

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This list of definitions and acronyms provides easy-to-understand explanations of words, phrases, terms and acronyms commonly used in local government that may not be familiar to citizens or newly elected or appointed municipal officials.

A

Abstain - To refrain deliberately from voting.

Ad-hoc - For a particular purpose, for a limited time.

Ad-valorem tax - A tax levied on the assessed value of real property.

Adopt- Formal acceptance of what a motion proposes usually established by a vote.

Agenda- A list or outline of things to be done at a meeting; the most important of which is the terms of business.

Amendment- A change or addition that changes the meaning or scope of an original formal document, usually laws or regulations, but can include plans, specifications, contracts, etc.

B

Board Clerk/Secretary- County employee designated by department director that serves as the recording officer.

Bond- An interest bearing certificate issued by a government or business, redeemable on a specific date; used as a measure of raising funds for capital improvements.

C

Call to order- The opening action of a presiding officer or chair that officially starts a meeting.

Call or put the question to vote- A motion; a subject or point of debate or a proposition to be voted on in a meeting; the bringing of such to a vote; the specific point at issue. The “question” is whether the board/committee/assembly agrees to or will adopt the immediately pending motion.

Capital improvement- A government acquisition of real property, major construction project, or acquisition of long-lasting, expensive equipment.

Carried- The same as “adopted.”

Chair- The person presiding; the station in the meeting room from which the person presides.

Chairman- The person in the chair or the one presiding over the meeting.

Chairman pro tem (pro tempore) - The individual appointed or elected to preside on a temporary basis.

Chairperson- A recent variant of “chairman.”

Charrette- A creative, intense work session with public workshops and open houses.

Con- On the negative side; against; in opposition to (as in pro and con).

Consensus- General agreement; unanimity; a group decision-making process where substantial agreement is reached by all concerned parties.

Consent agenda- A policy of the governing body to approve, in one motion, routine and/or non-controversial items, as determined prior to the meeting; a Councilmember may request that any item be removed for a separate discussion.

Custom- A long established practice considered as unwritten law.

D

Debate- Discussion on the merits of a motion; the formal discussion on the reasons for or against a pro-posed action.

Decorum- Customs of formality that are followed by the presiding officer and members of a board/ committee/assembly; propriety and good taste in conduct or appearance.

Defeated motion- A motion which has been defeated.

E

Easement- An interest in land owned by another that entitles its holder to a specific limited use.

Elect- Choose by vote for an office, position or membership.

Enterprise fund- Used to account for operations that provide goods or services to the general public on a user-charge basis.

Executive session- Any meeting of a deliberative assembly, or a portion of a meeting at which the proceedings are secret.

Ex officio- By virtue of an office or chairmanship held in the society or in the state or national society or federation. An ex-officio member, is an individual who is a member of boards/committees by virtue of an office held.

F

Floor- The exclusive right to speak in a meeting.

G

Gavel- A mallet used by a presiding officer for commanding attention or confirming an action.

General consent- A time-saving procedure whereby routine business or questions of little importance are decided/approved without putting a formal vote; a form of voting in which no objection is voiced (considered unanimous consent).

Germane- Closely related to (used in relation to amendments and debate which must be germane to the motion being amended or debated).

Good of the order (general good and welfare) - An agenda item under which open and informal discussion is permitted on a varying range of topics related to the organization as a whole.

H

Hearing- An open meeting of a board or committee in which members of the society have the opportunity to appear before the committee and present their views on a subject.

I

Impact fees- set-aside fees collected from citizens and developers for infrastructure adjustments to the community; monies to be used as the development further impacts the municipality.

Indecorum- Lack of decorum; a breach of order; a violation of the rules or customs of formality in a meeting.

In order- Appropriate in the current environment according to parliamentary or other rules of a society.

L

Law- a: A binding custom or practice of a community; a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority; **b:** The whole body of such customs, practices, or rules.

Legislative body- Refers to a constitutionally established public lawmaking body of representatives.

