

## How We Conduct Business

The Panel 64 officers would like to reiterate some guidelines for conducting area business that we think will best serve us now and in the coming years. These ideas have been discussed at length by your trusted servants, and lean heavily on our area's past experience as well as that of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The first is that we need to feel free to discuss anything, and to become comfortable in sharing openly with one another. If any member of the Area wishes to have a topic discussed bring it up during one of our Assemblies or ACMs., or contact an Area Officer. If time allows we will begin discussion immediately, or it will be on the Agenda as New Business at our next gathering. Discussion should follow the general format suggested in our Service Manual for Sharing Sessions (pg. S40 of the 2014-15 edition). Once it's discussed it now becomes Old Business. When discussion is completed, further action may be taken.

The second is that we all support the idea that most of our business does not require a motion. If a motion is required, it can only be brought up during "New Business", and it must be submitted in writing: two copies, one to the Chair and one to the Recording Secretary.

### **General Rules of Debate:**

- People who wish to speak line up at the microphones and are called on in order.
- Each person may speak for two (2) minutes.
- No one may speak for a second time on a topic until all who wish to have spoken for the first time.
- Voting is by show of hands.

**Substantial Unanimity:** All matters of policy require substantial unanimity, that is, a two-thirds majority.

Because the number of members present during our meetings varies from time to time, the phrase "two-thirds vote" is taken to mean two-thirds vote of those who are present, eligible, and have either voted for or against a motion.

**Reconsideration:** After voting on a motion, the losing side will always be given an opportunity to speak their position. A motion to Reconsider a vote must be made by a member who voted with the prevailing side. If the motion receives a majority vote, but fails to pass for lack of a two-thirds vote, the majority may speak to their position, and the motion to Reconsider must be made by someone who voted on the prevailing side. Only a simple majority is required for the motion to be reconsidered. No motion may be reconsidered twice. If the majority votes to reconsider, *full* debate, pro and con, resumes. Members are urged to limit discussion to *new* considerations of the motion under debate.

**Tips, Hints, and Words of Caution:** *Full* discussion of a motion should take place *Before* the vote. Premature actions (such as amending motions early in the discussion or hastily calling the question) can divert attention from the subject at hand, thus confusing and/or delaying Area business.

Everyone is entitled to, and should, express his or her opinion. However, if your perspective has already been stated by someone else, it is not necessary to go to the microphone and say it again.

Remember, too, that saving “minority opinions” for after the vote, when there is no rebuttal, is another time-waster, for it can force the Area to reconsider a motion that might well have been decided the first time around if it had been thoroughly examined from all sides. An informed group conscience is the result of discussion covering ALL points of view.

**Friendly Amendments:** It is possible that someone may wish to propose an amendment to the motion. This requires a second, and must be accepted by the member who originally made the motion. If accepted debate resumes on the amended motion.

**Calling the Question:** Calling the question brings debate to a halt while members decide whether to proceed directly to a vote (on the motion) or go on with the debate. A motion to call the question must be made in order at the microphone without comment, requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a two-thirds vote.

**Tabling a Motion:** Tabling a motion (postponing discussion to a future ACM or Assembly) requires a motion and a second, is not debatable, and needs only a simple majority to pass.