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Dane County Youth Governance Program Handbook

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Acknowledgements

Contributors:

Lesly Scott, former 4-H Youth Development Educator, Dane County UW-Extension
Connie Bettin, Prevention Services Manager, Dane County Human Services
Jackie Gehin, 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor, Dane County UW-Extension
Layout: Donna Zarovy, Kenosha County UW-Extension
Document Preparation: Jess Guffey Calkins, 4-H Youth Development Assistant, Dane County UW-Extension

Thanks to the Youth Governance Program Study Committee Members:

Former Supervisor Tom Stoebig, Chair of the Study Committee
Former Supervisor Dianne Hesselbein
Former Supervisor Melissa Sargent, Vice-chair of the Study Committee
Supervisor Matt Veldran
Hugh Wing, former Dane County Youth Board Facilitator

The Committee would like to acknowledge the great contributions of the following individuals:

Consultant and Program Designer: John de Montmollin, Kenosha County UW-Extension
Consultant: Matt Calvert, UW-Extension

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Dane County Board of Supervisors and Chief of Staff, Karin Peterson Thurlow
Dane County UW-Extension
Dane County Human Services

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Welcome!

Congratulations on being selected as a member of Dane County's Youth Governance Program (YGP)! We are so glad to include you and look forward to your term as a Youth Representative. As you begin this exciting venture, you may have some questions and you may become curious about other issues throughout the year. This manual was designed to assist you on your journey with YGP.

What is the Youth Governance Program?

The purpose of the Dane County Youth Governance Program is to offer greater opportunities for youth leadership, development, and empowerment in Dane County through direct participation in county government decision-making; to provide real-life learning opportunities for youth in the functioning of local government; and to bring a direct youth voice to community issues and concerns while fostering the development of confident, capable, and independent leaders for the next generation.

In other words, YGP has four major components that are beneficial to the youth representatives and the county as a whole. These components include:

- Youth Development: helping youth develop the skills they need to succeed in YGP and beyond
- Community Improvement: offering a unique opportunity for youth to positively contribute to their communities
- Civic Engagement: allowing youth to engage with and participate in local government in a meaningful, long-term capacity
- Youth Voice: providing a mechanism for the needs and interests of youth to be heard and understood

History of the Dane County Youth Governance Program

At its 2010 annual conference, the Wisconsin Association of County Extension Committees (WACEC) included a break-out session on statewide youth governance initiatives. The session focused on a program initiated in Kenosha County in 2006 that appoints youth members to serve on county board standing committees.

Inspired by the WACEC presentation, several county supervisors on the Dane County Extension Committee and Dane County Youth Commission held discussions both individually and with their respective appointed bodies on the concept of a youth governance model for the Dane County Board, and the programmatic linkages that could be created between the County Extension and Human Services Departments. The timeline to develop the program occurred in the following manner:

December, 2010 – January, 2011

Informal conversations began between Board Supervisors, Extension Staff, and Youth Commission staff about the opportunities for a youth government program in Dane County.

February – June, 2011

A series of meetings were convened in which the group examined other youth governance models throughout the state and locally [YMCA's Youth in Governance (YIG) program, MMSD Board of Education and Kenosha County's YIG program]. The group identified the program's goals: community development, youth development, and civic engagement.

July 1st, 2011

A Special Study Committee was appointed by the County Board Chair, Scott McDonell. Committee members met numerous times between July 27th and September 20th and received valuable input and feedback from community members (youth and adults) regarding program modifications and improvements.

October 28th, 2011

A Youth Summit was held during WEAC, which 24 adults and youth attended. There was much interest in the program and feedback was very positive.

January, 2012

Supervisors and supporters presented the proposal to various committees for approval.

January 19th, 2012

The Dane County Board of Supervisors approved the Youth Governance Program, and the process of fully developing and carrying out the program began.

June 7th, 2012

The first cohort was inducted into the Youth Governance Program with a Reception and Pinning Ceremony at a meeting of the Dane County Board of Supervisors.

