

NYN Assembly & AWSC Voting Procedures (9/13)

Assembly Agenda

The Assembly agenda is derived from input through the AWSC members and its committees. Suggestions of all Assembly members and the membership-at-large are carefully considered.

The Chairperson can alter the agenda if circumstances warrant. However, any significant deviation from the agenda initiated by the Chairperson or any other Assembly members requires a two-third vote of the Assembly.

Tips, Hints, and Words of Caution

In a Knowledge Based Decision Making (KBDM) culture for an Informed Group Conscience, full discussion of an idea takes place before a motion is presented. At the end of a discussion, further discussion may be necessary. A motion need not be made after every discussion. Premature action (e.g. making and amending motions early in the discussion or hastily calling the question) can divert attention from the subject at hand, thus confusing and/or delaying Assembly business.

Proposed motions may come from the recommendation by AWSC or from any Assembly member. All committees, Work Groups, Thought Forces, or Task Forces may make recommendations to the originating body.

The legitimate rights of the minority are protected by Concept Five (“The rights of appeal and petition protect the minorities and insure that they be heard”) and are observed throughout the Assembly.

Photographs at the Assembly may only be taken by the Area Archivist.

Cell phones are to be silenced in the meeting. Computers and other electronic devices shall be used for note taking and viewing of reports and other information pertinent to the meeting; members will have personal responsibility for maintaining adequate power. This will be done on a three-year trial basis. (9-27-14)

It is important to remember that the purpose of rules of order is to make it easier for the Assembly to do what it needs to do in order to carry out the will of the fellowship by reaching an informed group conscience.

Voting by show of hands or closed ballot is decided at the beginning of each Assembly. Out of deference to those holding a minority viewpoint, applause is discouraged when an Assembly member expresses an opinion with which others may agree.

Asking for Consensus

At times there is a need for a consensus from the Assembly to obtain a sense of direction before moving forward. When a consensus is requested, the Area Chairperson asks for a show of hands indicating “yes” or “no” expression from the Assembly members. Since this is not a formal vote, closed ballots are not necessary, nor will abstentions be requested.

Substantial Unanimity

All AWSC & Assembly actions require substantial unanimity. What constitutes substantial unanimity is decided at the beginning of each meeting. See Warranty Three. (below)

Each meeting will determine by an open vote (show of hands) whether to require a two-thirds majority for its decisions.

Warranty Three

That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.

Here, on the one hand, we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and on the other hand, take notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of importance will be extensively debated, until a substantial majority can support every critical decision we are called to make in the Assembly.

The Assembly voice would thus speak with authority and confidence beyond that which a simple majority could confer. If any persons remain in opposition, they are likely to be better satisfied because their views had a full hearing.

The principle of substantial unanimity does, however, have certain practical limitations. Occasionally a matter will be of such extreme urgency that an Assembly decision must be made at once. In such case a minority, however well-intended, could not be allowed to block a vitally needed action or one which is evidently in the best interest of Al-Anon. Here we shall need to trust the majority, to decide whether Assembly debate is to be terminated and a final decision taken. In certain other cases, the majority will also have to exercise its prerogative. Suppose, for example, that a small minority obstinately tries to use the principle of substantial unanimity to block a clearly needed action. In such event it would be the plain duty of the majority to override such a misuse of the principle of substantial unanimity and call for a vote.

However, majorities will probably seldom need to take such radical stands. If and when they do, the Assembly will have to decide, by a simple majority vote, what the requirements of substantial unanimity should be, whether two-thirds, three-quarters, or even greater majority.

The practical and spiritual results of substantial unanimity will make itself evident.

Proposing and Discussing Ideas and/or Proposed Motions in a Knowledge Based (KBDM) Environment for an Informed Group Conscience

In a Knowledge-Based Decision-Making (KBDM) environment for an Informed Group Conscience, ideas for motions are brought to the floor with supporting information including background, perhaps a completed KBDM Questionnaire, and ample time for the Assembly to have a discussion on the topic **without a motion**.

1. Proposed wording for a possible motion is submitted to the Area Chairperson in the Assembly motion format. (A second is not needed at this time.) This format is available from the Area Chairperson, Secretary or website.
2. Each proposed motion should be submitted to the Area Chairperson on a separate form using the Assembly motion format.
3. The Area Chairperson brings the proposed wording to the floor at the appropriate time. The person bringing the proposal with a KBDM questionnaire and /or background framing completed so that everyone understands the purpose for the proposed motion. These are submitted to the Chairperson with the motion proposal.
4. The proposed motion is read aloud by the Chairperson.
5. The Chairperson invites all members with voice to participate in a discussion on the proposed motion.
 - The person who made the proposed motion begins the discussion in order to provide the background for the Assembly members.
 - Assembly members who wish to speak line up at the microphone (mic) and are called on in order.
 - All comments are to be at a mic and are limited to two minutes at the mic per person per proposed motion.
 - 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 mic and say it again.
 - Out of deference to those holding a minority viewpoint, applause is discouraged when an Assembly member expresses an opinion with which others may agree.
 - When asking a question for clarity on the current discussion, hold up your *Service Manual*.
 - Questions begin with who, what, where, when, why, and how and do not contain personal opinions.

