

## **Script and Poll Questions: Common Issues In Robert's Rules**

**Chair: Hermione Granger**

**Members: Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley, Luna Lovegood, Neville Longbottom, Winky**

Chair: I call this meeting of the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare to order. The first item on our agenda is the report of the Knitting Committee. The chair recognizes Luna Lovegood.

Luna: Madam chair, on behalf of the Knitting Committee, I report that we knitted nine full socks and also an additional three quarters of a sock. Our yarn supply was severely diminished when a fifth-year Hogwarts student, practicing for Ordinary Wizarding Levels, accidentally used a Vanishing Spell on all our remaining stash. We recommend therefore that five Sickles, two Knuts, and four Galleons be allocated to the purchase of new yarn.

Chair: The chair recognizes member Harry Potter.

Harry: I move to receive the report of the Knitting Committee.

Ron: Second!

Chair: It has been moved and seconded that the Society receive the report of the Knitting Committee.

**Poll 1:** If the society adopts this motion, what will be the effect? See RONR 12<sup>th</sup> ed., 51:10-51:16.

- a. The Knitting Committee's report will be entered into the minutes.
- b. The Society will allocate money to buy new yarn according to the recommendation of the Committee.
- c. The Society will not only allocate money to buy new yarn but will also give its endorsement to everything in the report as though it had been voted on.
- d. There is no effect.

Chair: The motion is to receive the report of the Knitting Committee. Is there any debate? All in favor, say “aye.”

All: Aye!

Chair: All opposed, “no.” The ayes have it and the motion is adopted. The next item on the agenda is ratification of a decision by email vote to purchase butterbeer for this meeting. The chair recently learned email votes are not allowed, since, for one, they do not permit members to exercise their right to debate or to notice of meetings; they are further not advised as they can become cumbersome and confusing as opposed to the proceedings of a meeting. Therefore, even though no one objected to buying butterbeer, your butterbeer goblets will now be summarily vanished.

**Poll 2:** Is the chair correct in that email deliberations of this nature are never allowed? RONR 9:34.

- a. Yes, this rule is in Robert’s Rules of Order, and there is no way for societies to conduct business by email.
- b. No, because the most recent version of Robert’s Rules of Order allows voting to be conducted by electronic means.
- c. Yes, but it is possible for a member to send an email asking if there’s any objection to taking a certain immediate course of action that can be ratified at the next meeting; if there’s any objection, however, the subject must be discussed in a meeting.

Chair: Next on the agenda is new business. Is there any new business? The chair recognizes member Neville Longbottom.

Neville: Madam Chair, I think that we need to revise our dues structure. As you know, the Society currently requires two Sickles annually from all members, whether wizards, witches, elves, or other beings. My concern is

that there's a lack of access to membership for house-elves, whose work is unpaid, and some of whom don't have a single knut to their name. As we want to diversify our membership, not only to elves, but also to other beings such as imps, werewolves, and even merpeople if our goal of underwater meetings is achieved, we need to have an exception to waive dues for beings other than wizards.

Chair: The chair recognizes member Ronald Weasley.

Ron: Yeah, I agree. I know there's a lot of house-elves out there who might be interested in membership but don't have the money to join. I mean, it's only recently the very first elf account was opened at Gringott's bank.

Chair: The chair recognizes member Harry Potter.

Harry: Madam Chair, I don't think we should reduce dues. Our own Gringotts vault is getting low, and now we've got to buy all this yarn. We need all the Sickles we can get.

**Poll 3:** May the chair allow continued debate in this matter? See RONR 12<sup>th</sup> ed., 51:12, 4:12.

- a. No, because there is no motion on the floor.
- b. Yes, because Neville's motion--to waive dues for beings other than witches and wizards—could be assumed.
- c. No, because although Neville's motion could be assumed, it was never seconded.

Chair: The chair recognizes member Luna Lovegood.

Luna: Madam Chair, I don't think this matter should even be discussed until we know whether the law currently under consideration at the Ministry of Magic outlawing house-elf enslavement and requiring elves to be paid will pass, so I guess I move to postpone indefinitely.

Ron: Second!

Chair: The chair recognizes member Winky.

Winky: Madam Chair, I don't think it's necessary for us to waive dues for all non-wizard beings, but just for house-elves. There's no reason that goblins and imps need their dues waived. The goblins, for one, have plenty of gold. Maybe Neville would allow a friendly amendment to change all beings to just house-elves?

**Poll 4:** Are "friendly amendments" allowed? See RONR 12<sup>th</sup> ed., 12:91, 33:12.

- a. Yes, as long as the maker of the motion agrees to the amendment, it may be amended without a vote by the body.
- b. No, all changes to a motion must go through the amendment process.
- c. No, but in the brief interval between when the motion is made and when it is stated by the chair, a member may ask if the maker of the motion is willing to make a change in the motion.
- d. No, but in the brief interval between when the motion is made and when it is stated by the chair, a member may ask if the maker *and the seconder* of the motion are willing to agree to a change in the motion.