YGP Application Process

Selection begins via a nomination process. Nomination forms are sent out to every public and private high school in Dane County and to home-schooling support organizations. Nominations can be made by a principal, teacher, guidance counselor, school faculty member, or a home-schooling adult facilitator (may be a parent).

Youth who are nominated receive an application from Dane County, either electronically or by mail. The application consists of basic contact information, school information, and short-answer questions regarding their objectives for participating in the Youth Governance Program. The application also includes a written recommendation from an adult involved with the youth (parent, teacher, guidance counselor, etc.).

Dane County UW-Extension staff members conduct an initial screening of the applications. Together with the Dane County Extension Committee, Dane County UW-Extension staff then conduct brief interviews of the screened applicants and make final recommendations. Finalists are forwarded to the County Board Chair for official appointment. Youth members are notified of their appointment in May.

YGP Program Structure

Youth serve on County Board Committees for a one year term, running from June 1st through May 31st, and may serve up to two terms. Eligible youth are Dane County residents who will be in grades 9-12 during their term. Youth members have a non-binding advisory vote on all County Board standing committees, but otherwise may participate fully in committee open sessions. The youth representatives do not participate in committee closed sessions.

There are currently two youth representatives on each of the six standing committees:

- Personnel & Finance (P&F)
- Health & Human Needs (HHN)
- Public Protection & Judiciary (PP&J)
- Public Works & Transportation (PWT)
- Environment, Agriculture, & Natural Resources (EANR)
- Zoning & Land Regulation (ZLR)

Consistent attendance of youth representatives at committee meetings is **critical** in maintaining the reputation of the program and presenting a positive image of youth. Youth representatives are expected to strive to attend **all** of their regularly-scheduled committee meetings. If a meeting will be missed, the youth must notify: 1) the mentor and/or the committee chair, and 2) a YGP facilitator, as soon as possible.

The minimum requirement is that youth must attend at least 75% of regularly-scheduled committee meetings (in other words, at least 3 out of every 4 meetings) and *have no more than three (3) absences without notice*. An absence without notice is when a youth representative misses a regularly-scheduled committee meeting without notifying a committee member.

If a youth representative does not meet the attendance requirement in the first four months, s/he must meet with a YGP facilitator to discuss attendance improvement and reassess continued program participation.

Youth members (or their parents/guardians) may be reimbursed at current county mileage reimbursement rates to compensate for transportation expenses in attending committee meetings. Contact a YGP facilitator for details.

All youth have an assigned mentor on their individual committees. YGP mentors are responsible for assisting youth in becoming involved in county governance by providing information and resources for them to better understand the governance process, fully develop their ideas, and feel confident in sharing their opinions. They encourage and promote learning and skill development in areas such as communication, organization, and decision-making. Mentors also advocate for the youth and help create a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment.

Youth representatives may work with the YGP facilitator to plan Youth Executive Committee (YEC) meetings. The YEC is comprised of YGP members, as well as other interested youth unable to participate in YGP. The YEC meets regularly and serves as a place to support youth interested in governance through reflection, community, and education. The YEC structure and topics will be largely decided upon by the current YGP cohort. YGP members are expected to attend at least four (4) YEC meetings.

YGP Operating Guidelines

Time Period:

- Youth will serve on county board committees from June 1 to May 31 each year. Youth are inducted at the Pinning Ceremony in early June, and committee responsibilities start the following week.

Attendance:

- Youth are expected to strive to attend all regularly-scheduled committee meetings.
- If you are unable to attend a meeting, notify the following people ASAP:
 - Your mentor and/or the committee chair
 - A YGP facilitator
- Must attend at least 75% of regularly-scheduled committee meetings (at least 3 out of every 4 meetings)
- No more than 3 absences without notice.
- Youth are expected to attend at least 4 YGP Youth Executive Committee meetings
- If attendance requirements are not met, a YGP facilitator will meet with the youth to discuss attendance improvement and reassess continued program participation.