- Questions and answers to the questions are not subject to the two minute time limit.
 - If a question arises, it is the Area Chairperson's responsibility to call on the appropriate person to answer the question.
 - Only one proposed motion may be discussed at a time
 - If the proposed motion as stated is unclear, the Area Chairperson may ask the originator to reword it.
 - The Area Chairperson or any other Assembly member with voice may ask to have the discussion held at another time.
 - The Chairperson does not enter into the discussion.
 - Focus on the proposed motion—remember we are to “presume goodwill” and to practice “principles above personalities.”
6. The Chairperson will ask for the consensus on each change that is proposed before moving ahead. For each proposed change the Chairperson may ask: “Is it correct?” or “Can we live with it?”
 7. The Chairperson will ask for a consensus of the Assembly that the motion proposal be acted upon at this time. (The Assembly may also choose to wait or to obtain further information on the topic.)
 8. After all wording changes are discussed and agreed upon, the Chairperson will ask for the official motion to be made. A second is required at this time.
 9. The Chairperson will ask for any further discussion.
 10. When discussion ends, a vote on the motion will be called for. The roll call will be taken, no voting member to enter or leave the room until the vote is complete.

Developing and Presenting Motions

By Assembly Members Who Have a Vote

Matters that are recommended by the AWSC and/or its committees are submitted to the Assembly in advance, whenever possible, in the form of a proposed motion for the Assemblies approval. At the appropriate time, the motion will be read to the Assembly.

If the Assembly wishes to act on the proposed motion, a second may come from any voting member of the Assembly. When making a motion or giving a second state your first name and last initial, GR for _____, District # _____.

How Floor Motions are Developed

When the conscience of the Assembly indicates a specific motion is in order, any voting member of the Assembly may prepare a proposed motion.

If the Assembly wishes to act on the proposed motion, a second must be from a voting member of the Assembly.

Who Can Vote?

AWSC Meetings: Officers, Coordinators, District Representatives, Past Delegates and Trustees (who have remained active at the Area level)

Assemblies: Group representatives, their Alternates or Designees (cannot be a dual member). One vote per group/ One vote per person.

Voting on the Motion

- The Chairperson gives a copy of the Motion to the Area Secretary
- The Chairperson asks for the Area Secretary to reread the motion
- The Chairperson calls for the vote
- All Assembly members are asked to remain in the Assembly room during the discussion and the vote
- The following number of votes are required to carry a motion: Each Assembly determines for itself the percentage required to carry all motions. We strive to abide by the Third Warranty principle: “that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.” (pg.213 in the 2010-2013 Service Manual)
- Closed or Open Voting: At the beginning of each Assembly, it will be determined by a show of hands whether we will have closed or open voting on matters of substance. If closed balloting is approved, the Chairperson requests discretion in asking for a show of hands in procedural and consensus matters.
- Counting the Vote – Closed Ballot
 - Ballots are marked YES, NO, or ABSTAIN,*
 - Ballots are collected by those persons designated by the chairperson
 - The vote is announced by the Chairperson and recorded by the Area Secretary

*Abstentions are not considered as votes. Therefore, the number of voting members will vary from motion to motion.

- Void Ballots – A ballot is considered void if any of the following occur:
 - No mark is indicated showing YES, NO, or ABSTAIN;
 - More than one category is marked.

Presentation of Routine Motions

At each Assembly motions for routine matters are presented for approval; this will include such matters as minutes of the previous Assembly meeting, Treasurer’s Report, Budget for the

coming year, Host Districts for upcoming Assemblies and Conventions and other routine matters. These motions will be presented at the discretion of the Area Chairperson for approval during the course of the meeting agenda. The use of open voting (show of hands) for these matters will be acceptable; however a motion and a second will be necessary and will require the person to stand and identify themselves using their first name and the initial of their last name; GR for _____, District # _____.

Additional Motion Procedures

In a Knowledge-Based Decision Making (KBDM) culture for an Informed Group conscience, thorough discussion of a topic generally takes place before a motion comes to the floor, often making the need for amendments unnecessary. However, should there be a need, follow these procedures:

- **Amendments** Should there be a need for an amendment, it must be related.
 1. **To insert or add**
“I move to amend the motion by inserting the word, ‘red,’ before the word, ‘roses.’”
 2. **To strike out**
“I move to amend by striking out the words, ‘long stemmed,’ before the word, ‘roses.’”
 3. **To strike out and insert**
“I move to amend the motion by striking the word, roses,’ and inserting the word, ‘flowers.’”

Reminder: state your first name & last initial, GR for _____, District # _____.

- **Postponing Discussion on a Motion**
The Area Chairperson has the authority to delay or continue a discussion at his/her discretion. If the Assembly objects, it takes a motion, second, and vote of substantial unanimity to overrule the Chairperson’s decision.
- **Tabling a motion**
 - Requires a motion and a second
 - Is not debatable
 - Needs substantial unanimity to pass
 - If passed, the motion is rescheduled at the discretion of the Area Chairperson unless motion directs a specific date.
- **Calling the Question**

Calling the question brings the discussion to a halt while the Assembly members proceed immediately to vote on the issue before them. A motion to call the question:

- Is made in order at the microphone
- Requires a second
- Is not debatable
- Requires a two-thirds vote by show of hands

If the question is passed, discussion ceases and Assembly members proceed immediately to vote on the issue before them. If the question is not passed, discussion on the main issue resumes.

- **Reconsideration**

A request to reconsider after the vote must be made by an Assembly member who voted with the majority and wished to reconsider the issue.

- Requires a motion and a second.
- The Assembly member who is proposing reconsideration is the only member to speak to the reason for requesting the reconsideration.
- Needs a two-third majority by consensus to pass.
- If there is a consensus to reconsider, full discussion on the original motion is resumed. (Assembly members are urged to limit discussion to new considerations of the question under discussion.)

The same motion may be reconsidered only once.

Accepted 9/21/13 as amended