school closure in a certain ward

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***Questions on the  
Two-Hats Dilemma?***

# Three Part Knowledge Pie





# Fundamental Premises

It is important that all elected members cast thoughtful, judicious, and fully informed votes.

# Fundamental Premises

It is not acceptable to suppress  
valid and relevant input...

# Fundamental Premises

It is not acceptable to suppress valid and relevant input,  
even when it may threaten your  
desired outcome of a vote.

# Elected Officials Interactions with Management

Cross-examining the 'hostile witness'

Chair's order: Sit away from me; No staff-written motions

4 to 3, research done, but not used (pre-made decision)

Elected members doing research? Writing technical docs?

Privately requesting research (level playing field?)

# Management's Interactions with Elected Officials

Sanitized or diluted report; Blocking valid options

Private briefings with an assertive Board Member

Arguing with elected officials on policy matters

Talking **about** them (*'Feedback/Complaints are Gifts'*)

Minutes: How much is too much?

# Pledges and Requests

**Pledges:** “I pledge to embrace these habits \_\_\_\_\_,  
and abandon these habits \_\_\_\_\_:”

**Requests:** “\_\_\_\_\_ can help me by embracing these  
habits \_\_\_\_\_, and abandoning these habits \_\_\_\_\_:”

Talk **to** people instead of talking **about** them...

# Interactions with the Public

Fluff?

Off line promises?

Length of presentations enforced?

Heckling and clapping `normal`?

Social media engagement

Being bullied (`**Green Banana**', **two versions**)?

# Community Engagement Levels

**Highest:** Leaders

**Creators:** Have positive and helpful suggestions

**Critics:** Their input can be quite helpful

**Watchers:** Usually in the public gallery

**Socialites:** Attend events, some meetings

**Lowest:** Customers (entitled)



**Time to Reflect:**

**How does this apply to us?**

**Questions?**

## Where do you stand on rules of order?

1. Are you **passionate** about rules of order?
2. Do you a bit **curious** about rules of order?
3. Do rules of order bring you pain and **suffering**?

## A caution about raising Points of Order:

RONR12 23:4: *“In ordinary meetings it is undesirable to raise points of order on minor irregularities of a purely technical character, if it is clear that no one’s rights are being infringed upon and no real harm is being done to the proper transaction of business.”*

RONR12 47:6: “... *any presiding officer will do well to bear in mind that no rules can take the place of tact and common sense on the part of the chair...*”

*“Common sense is the least common of  
all the senses...”*

**Life is for Learning  
and for Having Fun**