

ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER “LITE”

SPECIFICALLY ADAPTED FOR ACHMM – Approved by Board 09/24/2005

Prepared by: Director Kelly Kading, Task Force Chairman

The Robert’s Rules Lite Task Force

Task Force Members:

**President Allison King
VP John Mitchell
Director Laureen McMurray Boyle
Director Tom Brown
Director Emeritus Smiley McMillan
CyberChapter President Tim Foelker
Member-at-large Rampur Viswanath
Academy Administrator Jeannie Steward**

PREAMBLE

The Bylaws of the Academy of Certified Hazardous Materials Managers state that we will conduct our meetings using the current version of Robert’s Rules of Order. In general, we attempt to follow these longstanding and respected rules of general assembly when we meet in person. To accommodate our relatively small board, and to simplify our process, this set of “Robert’s Rules Lite” (RRL) has been prepared for Board use. In addition, we also conduct Academy business online, and the RRL provides a structure for online meetings. The rules for online business are included herein. Therefore, the purpose of the RRL Task Force is to provide a set of meeting governance rules, based upon Robert’s, which are **simple, straightforward, and workable** for the needs of the ACHMM.

The following RRL guidance document is divided into three Sections as follows:

- I. Regular business meetings (for face-to-face meetings)
- II. Online meeting operations (for “always-on” internet meetings)
- III. Tools for Unusual Circumstances (to be applied to both online and face-to-face meetings).

In addition to this guidance document, the Task Force recommends a few changes to the way we do business as a Board – to accommodate the use of a streamlined version of Robert’s Rules. These changes include:

- 1) Designation of a Board Parliamentarian (preferably a Director), who will be familiar with the full and current version of Robert’s Rules to a degree that he/she can assist the Board in following the streamlined version contained within the RRL. The Parliamentarian will monitor the flow and form of Board action to

assure that it follows RRL, and on the rare occasion when more rigorous use of Robert's is called for, he/she will be a resource to the President and the Board for procedural propriety.

2) Appointment of an Assistant Parliamentarian for three reasons: 1) to support the Parliamentarian, 2) to serve in the Parliamentarian's absence, and 3) to provide a check/balance for fairness and impartiality.

3) Delivery of annual RRL training sessions at the first quarterly Board meeting. The training will be presented by the Board Parliamentarian to educate new Board members in the specific "language" of the Academy's RRL, and to provide "refresher" training for returning Board members. The first quarter RRL training will be limited to one hour, preferably early in the agenda on the first day of the face-to-face first quarter meeting.

4) Change the wording of our Bylaws to reflect this change in meeting protocol.

Some final points about our rules of governance – any group that wishes to conduct business in an orderly fashion, using Robert's Rules or any other form of guidance, must recognize a few truths about how groups that must decide things work. Some of these are:

- We decide things by voting. Close votes may happen, and it is perfectly okay to have an issue that passes 7 to 4. Dissent is the hallmark of a vibrant governing group.
- We must respect the value of time. Be cognizant not only of the value of the time but the value of the topic.
- The Chair (in our case the President) is the steward of the meeting, and must keep the agenda moving in order to make progress.
- Everyone must know the rules. Each Board member must know how we function and how to be specific and timely.
- When a motion is presented, it should be complete, accurate, and short. A well thought-out motion that is simple and supported makes for an efficient meeting. Homework done in advance will save valuable discussion time.

Section I – Regular Face-to-Face Meetings

The ACHMM holds regular quarterly Board meetings, usually lasting 1.5 days. These meetings sometimes achieve their full agenda, and other times we run out of time before we run out of agenda. Our effectiveness in completing the agenda is a combination of factors. The main factors are length of the agenda, efficiency of our process, and effectiveness of the chair. The length of the agenda and effectiveness of the chair are largely out of our control. However, controlling efficiency is the point of RRL. This Section will describe the operational methods

for typical meetings, which are divided into two parts – Part A is Meeting Structure and Flow; and Part B is Making Motions.

PART A – Meeting Structure and Flow

This Part addresses the structure of our meetings including the opening, the body, and the closing. This Part is arranged numerically to reference these issues if needed.

A-1 – Opening the meeting

The Chair will call the meeting to order, at which time the members will give their attention to the Chair and the meeting will commence. The Chair will state the nature of the meeting (This is the 1st Quarter 2006 meeting of the Academy for the purpose of conducting regular business . . .).