Behavior:

- Youth should stay up to date on committee business and read necessary material in advance in order to stay engaged in committee meetings
- Youth should not use cell phones or other devices during committee or YEC meetings
- Youth are required to adhere to the UW-Extension and Dane County Youth Governance Program Behavior Agreement at all times

Communications:

- Youth should receive **all** communications sent to committee members. If you feel you are not receiving the appropriate communications, notify the YGP facilitator.

Meetings:

- Youth are permitted to vote on all motions made at committee meetings. **On roll call votes**, youth votes should be taken before county board members vote (this is done to avoid any unintended influence by adult members). The youth vote is recorded in the committee's minutes for public record.
- Youth are not permitted to attend closed session meetings. If the meeting goes into closed session, youth are excused from the meeting.

Tips for Youth Leaders from Youth Leaders

These 13 tips are helpful to young people who serve on boards or other governing bodies with adults. They were developed by young people who have been in these positions and know the pressures involved*.

1. You belong in leadership

You might feel inexperienced at first, or you may think that the adults don't want to hear what you have to say. Remember that your opinions are key to the work the group is doing. As a young person, you have a right and responsibility to be there. Young people are part of their communities, and organizations need to hear from them.

2. Find allies

Find people on the staff and the governing bodies who seem to take young people seriously. Sit next to them at meetings, have lunch with them, or talk to them during breaks. When you forget that your role in the group is important, they can help remind you.

3. Ask questions

If you don't understand something, make sure to ask someone. Your questions are important. You need to understand what's going on, and it won't help anyone if you sit quietly without understanding certain discussions. There will be times when you will feel shy or not interested in what's going on. No matter how you're feeling, it's important to ask questions so you can stay involved.

4. Build a support base for yourself

Find three young friends who are interested in what you're doing with the group. Talk to them openly about what frustrates you, excites you, or bores you about your work. Choose good listeners who can help you think things through and get some of your feelings out.

5. Get the word out about your leadership

You have a responsibility to get the word out about the importance of youth leadership to as many young people as possible. It's not just about serving on your board of committee. It's about giving other young people information they can use to take charge. If you're on a foundation board, or any kind of board where you can influence grant policies, encourage the board to fund those organizations that have young people in their governance structures.

6. Know that you are not alone

There are many young people out there on boards, advisory boards, student councils, etc., working to make a difference in how things are done. You may sometimes feel that the work of your group isn't important. Connecting with other

youth leaders can help remind you that there is a youth voice movement going on and you're part of it.

7. If you're feeling bored, take responsibility for making the work interesting

Learn the language of the board or of the organization (e.g., acronyms and jargon). Ask the questions you need to ask. Say at least two things at every meeting, so you always stay engaged in what's going on. If you feel that meetings need to be jazzed up, suggest something different to do, like brainstorming or small group activities. Chances are other people will also be more engaged if meetings are more interactive.

8. If you don't like how something is going, change it

You are a member of the group. If you don't think the agenda is interactive enough or you don't like your committee assignment, speak up and work with people to make changes. This may not be easy. You may have to talk it through with people a few times to win them over.

9. Don't get discouraged

If it feels like people aren't listening or are disrespectful, keep trying. Change usually takes time. Take notice when adults do listen and try to understand your thoughts. If you feel like someone is talking down to you, don't be quiet about it. Bring it up. The groups needs to deal with the issue.

10. Go to all meetings

Find out the dates and write them all down in your calendar. Be prepared for meetings. Read the materials and learn about how things work. Refer to the County Board website for information regarding committee agendas and minutes. The website is <http://www.countyofdane.com/board>. Links to minutes and agendas are on the top of the page.

11. Take on leadership

Get involved in the work that happens outside of committee meetings, and make your presence known.

