Using Robert's Rules of Order

MHS Association member Boards vary in their approach to conducting Board meetings. Some prefer to use a consensus or less formal decision-making style while others prefer the orderliness of Robert's Rules of Order (a manual of parliamentary procedure written in 1876 by Henry Martyn Robert, adapted from the rules and practices of Congress.)

A Board decision-making style can be deeply embedded and shaped by the founding and history of the organization. In the Anabaptist tradition, we value mutual accountability and by tradition believe in a separation of church and state; understanding that Jesus is our model for how to live and be in community. Thus, Anabaptist culture would lean toward a group consensus style for decision-making.

In certain circumstances, a blend of Robert's Rules and consensus may be necessary and also effective. Robert's Rules were developed to ensure that meetings are fair, efficient, democratic, and orderly. Robert's Rules are often used when a decision has legal implications or if there are certain ethical or compliance-related considerations at hand. Having clear notations on the actions and vote count may be needed in these circumstances. The following represents key procedures from Robert's Rules:

Types of Motions:

1. **Main Motion:** Introduce a new item
2. **Subsidiary Motion:** Change or affect how to handle a main motion (vote on this before the main motion)
3. **Privileged Motion:** Urgent or important matter unrelated to pending business
4. **Incidental Motion:** Questions procedure of other motions (must consider before the other motion)
5. **Motion to Table:** Kills a motion
6. **Motion to Postpone:** Delays a vote (can reopen debate on the main motion)

Every Motion Has 6 Steps:

1. **Motion:** A member rises or raises a hand to signal the chairperson.
2. **Second:** Another member seconds the motion.
3. **Restate motion:** The chairperson restates the motion.
4. **Debate:** The members debate the motion.
5. **Vote:** The chairperson restates the motion, and then first asks for affirmative votes, and then negative votes. Any abstaining votes are also recorded.
6. **Announce the vote:** The chairperson announces the result of the vote and any instructions.

If the board is in obvious agreement, the Chair may save time by stating, "If there is no objection, we will adopt the motion to…" Then wait for any objections. Then say, "Hearing no objections, (state the motion) is adopted." And then state any instructions. If a member objects, first ask for a debate, then vote, and then announce the vote.

Additional "Points" for Board use:

Point of Order: Draws attention to a breach of rules, improper procedure, breaching of established practices, etc.

Point of Information: A member may need to bring up an additional point or additional information (in the form of a nondebatable statement) so that the other members can make fully informed votes.

Point of Inquiry: A member may use a point of inquiry to ask for clarification in a report to make better voting decisions.

Point of Personal Privilege: A member may use point of personal privilege to address the physical comfort of the setting such as temperature or noise. Members may also use it to address the accuracy of published reports or the accuracy of a member's conduct.