Following the opening statement by the Chair, the Chair will ask the Secretary to perform a Roll Call. This will provide an official record of who is in attendance. If someone is late, or enters or exits the meeting at any other time, the Secretary will make note of the entry or exit by asking the Chair for a Point of Information, and once recognized by the Chair, will state who has arrived or departed, and at what time. This is important to note in the official meeting minutes because who is present is often as important as what is being discussed.

Once the roll is called, the Secretary will declare a quorum (minimum of three officers and three directors) and the meeting may commence.

NOTE: The number of members present at any given meeting affects the numbers required for a simple majority and a 2/3 majority (hereinafter referenced as a Supermajority) vote. After roll call, the Secretary will report how many votes will be needed for a simple majority and Supermajority, rounding up if fractional. Board members who participate by teleconferencing will be counted as full participating members as if physically present.

A-2 – Chair’s Opening Statement and Presentation of the Agenda

Once the meeting is called to order and declared a quorum, the Chair may commence with his/her statement. The purpose of this statement is to set the tone for the meeting, and to allow the Chair his/her due respect in framing the meeting.

After the opening remarks, the Chair will introduce the agenda, and briefly review the basic content. This is the point in the meeting that anyone can request additions or deletions to the Agenda, including an increase or decrease in the allotted time or the order of the items presented. Once everyone agrees on the agenda, the Chair will declare the agenda final unless due cause for reconsideration is warranted. This is not a motion item.

A-3 – Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes

Often seen as the first Agenda item, the placement of Previous Meeting Minutes is deliberate. If the previous meeting minutes (the official record of transacted business) is not approved by the board, subsequent action on a topic may be in conflict with a decision at the previous meeting. The business conducted at the previous meeting **MUST** be made official before action on new items can commence.

The Chair will ask the Secretary to provide the previous meeting's minutes for review (we do this in advance as part of our Board Book), and will ask for comments, revisions, or discussion on the previous meeting's minutes. This accounting of the previous meeting's minutes will include an Update of On-line Board Action. When all outstanding issues (relative to the record of the previous meeting) are settled to the Board's satisfaction, the Chair will call for a vote to approve the minutes, and simple majority rules. Once the previous meeting's minutes are accepted and the vote recorded, new business may commence in the current meeting.

A-4 – Progress on the Agenda

After previous minutes are accepted, the Chair may advance the agenda items. Agenda Items may have many purposes. Most of our agenda is to **Inform** the Board of ongoing tasks and activities. An example is our Committee reports, presented by a designated Board Liaison to each Committee. It is the Board Liaison's job to present the report from the subject committee (or summarize the Committee's activities in the absence of a formal report). Since the Board Liaison is involved in the regular business of the Committee that he/she liaises, he/she will be able to provide the formal report information and also be able to augment that information with personal knowledge, if necessary. Items of **Information** may or may not generate discussion among the Board members. It is the Chair's responsibility to limit and control discussion during informational reports.

If the Board requests an **Action** item (see part B), this Action item will be recorded by the Secretary for compilation into an Action List which will be reviewed at the end of the meeting. Generally, agenda items meant to Inform the Board do just that – they provide updates on ongoing activities.

Items that require a **Decision** by the Board will be accomplished by making **Motions** – see Part B.

A-5 – Closing the Meeting

Once the agenda is exhausted and no more business is planned, the meeting may be adjourned or recessed. Any Board member may "Move to Adjourn (or Recess)" if the meeting's full agenda is complete or "Move to Recess" for a lunch break or overnight rest period. The Chair must specify the time to reconvene, if

the motion is to Recess. The Motion to Adjourn or Recess must be seconded, and must pass by a simple majority.

PART B – Motions

Based upon the Information discussed, the Board may be called upon to make a decision. **Decisions** will be made by putting forth questions in the form of **Motions**.