12. Relax, have fun, and be yourself

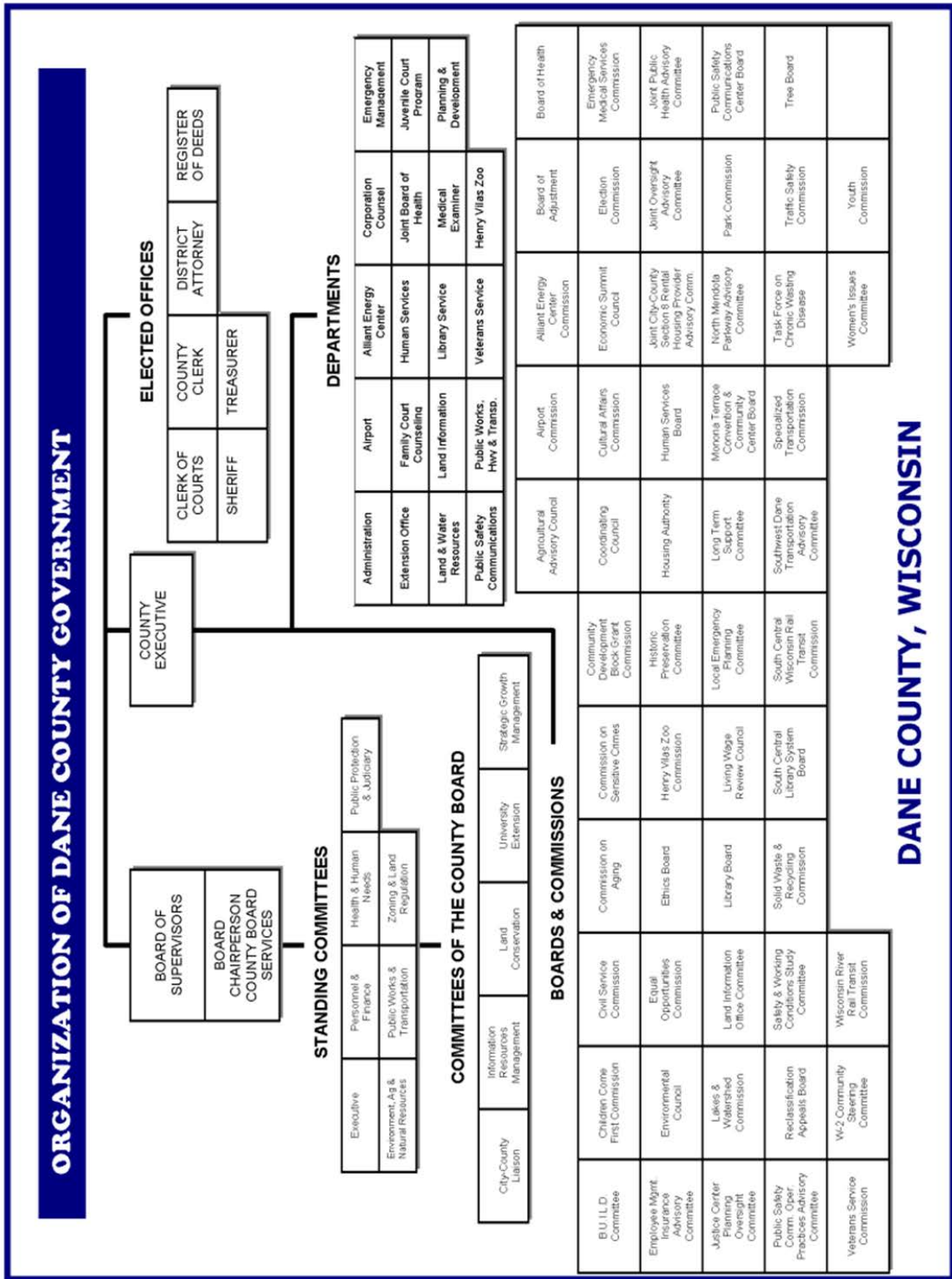
If you are someone who tells a lot of jokes, then tell jokes. You are a member of the governing body, and you should show who you really are. Think of the other people in the group as your peers.

13. Appreciate adult allies

Recognize that adults are trying their best, even if things aren't going well. Resist the temptation to criticize.

** Taken from the book *Youth on Boards. 15 Points: Successfully Involving Youth in Decision-Making**

Dane County Organizational Chart



Information about Dane County

Dane County is the second largest county in Wisconsin by population. Through its 2,200 elected, appointed and civil service employees, Dane County government provides many functions and services for its 495,959 citizens, acting primarily as an arm of state government to administer and enforce both state and county laws.