Chair: Thank you, Winky. The motion currently under discussion is "to waive the dues requirement for beings other than witches and wizards." There is also a motion to postpone indefinitely on the floor. It is now moved to amend the main motion by striking "beings other than witches and wizards" and inserting "house-elves." Is there a second?

Ron: Second!

**Poll 5:** Can debate proceed on the amendment, or does the motion to postpone have to be disposed of first? See RONR 12<sup>th</sup> ed., t4.

- a. Debate can proceed on the amendment because it is a higher-ranking motion than postponing indefinitely.

- b. Debate cannot proceed on the amendment because the motion to postpone indefinitely has to be disposed of first.
- c. Debate cannot proceed on the amendment because the motion to postpone indefinitely is undebatable and therefore should have been voted on immediately.

Chair: The question is on amending the motion by striking “beings other than witches and wizards” and inserting “house-elves.” If the amendment is adopted, the motion will be “To waive the dues requirement for house-elves.” Is there any debate on the amendment? The chair recognizes member Luna Lovegood.

Luna: Madam Chair, I actually think we should refer this to the Finance Committee and have them take a look at this, because it may be that waiving the dues requirement wouldn’t even be possible, once we check the Gringotts balance.

Ron: Second!

Chair: It has been moved and seconded to refer this matter to the Finance Committee. Is there any debate? The chair recognizes member Neville Longbottom.

**Poll 6:** If this motion to commit is adopted, which motions will the Finance Committee consider? See RONR 12<sup>th</sup> ed. 10:35.

- a. The main motion only.
- b. The main motion and the motion to amend.
- c. The main motion, the motion to postpone indefinitely, and the motion to amend.

Neville: You know, the more I think about it, I think Harry is right. We’re really set back by all that vanished yarn and you know Winky, you’re right too, it should really be just house-elves that are excused. I guess I don’t really want to make this motion after all.

**Poll 7:** Did Neville violate rules of decorum in debate? Choose all that apply. See RONR 12<sup>th</sup> ed. 43:19-28.

- a. No.
- b. Yes, by making remarks not germane to the pending question.
- c. Yes, by attacking a member's motives.
- d. Yes, by failing to address his remarks to the chair.
- e. Yes, by using a member's name.
- f. Yes, by speaking adversely on a prior action not pending.
- g. Yes, by speaking against his own motion.
- h. Yes, by reading from a report without permission.
- i. Yes, by standing during the chair's remarks.
- j. Yes, by disturbing the assembly.

Chair: The chair reminds members to confine their remarks to the pending question, which is at this time the motion to refer the main motion and amendment to the Finance Committee; debate may only enter into the merits of whether this matter should be referred. The chair also reminds members to refrain from using members' names, and to address all speeches to the chair. Also, and with regard the member who has just spoken, a reminder that members are not permitted to speak against a motion that they have made. Is there further debate on the motion to refer? The chair recognizes Ron Weasley.

Ron: Madam Chair, I think we're spinning our wheels trying to have this debate without the Finance Committee's say-so; they're the ones who really know if we have enough Galleons to do what we want to do.

Chair: The chair recognizes Harry Potter.

Harry: Madam Chair, I respectfully disagree. This is really a question about inclusivity in our membership and removing barriers to house-elf participation. It's an ethical issue and not a financial one, so I don't think we should refer it to the Finance Committee.

Chair: The chair recognizes Winky.

Winky: Madam Chair, I agree with the previous speaker. We'll find a way to get the money. We really just need to do this even just as a statement to the ethical problem of house-elf enslavement. It shouldn't be referred to the Finance Committee.

Luna: Call the question!

**Poll 8:** What is the effect of Luna's statement "call the question"? See RONR 12<sup>th</sup> ed. 16:5.

- a. The member called for the question; it must be voted on immediately.
- b. The member moved to call the question (the "previous question") but that motion must be seconded and receive a two-thirds vote; if it does, the chair calls for a vote on the motion to refer only.
- c. The member moved to call the question (the "previous question") but that motion must be seconded and receive a two-thirds vote; if it does, the chair calls for a vote on the motion to refer, then the amendment, then the main motion.
- d. The member's motion cannot interrupt. The chair may state this and allow the motion for the previous question, if the member gains the floor and is recognized.

Chair: The chair reminds the member that the motion to call the question is out of order when another has the floor. However, is there any objection to ending debate on the motion to refer this matter to the Finance Committee? (pause). We are now voting on whether to refer this matter to the Finance Committee. The question is on the motion to refer the motion, "to waive the dues requirement for beings other than witches and wizards," and the amendment to strike "beings other than witches and wizards" and insert "house-elves" to the Finance Committee. All in favor, signify by saying "Aye."

Neville, Ron: Aye!

Chair: All opposed, "no."

Harry, Luna, Winky: No!

