

Fair But Efficient Meetings: **Using implied motions, unanimous consent and consent agendas to get things done**

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Assumed Motion

When the presiding officer places a question before the assembly that was neither moved nor seconded.

Unanimous Consent

When the presiding officer asks if there are objections to a pending motion, rather than taking a formal vote.

- “Is there any objection?”
- “If there is no objection we will . . .”
- “Without objection we will”

RONR (10th ed.), p.511 - 512

- “In cases where there seems to be no opposition in routine business or on questions of little importance, time can often be saved by the procedure of unanimous consent, or as it is also called, general consent.”
- “Action in this manner is in accord with the principle that rules are designed for the protection of the minority and generally need not be strictly enforced when there is no minority to protect.”
- “If any member objects, the chair must state the question on the motion, allow any desired debate (unless it is an "undebatable" parliamentary motion), and put the question in the regular manner.”
- “If an objection is made with reasonable promptness, even though the chair may have already announced the result as one of "no objection," he should disregard such an announcement and proceed to state the question in the usual manner.”
- “Unanimous consent does not necessarily imply that every member is in favor of the proposed action; it may only mean that the opposition, feeling that it is useless to oppose or discuss the matter, simply acquiesces.”
- “Similarly, when a member [objects] . . . he may not necessarily oppose the motion itself, but may believe that it is wise to take a formal vote under the circumstances.”
- “If a member is uncertain of the effect of an action proposed for unanimous consent, he can call out, "I reserve the right to object," or, "Reserving the right to object, . . ." After brief consultation he can then object or withdraw his reservation.”

Assumed Motions and/or General Consent are useful for the following activities:

- Extend Debate
- Read Papers
- Permission to Withdraw or Modify Motion
- Request For Any Other Privilege
- Adopting Minutes
- Accepting Resignations
- Adjourning when no business is pending
- Recess
- Amendments that are not controversial
- Suspend the rules

The Standard Code discusses Assumed Motions and General Consent on page 142.

There are no significant differences between RONR and TSC.

Consent Agenda

- Non-controversial Items
- Voted up or down with one vote, no debate, no amendments
- At the request of a single member items are removed from the consent agenda

RONR (10th ed.), p. 349-350

- Calls it a “Consent Calendar”
- Routine or Non-controversial items
- Requires Special Rules of Order
- Rules may allow disposition “in gross without debate or amendment” or
- May simply allow placement earlier in the agenda

TSC Page 116

- “Before taking the vote, the chair allows time for the members to read the list . . . Any member has the right to remove an item”
- Special rule not required to allow consent agenda.
- Special rule can establish who creates the consent agenda.

Let's Practice

Extending Debate (1)

Member A: Therefore, I think that adopting this resolution will

Time Keeper: DING

Chair: I'm sorry Member A but your time is up.

Member A: May I have one more minute to conclude my remarks?

Chair: Is there any objection to allowing Member A one additional minute to conclude his remarks? <PAUSE> Since there is no objection debate is extended for one minute.

Extending Debate (2)

Member A: And in conclusion

Time Keeper: DING

Chair: If there is no objection Member A will have 30 seconds to conclude his remarks. <PAUSE> Without objection debate is extended 30 seconds.

Withdraw Motion

Member B: I request unanimous consent to withdraw my motion.

Chair: Is there any objection to allowing Member B to withdraw his motion? <PAUSE> Since there is no objection the motion is withdrawn. The next business in order is . . .

Brain Teaser: In what circumstance would the request for unanimous consent be required before a motion could be withdrawn?

Recess (1)

Chair: We've been sitting here for 2 hours now and I see the coffee has been brought in, so let's take a fifteen minute recess. Is there any objection? <PAUSE> Since there is no objection the meeting stands in recess for fifteen minutes.

Recess (2)

Chair: We have been debating this question for over an hour, and I think we can use a break. If there is no objection we will recess for twenty minutes. <PAUSE>

Member C: I OBJECT!

Chair: An objection has been raised. The question before you is shall we recess for twenty minutes. Are you ready for the question? As many as are in favor of recessing for twenty minutes say 'Aye' . . . Those opposed say 'No'. The 'Ayes' have it and the meeting will stand in recess for twenty minutes.

Amend a Motion

Member D: I move that the book sale be scheduled for the third weekend in July.

Member E: Second!

Chair: The question before you is “Shall the book sale be scheduled for the third weekend in July.” Are you ready for the question? Member D

Member D: There are no events scheduled in the town on either the third or fourth weekend. Let’s schedule it for the third weekend and get it over with.

Chair: Thank you. Member F

Member F: I just heard that the National Association of Parliamentarians is sponsoring a workshop that weekend. You know that when those parliamentarians come to town everybody goes to listen. I’d rather not compete with that wild and crazy bunch. I move to amend the motion by striking third and inserting fourth.

Member G: (without waiting for recognition) You’re right!

Member H: (without waiting for recognition) Good idea

Chair: Is there any objection to amending the pending motion by striking third weekend and inserting fourth weekend? <PAUSE> Hearing no objection the amendment is adopted. The question before you now is “Shall the book sale be scheduled for the fourth weekend in July.” Are you ready for the question? . . .

Using a Consent Agenda

Chair: The consent agenda was prepared by the president and secretary and mailed to all members. You should have a copy at your seat. Any member may ask that an item be removed from the consent agenda, and it will be removed. After everyone has had a chance to remove items we will take a single vote on all remaining items without debate. Does anyone have any questions about how a consent agenda operates?

There are twenty-two items on the consent agenda. Does anyone want to remove any items? Member I

Member I: Item 15.

Chair: Item 15 has been removed from the consent agenda. Anyone else? Member J.

Member J: Item 4.

Chair: Item 4 has been removed from the consent agenda. Anyone else? Member K.

Member K: Item 8

Chair: Item 8 has been removed from the consent agenda. Anyone else? As no one else is seeking recognition we will now vote on the remaining items in the consent agenda. Items 4, 8 and 15 have been removed from the consent agenda and will be considered in their regular places on the agenda.

The question before you is on the adoption of the consent agenda without numbers 4, 8 and 15. All in favor of adopting the consent agenda say ‘Aye’ . . . All opposed to adopting the consent agenda say ‘No’. The Ayes have it and you have adopted the consent agenda without numbers 4, 8 and 15. The next business in order is. . .