The Dane County Board of Supervisors is the legislative branch of county government, and establishes policies for the County. As the County’s legislative body, the Dane County Board approves county ordinances, levies taxes, and appropriates funds for all county services. There are 37 county supervisors on the Dane County Board who are elected in the Spring of even-numbered years, representing roughly 13,100 citizens. The County Board typically meets twice a month on Thursday nights at 7:00 p.m. in Room 201 of the City-County Building in Madison.

In addition to the County Board and County Executive, there are six elected County officials whose offices are established and governed by state statute and the Wisconsin State Constitution, and who are elected in the Fall of even-numbered years. These offices are the Clerk of Courts, County Clerk, District Attorney, Register of Deeds, Sheriff, and Treasurer. These elected officials serve as the head of their respective agencies, and carry out the policies established by the State Legislature, the County Board and the County Executive.

Dane County government also includes numerous appointed department heads who administer county, state and federal programs and regulations specific to their departments. Department heads are appointed by the County Executive with the approval of the County Board. These departments are:

Administration	Family Court Counseling	Planning & Development
Airport	Human Services	Public Safety
Alliant Energy Center	Juvenile Court	Communications
Corporation Counsel	Land & Water Resources	Highway &
Emergency Management	Library	Transportation
Extension	Medical Examiner	Veterans Services
		Zoo

Dane County and other local governments budget on an annual, calendar year basis which differs from the state and federal government. This year, Dane County budgeted an estimated \$492 million for a variety of ongoing program costs. Roughly, \$143 million comes from county property taxes and another \$45 million from the county sales tax to cover these costs. A much larger percentage of the county budget is derived from “intergovernmental revenues”, or pass-through funding from the state and federal government. Other county revenue sources – license & permit fees, fines & forfeitures, public charges for service, interest income, and other miscellaneous revenues – comprise a much smaller budget amount.

Standing Committees

1. Personnel & Finance – Serves as the primary policy arm of the County Board during the county’s annual budget process, and has preliminary approval authority over all county legislation having a fiscal impact. Oversees the Dept. of Administration, County Treasurer’s Office, and the Dane County Library Board. Deals with all matters related to collective bargaining, wages, benefits, and conditions of employment.
2. Health & Human Needs – Oversees the Human Services Dept., Veterans Service Office, Area Agency on Aging, Dane County Youth Commission, County Housing Authority, Specialized Transportation Commission, and Dane County Humane Society; and monitors and advises on all aspects of human services policy and program delivery in Dane County.
3. Zoning & Land Regulation – Oversees the Planning & Development Dept., Register of Deeds, and the Board of Adjustment. Fulfills zoning and subdivision control duties under state and county law. Advises on all matters related to zoning, land use planning and land regulation.
4. Public Protection & Judiciary – Oversees the Corporation Counsel, Family Court Commissioner, Family Court Counseling Service, Public Safety Communications Center, Juvenile Court, Emergency Management, Sheriff’s Department, Coroner, District Attorney, Clerk of Courts, and the Dane County court system; and concerns itself with any law enforcement issues related to Dane County ordinances.
5. Public Works & Transportation – Oversees the Public Works, Highway & Transportation Dept., the Facilities Management Division of the Dept. of Administration, the Alliant Energy Center, Dane County Regional Airport, and the Henry Vilas Zoo; oversees the bidding and construction process for county public works projects and the development of sustainable and energy efficient practices for new and existing county facilities; and concerns itself with all matters related to parking and transportation policies, and solid waste management
6. Environment, Agriculture & Natural Resources – Oversees the County Extension Dept.; the Land & Water Resources Dept., including operational programs for lakes management and aquatic weed control; provides policy oversight the Dane County Parks Commission and the Dane County Food Council; and concerns itself with all matters related to agriculture, environmental protection, and the conservation of natural resources in Dane County.
7. Executive Committee – Oversees the County Board Office, Dane County’s legislative lobbyist, and rules and policies of the County Board; provides budgetary and policy oversight for the Offices of the County Clerk and County Executive; reviews and recommends actions on state legislation and administrative rules which have a programmatic or fiscal impact on Dane County; and focuses on long range planning with respect to taxation, revenue projections, spending and borrowing.