B-1 – Types of Motions

Robert's Rules lists no fewer than nine separate types of Motions, but for RRL we will limit regular motions to five. These motions are:

- **Main Motion** – This is the method by which we will conduct business about a specific issue. Keep Main Motions, clear, concise, and complete to minimize Amendments. A Main Motion must be seconded. Simple majority rules (six votes on our Board, or the prevailing majority count depending upon attendance).
- **Motion to Table** – A Motion to Table an issue will suspend action on the motion until such time that the motion is re-entered as a Main Motion. A common reason to table a motion is if, during discussion, it is determined that more information is required before a decision can be made. A Motion to Table must be seconded and must pass by a simple majority. A Motion to Table will take precedence over a Main Motion, i.e. discussion of action on a Main Motion will be suspended until the period of time in the Motion to Table has expired and the Chair re-activates the Main Motion.
- **Motion to Adjourn or Recess** – This motion is self-explanatory – the “on/off switch” for the meeting. It must be seconded. A simple majority rules.
- **Point of Parliamentary Procedure (PPP)** – This motion acts like a “hold” button, and may be introduced as a “Point of Clarification” or as a “Point of Information”. At anytime, any Board Member may ask for a PPP to get clarification on the business process. A PPP is automatic and must immediately be heard by the Chair. If the Chair rules that the PPP is not specific to a procedural point, he/she may terminate the PPP and return to regular business. For our Board, the Chair will immediately recognize the presenter of the PPP and will direct them to the Board Parliamentarian for satisfaction. A specific type of PPP is a “**Gate Motion**” which may be used as a “Tool for Unusual Circumstances” as described in Section III of RRL.
- **Motion to Suspend the Rules** – This will be when a major point of discussion arises that will require lengthy discussion, or input from non-Board members. An example may be for the Board to listen to a detailed report from a committee chair person; we will move for suspension of the

rules for a specified period. The Chair will ask the speaker to estimate the time required. Then, the Chair will be responsible for controlling discussion during the suspension period. A second is required, and the motion to suspend must pass by a Supermajority. The Motion to Suspend should be used rarely and with caution.

B-2 – Seconding Motions

All motions, excluding Point of Parliamentary Procedure, must be seconded. The purpose of the second is twofold: 1) to affirm that the motion has sufficient support from another learned member to be considered, and 2) the person seconding the motion agrees with the scope, content, and form of the motion as presented. If the Main Motion is withdrawn by the person who presented the motion, then the person who seconded does not have to concur. It is the exclusive right of the person presenting the motion to withdraw a motion at any time for any reason, up until the motion is voted upon. Once the vote is called by the Chair, the motion is “in play” and cannot be altered.

B-3 – Amendments

Amendments (also known as Friendly Amendments, or FA) are a commonly over-used tool to clarify motions put before the Board. Only introduced during Discussion, FAs must be seconded and voted upon just like the Main Motion, and if approved, must be read as part of the Main Motion when the Main Motion comes for vote. The FA must be discussed and voted upon prior to completion of discussion and vote of the Main Motion. Most FAs may be eliminated IF the Main Motion is clear and complete. When FAs are attached to a Main Motion, it is up to the Chair to maintain control of all discussion and restate the amended Main Motion prior to vote. The person who presented the Main Motion may ask the Chair for an opportunity to **Withdraw and Restate** the Main Motion, rather than proceed with an unwieldy Main Motion and multiple FA configuration. It is the Chair’s discretion to allow or not to allow a maneuver to Withdraw and Restate.

B-4 – Discussion

After a Main Motion is made, or an Amendment offered, the Chair will call for Discussion. During the Discussion period, Board members may ask for the floor from the Chair to ask questions or make informative comments. Once granted the floor, Board members may make discussion points or ask questions of other Board members (or the person presenting the Motion). The amount of time spent in discussion may vary. The Chair is responsible for keeping the discussion effective and efficient; therefore the Chair may limit the time for discussion or the number of points allowed by each Board member. It is during Discussion that Board members must employ all their skills in debate, discussion and time awareness, and maintain focus. Decorum, respect, and good old-fashioned manners are critical skills in Discussion. Once the discussion is complete, or the Chair determines that time is a factor; the Chair will Call to Vote.

B-5 – Voting

Once the Chair requests a vote, the Board will express their considered opinion regarding the motion at hand. The Chair will first ask “All in Favor” and the Board will respond with either a voice vote or a show of hands (at the discretion of the Chair). The Chair will then ask for “All Opposed”, with voice or hand voting. If the total of the “ayes” and the “nays” is less than the total number of voters present, the Chair will ask for “All In Abstention”, with voice or hand voting. If a Board member does not respond to any of the requests, then their vote will be recorded as an Abstention. Once the voting is completed, the Chair will announce whether the motion has carried or it has been defeated, and continue with the next business item. The Chair may wish to keep the current item open for a time to wait for a restated motion (in the event of failure).

