

Effective Club Meetings – Role of the Chairman/President

So you've been asked to chair a meeting at your sports club or organisation. It might be a regular meeting, or perhaps your club's Annual General Meeting.

The chairperson's role is a bit like a referee. The Chairperson controls the meeting and conducts meeting business like accepting motions and amendments, ruling on points of order, and generally making sure that the wishes of the meeting are carried out correctly.

A meeting doesn't have to be formal all the time. And it's up to you as the chairperson to decide how formally you will run the meeting. As you are running the meeting, you should know the essential rules to make sure that everyone at the meeting gets a fair go and that decisions are reached with minimum distraction.

If you don't have much experience chairing meetings, this podcast will give you some helpful hints. Over the next few minutes we'll go through the process of running a meeting step-by-step and help you prepare for the task ahead of you.

The Department of Sport and Recreation has a whole locker room of other resources to help you with running a meeting, and all aspects of running your club or organisation.

Stay listening, and check out the department website dsr.wa.gov.au

The agenda

The agenda forms the basis for any meeting, and it helps by giving structure, direction and purpose to the meeting. It should be prepared jointly by the chairperson and the club or association secretary. Make sure it is circulated to members in advance.

This will give members and people attending the meeting the chance to think about the issues and come to the meeting well informed, and ready to contribute.

Call the meeting to order at least several minutes before the opening. Starting on time is essential.

The Quorum

Your organisation's constitution may specify a quorum, which is a minimum number of members who must be present at a meeting to make it official at the starting time nominated. Particularly important for AGM's and when voting in special meetings.

If necessary, as the meeting chairperson you can decide to delay the meeting starting time to give every opportunity for necessary number of people to be present. Once you have reached the quorum, the meeting should then be formally declared open.

If the numbers at the meeting fall below the quorum at any stage, no further decisions should be made. But make sure you check your club's rules, as some organisations may allow partial attendance at meetings. This means the meeting can continue without a quorum.

Open the meeting at the arranged time

You can now declare the meeting officially open. This is important, because the business of the meeting should be recorded from this point on. You should make a firm statement using the name and type of the meeting.

Attendance and apologies

You should record all members present at the meeting, introduce any special guests or visitors to the meeting and formally welcome them. You should also call for apologies and ask for a formal motion that apologies be accepted.

Minutes

Before you start on the new business for the meeting, you first need to review the minutes of the previous meeting. It is your duty as Chairperson to ask for any corrections to the minutes of the previous meeting, and amend them if necessary. You can then call for a motion that the minutes are correct.

The reason for confirming minutes is to make sure they are accurate. Avoid reading minutes in detail. It's unnecessary, boring to listen to, and you might lose the interest of people attending before it's really started.

Matters arising from the minutes

You should list all matters to be decided on the agenda circulated to the meeting, and limit discussion strictly to matters in the minutes. These will usually be specific questions or actions someone was appointed to take.

Correspondence

At this point the chairperson should ask the secretary to present a list of all correspondence coming to and from the club in chronological order.

The chairperson should ask for a formal motion "that all inward correspondence be received and all outward correspondence be approved".

You should not allow any discussion before the motion is presented. The secretary should read the date and signatory of the letter, as well as briefly meaningful contents of the letter. Any member can request that a whole letter be read to the meeting.

Reports

There are a few reports that should be a part of your meeting. These include the Treasurer's report, reports from Club committees and other reports

The Treasurer's Report

The chairperson asks the treasurer to present the regular financial report, and then calls for any discussion arising from the report.

A formal motion is needed of a list of all accounts for payment to be paid. This is a legal requirement for audit.

A formal motion is also needed to adopt the report.

Committee reports

The reports from committees should be brief. Ask the committee chairperson to present the report in writing before the meeting, and then present the report at the meeting, so that the report can be incorporated into the minutes of the meeting.

Insisting on a written report might seem uncalled for, but it will help presenter to be more organised, and will speed up your meetings.

A simple formula for reports from committees should answer the following questions.

What, why, who, where, when, how, how much, and the committee's recommendations to the meeting.

Using a template like this keeps reports to the point. A recommendation may be like a motion to give the club executive or meeting something definite to discuss.

Following each report there should be discussion and action. Each report must be adopted after presentation and discussion. This may simply be a motion that the report be received. No seconder is required for this motion.

Other business reports

Items of other business should be brief, and deal with specific topics.

Discussion on motions

Your club's constitution should lay down how much notice to give the chairperson of any business to be discussed at a meeting. These motions must be placed on the meeting's agenda. Any motions proposed without sufficient notice may be rejected by the chairperson, but are accepted as notices of motions for the next meeting.

Motions and Amendments

All items of business that require a decision must come before the meeting by way of a motion. If the motion is passed it then becomes a resolution.

There are rules that govern the way motions are presented, debated and amended. You can find out more information about motions and amendments in the Department of Sport and Recreation booklet on Effective Club Meetings, or at the website dsr.wa.gov.au

Formal motions

Formal motions are new items of business, and all need seconders. Formal motions may be introduced when either a motion or amendment is under discussion.

Any further discussion must be suspended until the chairperson accepts or rejects the formal motion. This decision is up to the chairperson.

A formal motion may not be moved or seconded by a person who moved or seconded the original motion, or spoken on the motion or amendment being discussed prior to the formal motion being moved.

All formal motions suspend debate on amendments and motions. Here are some examples of formal motions.

- I move that the question be left to lie on the table.
- I move that we proceed to the next business.
- I move that the previous question be voted upon.
- I move that the discussion be closed.]

Voting

At the end of any debate, the chairperson must put the motion to the vote. There are several different ways of voting including by voice, by standing, a show of hands, by a secret ballot or by a division.

Your club's constitution should nominate the necessary majority needed to resolve a vote. Unless specified otherwise, a simple majority vote is usually enough to allow the chairperson to declare the result. If there is any doubt in a voice vote, the chairperson may call for a show of hands. A member can also call upon the chair for a show of hands.

Unless someone demands a ballot or division immediately after a voice vote or show of hands has been declared, the decision of the chairperson is binding.

If there is an equal number of votes for and against on the first and second show of hands and after a ballot, the proposal is rejected.

The constitution should provide for voting power of the chairperson who may have a deliberate vote only, a casting vote only, a deliberate and casting vote, or no vote.

If the motion in its original or amended form is lost, the meeting proceeds to the next item of business.

Points of Order

Points of order are a way of dealing with breaches of meeting rules or decorum. They must be made at the time that a breach occurs, and can be introduced by a statement like

Any member can make a point of order, and the speaker may be interrupted. No seconder is required.

Points of order are not open to debate, nor are they able to be amended. The point of order is subject to the chairperson's ruling.

Points of order relating to General Business

During the general business section of the meeting, the chairperson can decide whether a point should be discussed, bearing in mind that relatively minor points may be brought up. As the chairperson, you should restrict discussion to the interest of the meeting.

Notices of motions for the next meeting may be brought up with a written copy of the motion being handed to the club secretary. The motion should be signed and dated.

Points of order relating to the Next Meeting

You should discuss the time, date and venue for the next meeting to ensure everyone knows the details.

Closure

The chairperson should close the meeting when there is no further business, or when continuing the meeting would serve no worthwhile purpose. This decision is up to the chairperson.

The closure signals that no further business is being conducted at the meeting. The normal way is for the chairperson to rise, thank members for their cooperation, thank visitors, wait for silence then announce...

"I declare this meeting closed."

As Chairperson you should leave the chair as soon as possible, which emphasises that the meeting is over, and that all further discussion is unofficial.