Available resource links:

- The Dane County Youth Governance Program’s website at <http://fyi.uwex.edu/youthgovernanceprogram/> for more information on our program and its components
- Dane County’s website at www.countyofdane.com for any countywide or department specific information on programs, policies, current initiatives, ordinances, etc.
- The Dane County Board of Supervisors Website at <http://www.countyofdane.com/board> for district maps, agendas, meeting schedules, and information about committees and supervisors
- “Legislative Logistics” Presentation under the “Documents” heading on the County Board of Supervisors home page at www.countyofdane.com.
- General county-related information from the Wisconsin Counties Association at www.wicounties.org.
- Links to an assortment of local, state and federal agencies and information via the “Government” homepage at www.wisconsin.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do I do if I can't attend a committee meeting?

Youth are expected to attend all committee meetings, but we understand that conflicts may arise. If you are unable to attend your committee meeting, notify your mentor and/or chairperson, as well as the YGP facilitator as soon as possible.

As a youth representative, how many committee meetings may I miss?

To maintain a position in the program, all youth must attend at least 75% of their regularly scheduled committee meetings and have no more than three (3) absences without notice. If you are unable to attend a meeting, you should contact your mentor and/or the chairperson of the committee, as well as the YGP facilitator, as soon as possible. Following this protocol will assign your absence as an absence with notice.

Where and when are my committee meetings held?

Most committees meet in the City-County Building in downtown Madison. However, other committees meet elsewhere (notably Public Works & Transportation and Environment, Agriculture, & Natural Resources). Committees usually meet at the same place and time every month, but dates and locations may change. You will receive email communications about the dates and locations of meetings. Talk to your mentor or the chair of your committee if you have any questions or concerns about meeting schedules or locations.

Is there a dress code for committees?

Each committee is unique and committees may differ on this issue. In general, wear business-casual attire to your committee meetings (no jeans, t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc.). If it is clear that your committee is casual, it is okay to dress more casually. Just remember, it is important to make a good first impression and to maintain that impression throughout the year.

Do I really get to vote?

Youth are permitted to vote on all motions made at committee meetings. On roll call votes (which means each person's name is called and votes are recorded individually), you will vote before county board members vote, to avoid any unintended influence by adult members. The youth vote is recorded in the minutes for the record, but is a non-binding advisory vote.

What if I don't understand what's going on?

If you find yourself confused or unsure, you can ask clarifying questions during the meeting. You are not expected to be an expert on the topic and it's okay to ask questions. If you don't feel comfortable speaking up during the meeting, talk with your mentor outside of the meeting and ask him/her to explain the situation. It is far better to ask questions right away than to go through a meeting confused and not contributing.

What do I call the committee members?

You can address the committee members as "Supervisor" or "Supervisor (last name)." When addressing the Chair, you can call him/her "Mr./Ms. Chair" or "Chairman/woman (last name)."

Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary Procedure is one of the most effective means by which individuals can take orderly action as a group. It is an organized system where the smallest minority (even just one person) can be heard, while preserving the right of the majority to prevail. Parliamentary Procedure helps make meetings be easier, shorter, and more productive. One of the oldest and most popular set of rules in Parliamentary Procedure is Robert's Rules of Order. It is the set of rules used by most legislative bodies. The following information will help you to better understand the process of adhering to Robert's Rules of Order.