Section II – Online Meeting Operations

Beginning in 2004, the Board began conducting business online for certain issues, such as discussing timely subjects, and voting on basic issues where a detailed face-to-face deliberation isn’t needed. Robert’s Rules of Order was established well before the advent of email, therefore the Board has not had a structure for conducting Board business online. The purpose of this Section is to provide a set of rules for performing limited Academy business online.

In 2004, the Academy chartered the CyberChapter – an online CHMM Chapter for CHMMs in remote areas. CyberChapter has set up a secure meeting place for the Academy Board online at the CyberChapter website. Early use has shown this to be an excellent way for the Board to “discuss” issues and vote, if the issue is basic and detailed face-to-face deliberation isn’t needed. The BOD Secure Site (BODSS) offers near-instantaneous posting of written messages, and also has a “digest” feature that sends a summary of all posts out to Board members at a frequency of their choosing. Our Webmaster can assist Board members in setting up this feature. Basically, the Digest sends the summary of posting activity on the BODSS directly to the Board member’s specified email address, so keeping up with the Board is as simple as checking email. Of course, the Board member can always log onto the BODSS directly at any time and engage in “real-time chat” with others online at the time. **Basically, the BODSS serves as an “always-on” Board meeting – so long as the Board members check in with reasonable frequency (reasonable frequency is defined below in Part A).**

The online meetings will follow the same basic protocols of regular meetings, with a few notable exceptions:

- Since the meeting is “always on”, there is no need to Call to Order, Adjourn, or Recess. Likewise, the timeframes involved in conducting online business are longer, allowing for these tasks to be completed at our own pace and in private.

- Care must be taken in crafting your messages clearly and completely to avoid miscommunications. Remember that your postings stand solely on the words that you use. Keep it simple and straightforward.
- Respect the timeframes outlined below. The Chair must be diligent in maintaining the flow of online meetings to preserve the value of the online tool.
- Use restraint in choosing what business to conduct online. Many of our topics are complex, and must be discussed at regular face-to-face meetings. Just as many are routine approvals of Board issues. .

As we grow as an organization, it is critical that we expand our available time to conduct business, and to allow for discussion of some issues outside the quarterly Board meeting. This tool should help us to get regular tasks accomplished and to maximize the value of our “face-time”.

PART A – Meeting Location and Form

A-1 – Meeting Place

Our official meeting place for online Board business will be Board of Directors website (BODSS). Only Board members in good standing will have access to the BODSS.

A-2 – Meeting Frequency

As the BODSS operates as an “always on” Board meeting, Board members will need to monitor their email routinely to stay abreast of posted items. A minimum frequency for monitoring the online Board meeting is every three calendar days. For maximum efficiency, it is recommended that Board members monitor the BODSS daily. Certain suspension periods have been accepted for the online Board meeting, and these are listed in Section II Part B-3.

PART B – Conducting Business Online

B-1 – Motion and Voting Timeframes

The following timeframes are to be used for conducting business online:

- 1) **Motions and Seconds** - Any Board member may post a motion on any topic. Once the motion is posted, it must be seconded within three days (72 hours) of posting. If this time period expires without a second, the motion will die. If the motion is seconded, the three day time period will be truncated and the discussion period automatically begins. In order to avoid confusion, we will only consider one main motion at a time. *(This may be amended as we become more proficient at using the online Board meeting).*
- 2) **Discussion** – The discussion period will last for three days (72 hours) during which time all Board members wishing to comment on the motion will post their messages. Discussion will be limited to three

posts per member, plus one additional post if responding to a direct question from another Board member. The 72 hour discussion period may not be truncated. All discussion must take place within the 72 hour period.

- 3) **Voting and Majority** –At the end of the 72-hour Discussion period, the Chair will call for the vote. Once the vote is called for, three days (72 hours) will be allowed for voting. No further discussion will be allowed during the voting period, and all voting will be “open”, i.e. it is visible to the Board who has voted and how they have voted (just like in a regular Board meeting). The Chair may truncate the voting period by calling the vote if everyone has voted. The Chair may also call the vote if a majority is reached before the 72-hour period is over. Since the BODSS is “always on” it is assumed that the full complement of Board members are available to vote. This means that a simple majority is 6 votes. *(EXAMPLE: A vote is called and quickly receives seven affirmative votes. The Chair may then close the voting – the motion will pass and the remaining votes will be recorded as abstentions).*
- 4) Once the Vote is closed by the Chair, the issue is decided and can only be recalled by a Motion to Rescind, which is a type of motion in the full version of Robert’s Rules, accessible only through a Gate Motion (see Sections I and III).