M

Main motion- A formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the board/committee take certain action; the lowest ranking of the thirteen ranking motions.

Majority- More than half; a number greater than half of total.

Majority vote- The basic requirement for approval of an action or choice by a deliberative board/ committee; without qualification it means more than half of the votes cast by members legally entitled to vote who are present and voting.

Meeting- A single official gathering of the members of a board/committee/organization in one room or area to transact business for a length of time during which there is no cessation of proceedings and the members do not separate, unless for a short recess.

Meeting notice- A written notice of the time and place for a meeting; to invite or command to meet.

Member- A person who has the right to participate in a meeting and whose opinion has equal weight with other members as expressed by a vote. A member has the right to make motions, to speak in debate and to vote.

Mill- a term used to express the property tax rate.

Minority- The smaller in number of two groups constituting a whole; specifically: a group having less than the number of votes necessary for control.

Minutes- The official record of the proceedings of a deliberative board/committee/assembly which contain mainly a record of what was done at the meeting, not what was said by the members.

Motion- A formal proposal for action made to a deliberative board/committee/assembly; a question.

N

Nay- A vote against; a negative reply or vote.

Negative vote- A vote against the adoption of a motion.

New business- New items of business or matters which may be brought up to a board/committee/assembly for consideration.

Null and void- Having no legal or binding force or effect.

O

Objection (object) - A formal expression of opposition to a proposed or pending action or motion; to oppose something firmly and usually with words or arguments.

Obtain the floor- Secure recognition in order to speak or to make a motion.

Officer- One who holds an office of trust, authority, or command in an organization.

Opening ceremony- A series of acts prescribed by protocol which immediately follow the meeting call to order and may include the Invocation, the singing of the National Anthem, the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance, a ritual briefly recalling the objects or ideals of the organization, or the like.

Opposed- To be hostile or adverse to; to be against the adoption of the pending motion.

Order- The customary or prescribed mode of proceeding in debates or in the conduct of deliberative or legislative bodies, public meetings, etc., (i.e., parliamentary rules of order).

Order of business- An established sequence in which certain types or classes of business are to be brought up or permitted to be introduced at sessions of a given board/committee/assembly.

Ordinance- An enforceable municipal law, statute or regulation that applies to all citizens within that municipality; penalty provisions may apply.

Out of order- A motion, request, or behavior which is in violation of the rules of an organization.

Outrank- Take precedence of; to rank higher than.

P

Parliamentary procedure- A set of rules for the orderly conduct of business at meetings that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.

Pass/passed (with reference to a motion) - The same as adopted or carried.

Pending motion (pending question) - A motion which has been stated by the chair but has not yet been disposed of permanently or temporarily.

Personal privilege- A right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage or favor of an individual in a society. A question of personal privilege, may relate to an incorrect record of a member's participation or to charges circulated against a member's character.

Podium- A dais especially for a presiding officer; lectern.

Policy- A high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures in and for a society.

Preamble- Usually refers to the statement(s) of the reasons for the action being proposed in a resolution. The preamble begins with the word "Whereas".

Precedence (or rank) - Briefly, priority or rank of motions; the rules whereby secondary motions take precedence (may be made while a main motion or secondary motions of lower rank are pending).

Precedent- Something done or said that may serve as an example or rule to authorize or justify a subsequent act of the same or an analogous kind.

Preside- To exercise guidance, direction or control of a meeting; to occupy the place of authority; act as president, chairman, or moderator.

Presiding officer- The person conducting a meeting; the individual who has the responsibility of exercising guidance, direction and control of a meeting of a deliberative board/committee/assembly.

Prevailing side- The winning side, whether affirmative or negative.

Previous notice- An announcement of intent to introduce a proposal - indicating its exact content - given at the preceding meeting or in the call of the meeting at which the proposal is to be brought up.

Pro- On the affirmative side; in favor of (as in pro and con).