Order of Business in Parliamentary Procedure

1. Call to order
2. Roll call
3. Reading minutes from the previous meeting
4. Approving minutes from the previous meeting
5. Committee reports
6. Accepting the committee reports
7. Unfinished business
8. New business
9. Adjourn

Steps in Making a Decision in Parliamentary Procedure

1. Motion – A motion is a request that something be done or that something is the opinion or wish of the group. Only one motion should be placed before the group at one time. It is debatable and amendable. When making a motion, one should say “I move that...” instead of “I make a motion that...”
2. Second – Someone from the group must “second” the motion, or agree to the motion, so that it can be discussed.
3. Discussion – The motion “on the floor” is discussed by all members, addressing the pros and cons of the issue.
4. Re-state the motion – The chair re-states the motion before the group votes.
5. Vote – The group votes by saying “aye” for yes/approval or “no” for disapproval.

Basic Robert’s Rules of Order Motions Chart

The motions below are intended to be a basic primer of commonly used motions*. They are listed in order of common use – not in order of precedence. Some motions take precedence over other motions.

You want to:	You say:	2 nd ?	Debate?	Amend?	Vote?
Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that (or “to”)...	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify the wording of a motion	I move to amend the motion by...	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	Yes	No	No	Majority
Take matter from table	I move to take from the table...	Yes	No	No	Majority
Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to...	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to...	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Take a break	I move to recess for...	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Make assembly follow the agenda	I call for the orders of the day	No	No	No	None
Request more information	Point of information	No	No	No	None
Enforce rules	Point of Order	No	No	No	None
Demand a rising vote	Division	No	No	No	None
Close the meeting	I move to adjourn	Yes	No	No	Majority
Parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry	No	No	No	None

Glossary of Parliamentary Procedure Terms

Adjourn – to end the meeting

Chair – the presiding officer

Address the chair – to rise and say “Mr./Ms. Chair”

Quorum – the number of members necessary to carry on business

Amend – change or modify a motion

Minutes – the record of report of each meeting’s work

Majority Vote – the vote of more than half of the members

To Obtain the Floor – receive from the chair the right to speak. No one speaks unless recognized by the chair

* Developed by Annie Jones, Kenosha County UW-Extension Community Development Educator



UW-Extension Contact Information

UW
Extension
Cooperative Extension



*Your county
extension office*

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Youth Governance Program
Dane County UW-Extension
5201 Fen Oak Drive, Rm. 138
Madison, WI 53718
Phone: (608) 224-3712
Fax: (608) 224-3727

Jess Guffey Calkins
Youth Governance Facilitator
Calkins.jessica@countyofdane.com

<http://dane.uwex.edu/>

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/youthgovernanceprogram/>

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Resources

Activism 2000 Project <http://www.youthactivism.com>

Encourages young people to speak up about issues they care about.

Do Something <http://www.dosomething.org>

Through its BRICK Awards program, funds innovative projects started by community activists under the age of 30.

Global Youth Action Network <http://gyan.tigweb.org/> ; <http://www.TakingItGlobal.org>

They are working to create a more involved community of young people on-line to inspire, inform, and involve more young people in creating a better world.

Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development <http://www.theinnovationcenter.org>

This organization unleashes the potential of youth, adults, organizations, and communities to engage together in creating a just and equitable society.

Resource Generation <http://www.resourcegeneration.org>

Provides resources, publications, and networks to help young people make positive and creative choices about their lives and their money.

Soundout.Org <http://www.soundout.org>

A national online resource center designed to promote meaningful student involvement in school change. They seek to encourage students and adults to work together positively, powerfully, and effectively in order to transform education together.

YouthBuild USA <http://www.youthbuild.org>

Encourages youth to take charge of their lives and gain skills that lead to economic independence, while helping rebuild their communities.

Youth Leadership Institute <http://www.yli.org>

A community-based institute that joins with young people to build communities that value, honor, and support youth. Offers a wide array of programs, all of which are grounded in a positive youth development philosophy.

Youth On Board <http://www.youthonboard.org>

Youth on Board prepares youth to be leaders and decision makers in their communities and strengthens relationships between youth and adults through publications, customized workshops, and technical assistance.

Youth Venture <http://www.youthventure.org/>

Dream it. Do it. Youth Venture helps young people 12-20 across the U.S. start new youth-led organizations that achieve a lasting benefit for their schools, neighborhoods and communities.

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