B-2 – Recording Online Board Business

The Secretary will work with the National Administrator to assure that all online votes are recorded and presented with the Previous Meeting Minutes at the regular Board meetings. The Board can then recognize actions conducted online between Board Meetings and make them part of the official record of Board business.

B-3 – Suspended periods for the Online Meeting

The following periods will be recognized as Suspended periods for the online Board meeting. During these periods, business is suspended for the online Board meeting. For ongoing action, the clock stops and suspends at midnight of the listed days, and online business resumes at midnight plus one minute on the day after the last day of the suspension period.

- The four regular Board meetings, including the Thursday before and the Sunday after each regularly scheduled Board meeting.
- The Monday through Wednesday of the Annual Conference.
- Thanksgiving Day (Thursday) and the following Friday.
- December 24 and 25.
- December 31 and January 1
- All other federally-recognized one-day holidays (such as Labor Day, Memorial Day, President’s Day, The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Veteran’s Day, Columbus Day).

B-4 – Additional Rights of the Chair regarding Online procedures

The Chair may exert control over the online process only by implementing the **Chair's Suspension Motion**. This Motion is designed to suspend online business on a given topic, and this must be brought forth by the Chair for vote by the Board. Should the Chair wish to suspend action, it is limited to a specific topic, and must be placed to the Board in the form of a motion. The **Chair's Suspension Motion** must be seconded, and must pass by a Supermajority. This suspension privilege may only suspend a topic until the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.

SECTION III – Tools for Unusual Circumstances (or, how to access Robert's Rules Heavy)

In the Preamble and in Section I, the concept of a streamlined version of Robert's Rules using four types of motions was detailed. The purpose of Section III is to provide mechanisms for employing the full Robert's Rules process as needed. The authors of RRL recognize that Robert's Rules of Order (in its full text) provides tools to deal with almost any situation that might arise in a deliberative body. Although the need to employ these tools will be rare for the ACHMM, it is nonetheless wise to provide mechanisms to employ these rules.

A term that was introduced in Section I, and that does not appear in Robert's Rules, is what we call the "**Gate Motion**". The Gate Motion is defined as a motion for any Board member to open up the full arsenal of Robert's Rules methods and procedures for use during a meeting. If a Board member feels that the process will benefit by a Gate Motion, or if he/she feels that the process has somehow broken down or is unfair, then he/she may make a "Gate Motion".

At that time the Board member will ask the Chair to grant a Gate Motion. The Chair will immediately grant the motion and open a dialog between the person presenting the motion and the Board Parliamentarian. At this point, the person presenting the motion will ask for the specific section of Robert Rules of Order to address the issue in question that triggered the Gate Motion. The Board Parliamentarian will have a reasonable period of time (no longer than ten minutes for a live meeting and 24 hours for an online meeting) to advise the presenter of the motion of the appropriate section of Robert's to employ. Then, the presenter of the motion will proceed using the tools available in the latest version of Robert's Rules of Order. The Board Parliamentarian will provide reasonable assistance to the presenter of the motion, upon request, until the issue is resolved.

It will be the responsibility of the Board Parliamentarian to return control of the meeting to the Chair (close the gate), once the issue has been settled. The only other way to exit a Gate Motion period is for the Chair to request an immediate vote to override the Gate Motion. The Override vote must be seconded and must

pass by a Supermajority. The Board Parliamentarian presides over the Override vote process (this is the only vote that the Board Parliamentarian may control).

The purpose of the Gate Motion is to provide access to the full weight of Robert's Rules of Order. Meanwhile, the purpose of the Gate Motion Override is to keep the meeting moving if the Gate Motion becomes unreasonable.

In the interest of brevity, this RRL guidance document will not go into the details of the full Robert's Rules of Order. Suffice it to say that this Section III provides the gate to the full Robert's tool chest, with the Board Parliamentarian as the Gatekeeper (with help from the Chair as Keymaster, using the Gate Motion Override).