

## School Board Meetings for the Glory of God

by Don Post, Tall Oaks Classical School

“And the more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild.” *The Paradoxes of Christianity* by G.K. Chesterton

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How often have you attended meetings that were disorderly? Very little was accomplished. Those who spoke the loudest controlled the meeting. The meeting went on and on without any final conclusions. What was wrong?

All members of your school board must (or should) be able to express their opinions and to propose solutions. We are called to be good stewards of the time granted to us, to “make the best use of the time” (Eph. 5:16). Scripture requires us to show proper respect to those in authority over us. James reminds us “to be quick to listen, slow to speak” (James 1:19). If our meetings are to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31), “all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

The purpose of *Robert’s Rules* is not only to keep order, but also to accomplish the board’s business while resolving any issues along the way. This presents a paradox: “in order to preserve its freedom to act, the body must impose regulation.”<sup>1</sup> If regulations must be imposed, however, they must be imposed justly on everyone involved in the meeting. *Robert’s Rules* contains many procedures that balance the need to impose regulations with the need to use the time and

talents of each board member well.

The importance of all meetings using the same body of rules cannot be overstated otherwise each meeting would be run by the chairman’s own rules. These rules are known as parliamentary procedures which, for the most part, were derived from the English

problem. *Robert’s Rules* is not something to turn to when you are in trouble, but to use as a normal course of procedure.

When you follow *Robert’s Rules*, it is much easier to navigate through difficult positions in which you find yourself. Several months ago, a board had voted

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Parliament. Today’s procedures, which were first published in 1876, are primarily the work of Henry Martyn Robert (1837–1923), a retired US Army brigadier general. The original writing, which contained 176 pages, is now 643 pages of text, tables and index.

So why use *Robert’s Rules*? Your school board meets to make decisions on a course of action that it believes must be taken for the most efficient operation of your school. *Robert’s Rules* is designed as a reference book to answer every question of parliamentary procedure. It gives direction on running a meeting from following an agenda to handling motions, debates and voting. It explains bylaws and other rules and how to use them. There is a chapter on frequently asked questions and, of most importance, a summary of motions—main, subsidiary, privileged, incidental, and their priority. They are never to be applied more tightly than what is good for that particular

down a motion, but had failed to count one board member’s vote. The board determined that the missing vote caused the motion to pass. Consulting *Robert’s Rules*, it discovered that the president could vote not only to break a tie but whenever his or her vote would affect the result. The president then voted against the motion, defeating it and returning it to the original vote. An accurate application of the rules keeps the meeting running properly and justly.

There are chapters on each of the different officers and what is expected of them. Since many of you reading this article are called to preside over meetings, you will find many helps and steps to equip you to be more effective in both planning and running efficient meetings. There are some great tables in the back which help you with the actual wording of motions, responding to motions and rules relating to motions: whether they are debatable, able to be amended, and what is the required vote.

This may sound like an enormous amount of work, but

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remember you have been called to Kingdom work. You only need to know twenty percent of the material eighty percent of the time. Your decisions have consequences which not only affect your school and students now, but for eternity. You are a workman who needs to be properly prepared in order to bring glory to God in your board meetings and in your school. I would encourage each board member to buy a copy of *Robert's Rules*, read it, and apply it to your meetings in order to facilitate orderly meetings for the glory of God.

### NOTES

1. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 10th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Publishing, 2000), p. 6.

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*The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

## Timely and Wise Decision Making

by Ron Lee, Schaeffer Academy

The Christian school board is a crucible where the notions of secular vs. sacred collide. The school is a business entity and must meet the pressing demands of staying afloat with a positive

decisions which may prompt you to want to wait until the next meeting and even cause you to lose sleep, yet for the vast majority of the issues that come before the board, a decision just needs to

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*Rereading your mission statement, statement of faith, statement of purpose and your school history can help provide the fuel necessary to reignite your passion and vision for your school . . .*

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cash flow while making fair, viable and consistent policies which embody Christian charity toward its neighbor. The weight of decision making can produce heat and pressure in this environment. How can a group of diverse individuals refine and fuse their ideas into policies that benefit the school, without getting burned?

Procrastination is a formidable foe and one that can afflict the board decision-making process. We have all heard the adage, "Why do today what can be put off until tomorrow?" Our own personal and professional demands may contribute to this, but more often than not, we can procrastinate on board decisions because we place great value upon the work that needs to be accomplished by the board. The decisions you make influence such a broad and demanding clientele that they must be "just right." The selection of property or the final wording of a policy must be perfect since so much of the school's future is riding on it. These are major

be made. Even when you've done all of your "homework" there is sometimes no perfect answer. We ultimately must remember that we are finite individuals and all of our decisions must be made on the basis of good research, counsel and most of all, faith. To help overcome our battle with procrastination, we need to rest a greater confidence on our God. The verses in Hebrews 11: 1, 6 encourage us to abide in this truth, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

"School board members must be visionaries." We have all heard that to be successful your board must include individuals who wear that mantle. Visionaries not only help you dream big for your school, but also they can help you to foresee difficulties and be proactive in order to ease the decision-making process. Just

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