

EMR Committee Meeting Report

The EMR committee met and on April 4 from 9am to 10am. The agenda consisted of 3 main topics. The first was a question staff council representative John Clendenin asked pertaining to the ruling by EMR on a vote that was recently declined. See Attachment A for details. The 2nd topic of discussion was for filling open positions. The third topic was getting a parliamentary procedure training setup for staff council.

Topic 1:

In the question posed by John, the crux of the matter came down to, is a majority vote determined by all representatives present and able to vote, or by only those who have cast their vote. During EMR's discussion about this, all members concluded that "Since the voting is based on quorum or 2/3 present, then EMR holds that a motion requires a majority of voting members (unless specified otherwise) present to pass." However, further investigation occurred after the meeting which supported John's conclusion. I found in my research that this is a frequently confused point when following Robert's Rules of Order. From Roberts Rules:

"A majority vote, that is, a majority of the votes cast, ignoring blanks, is sufficient for the adoption of any motion that is in order, except those mentioned in Section 39, which require a two-thirds vote." [Roberts Rules of Order The Classic Manual of Parliamentary Procedure, Article VI. Vote, Section 38, paragraph 2]

In our case abstention is really a blank vote. Since votes in the affirmative are cast first, then those who don't really support the motion have the opportunity to strike it down. If people do not have enough information as in the case of our previous motion that came during the meeting, we should inform everyone that they can "Move to Postpone to a Certain Day", likely the next time staff council meets. This allows them to research the topic and become informed. From Section 21 of the book, the "The Effect of this motion is to postpone the entire subject to the time specified until which time it cannot be taken up except by a two-thirds vote." I interpret that as it requires a 2/3 vote for it to pass. This also has the effect of making the motion an "Order of the Day" for which ever day/time it has been postponed.

The most important thing to raise to the rest of council is that they have another opportunity that can be raised before the results have been officially recorded/reported.

Topic 2:

Discussion was held on ideas that people had to related to how we can have more people step up to be representatives and alternates. We want people who will engage others in their Unit and will help with community activism.

We want to ask the reps to email their units with introductions, if they haven't already, and invite others in to participate where there are open slots.

Topic 3.

This topic we ran out of time to fully discuss. Gary Newman agreed to take this up. His initial suggestions included looking at agreatmeeting.com and maybe trying to get Collette Trohan. Other possibilities include trying to get the person who this performed a parliamentary training for staff council previously. Gary would like this to be a more in-depth training than before, proposed 2 days in length.

Attachement A:

John Clendenin <jrclendeninjr@alaska.edu>
from
reply-jrclendeninjr@alaska.edu
to
towalker.wheeler@alaska.edu

date Mon, Mar 28, 2011 at 12:39 PM
subject Roberts Rules of Order comment
Important mainly because of the people in the
conversation.

Walker,
Ok, here goes...

Two meetings ago a majority of people in the meeting abstained from voting:
"Naomi put forward the motion that statewide work with ConSova to have ConSova accept and use the university's Financially Interdependent Partners documentation verification for the dependent audit."

The Motion was called to question and Seconded.

Six Ayes

Five Nays

The remainder abstained

The motion failed to pass.

Staff Council bylaws do NOT define how a motion vote must be conducted. Therefore, the only reasonable conclusion I can make is that the "usual" situation in Roberts Rules of Order FAQ #6 (listed below) applies.

In the usual situation, where either a majority vote or a two-thirds vote is required, abstentions have absolutely no effect on the outcome of the vote since what is required is either a majority or two thirds of the votes cast. Remember, abstention is a refusal to vote, it is not a vote.

If the bylaws stated a majority or two thirds of the members present is required to pass a motion then abstentions would have the same effect as a "no" vote.

Technically that motion should have passed.

Staff Council may want to clarify how voting on a motion is to be conducted.

Roberts Rules of Order FAQ

Question 6:

Do abstention votes count?

Answer:

The phrase "abstention votes" is an oxymoron, an abstention being a refusal to vote. To abstain means to refrain from voting, and, as a consequence, there can be no such thing as an "abstention vote."

In the usual situation, where either a majority vote or a two-thirds vote is required, abstentions have absolutely no effect on the outcome of the vote since what is required is either a majority or two thirds of the votes cast. On the other hand, if the vote required is a majority or two thirds of the members present,

or a majority or two thirds of the entire membership, an abstention will have the same effect as a "no" vote. Even in such a case, however, an abstention is not a vote. [RONR (10th ed.), p. 387, l. 7-13; p. 388, l. 3-6; p. 390, l. 13-24; see also p.66 of *RONR In Brief*.]

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