Chair: The nos have it and the motion to refer to the finance committee is lost. We will now proceed to debate on the amendment to the main motion. Is there any debate on the amendment? (pause) The question is on the motion amend by striking “beings other than witches and wizards” and inserting “house-elves.” If the motion is carried, the main motion will be “to waive the dues requirement for house-elves.” Is there any objection to the amendment? (pause) The amendment is adopted by unanimous consent. We will now proceed to debate on the main motion, “to waive the dues requirement for house-elves.” The chair recognizes Neville Longbottom.

Neville: Madam Chair, I still think we should have time for the Finance Committee to at least present us with a report before we consider this. Therefore, I’d like to table this to the next meeting, in order to give everyone time to research and study the issue and to hear an updated Financial report.

Ron: Second!

**Poll 9:** Which of these are correct examples of “Lay on the Table” versus “Postpone To a Certain Time”? (Select all that apply). RONR 12<sup>th</sup> ed. 17:2, 17:3.

- a. The motion to waive dues for house-elves can be laid on the table to await the Finance Committee’s report.
- b. The motion to waive dues for house-elves can be postponed definitely to the next meeting to await the Finance Committee’s report.
- c. The motion to waive dues for house-elves can be either laid on the table or postponed definitely to the next meeting to await the Finance Committee’s report.



- d. The motion to waive dues for house-elves can be laid on the table because the keynote speaker, Garrick Ollivander, has to leave for an appointment with a unicorn hair broker.
- e. The motion to waive dues for house-elves can be laid on the table because a majority of members think that the next item, endorsement of the pending Ministry of Magic law, is more pressing.

Chair: The chair accepts the motion to postpone the matter to waive dues for house-elves to the next meeting. Is there any discussion? The chair recognizes Luna Lovegood.

Luna: Madam Chair, I originally thought we should wait for the Finance Committee to weigh in, but now I think we just need to waive the dues in the name of justice. I don't think we should postpone this matter a moment longer.

Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lovegood. The chair recognizes Winky.

Winky: I'd just like to say, this could all be solved with the careful use of a Time-Turner to just have the Treasurer go back in time and research the issue; then we wouldn't have to wait until the next meeting.

Chair: Thank you, Winky. Is there any further debate? (Pause) The question is to postpone the matter to waive dues for house-elves to the next meeting. All in favor, signify by saying "Aye."

Neville, Ron: Aye!

Chair: All opposed, "no."

Harry, Luna, Winky: No!

Chair: The nos have it and the motion is lost. We now turn to the main motion, "To waive dues for house-elves." Is there any further debate? (Pause) All those in favor, signify by saying "Aye!"

Harry, Luna, Winky, Ron: Aye!

Chair: All opposed, “no.”

Neville: No!

Chair: The ayes have it and the motion is adopted. Is there further new business? The chair recognizes Luna Lovegood.

Luna: Madam Chair, I’d like to reconsider the motion previously adopted in this session to receive our report, the report of the Knitting Committee. I had reported that nine and three-quarters socks had been knitted. Winky just informed me she did finish that tenth sock.

**Poll 10:** Has Luna made a proper motion (leaving aside the question of whether a report is received), and if so, what vote is needed to adopt it? RONR 12<sup>th</sup> ed. 37:9, 35:2.

- a. The motion to reconsider is proper and requires a majority vote.
- b. The motion to reconsider is proper because Luna voted on the prevailing side and requires a majority vote.
- c. The motion is improper and requires a motion to amend something previously adopted, which would be a majority vote.
- d. The motion is improper and requires a motion to amend something previously adopted, which would be a 2/3 vote, a majority vote when notice is given, or a majority of the entire membership.

Ron: Second!

Chair: Thank you. Was the member who made this motion present at the time the original motion was adopted by unanimous consent?

Luna: Yes, Madam Chair, I was.

Chair: Thank you. Is there any debate on the motion to reconsider? (Pause) Is there any objection to reconsidering the vote to receive the report? (Pause) The motion to reconsider is adopted. The question is now

to receive the report of the Knitting Committee. Is there any debate? The chair recognizes Luna Lovegood.

Luna: Madam Chair, I'd like to amend the report to say ten socks.

Chair: The motion is to amend the report to say ten socks. Is there any debate? (Pause) Any objection? (Pause) The amendment is adopted. We now turn to the motion to receive the report. Is there any debate? (Pause) Is there any objection? (Pause) The motion is adopted. Is there further new business? (Pause) Since there is no further business before the assembly, the meeting is adjourned. Please remember to take the right broom as you leave the castle; last time, mine got mixed up with Pavarti Patil's.

Answer key:

1. D
2. C
3. B
4. C
5. B
6. B
7. B, D, E, and G
8. B
9. B, D, and E
10. B

I hope you've enjoyed this script and quiz on Robert's Rules of Order. If you're looking for a quick way to brush up on Robert's Rules, or learn more about the frequently misapplied rules, I would suggest paging through Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised in Brief, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. It's available from amazon.com for \$7.99, and gives an easy-to-read overview of the main rules, without going into the most technical details.

Grace and peace, Marianne J. Grano, Stated Clerk