Pro tem (pro tempore)- For the time being; temporarily.

Protocol- A code prescribing strict adherence to correct etiquette and precedence.

Public hearing- Provides citizens the opportunity to express their position on a specific issue, both pro and con, as mandated either by statute or by order of proper authority after due notice.

Public record- Any record retained by a government body as further defined by statute and open to inspection.

Q

Quasi-judicial- Referring to the actions of a governmental entity in which there are hearings, orders, judgments or other activities similar to those conducted by courts.

Quorum- The minimum number of voting members who must be present at a meeting of a deliberative board/committee/assembly for business to be legally transacted.

R

Rank- The same as precedence.

Ratify- To approve and sanction formally. In a parliamentary sense, it means to confirm or make.

Recognition- The chair's formal acknowledgment that a member is assigned the floor.

Recognize- The process by which the presiding officer assigns the floor to a member for the purpose of making a motion, to speak in debate or to make a proper inquiry permitted under the rules.

Regular meeting- The periodic business meeting of a permanent society, local branch or board, held at weekly, monthly, quarterly or similar intervals, for which the day should be prescribed by the bylaws and the hour should be fixed by a standing rule of the society.

Resignation- The formal act of giving up one's office or position.

Resolution- A decision, opinion, policy or directive of a municipality expressed in a formally drafted document and voted upon.

Robert's Rules of Order- The most widely used manual on parliamentary procedure written by General Henry M. Robert; originally published in 1876.

Roll call- The procedure (usually by the Board Liaison or Clerk) of calling off a list of names (as for checking attendance).

Roll call vote- The process of voting by each member responding "yea" or "nay" as their names are called by the minutes secretary or staff liaison. It has the opposite effect of a ballot vote.

Rules of order- Refers to the written rules of parliamentary procedure; such rules relate to the orderly transaction of business in meetings and to the duties of officers in that connection.

Ruling- A decision of the chair on questions of parliamentary law usually rendered in response to a point of order.

S

Second- A verbal, sometimes written, indication made by any member of a board/committee/assembly that he agrees that a motion made should come before the meeting (not that he necessarily favors the motion).

Secretary pro tem- The person elected or appointed to serve as secretary on a temporary basis, as in the case where the secretary may not be present at a meeting.

Special assessment district (SAD) - A district where the cost of improvements provided by bond proceeds are assessed against property owners benefited by the improvements.

Special meeting (or called meeting) - A separate session of a society held at a time different from that of any regular meeting and convened only to consider one or more items of business specified in the call of the meeting.

Special rules of order- Parliamentary rules adopted by an organization which it finds are needed at that moment in order to address a situation that arises and there is no existing rule to address it.

Standing rules (except in the case of conventions) - Rules which are related to the details of the administration of a society rather than to parliamentary procedure.

Stating the question- After a motion is made and seconded the presiding officer repeats the motion so there will be no doubt what is to be considered.

Statute- A law enacted by the legislative branch of the state or federal government.

Subcommittee- A subdivision of a committee usually organized for a specific purpose. A subcommittee is responsible to and reports to the board/committee which organized it.

Substitute motion- The motion proposed to be substituted for the pending motion.

Super majority (a fairly recent term) - A majority that must represent some percentage more than a simple majority (more than half), e.g., a two-thirds or a three-fifths vote.

Sustain- To uphold or support as true, legal or just. When a point of order or any ruling of the chair is appealed, a presiding officer may ask the assembly to decide if the decision of the chair should stand as the judgment of the assembly. If the board/committee votes "yes," they are said to sustain the decision of the chair.

T

Table- A colloquial term for disposing of a motion by putting it aside temporarily.

Tie vote- An equal number of affirmative and negative votes; since a tie vote is not a majority, a motion requiring a majority vote for adoption is lost.

Timekeeper- Appointed by the presiding officer (mostly at conventions) to monitor the time each speaker is allotted for debate.

Two-thirds vote (when the term is unqualified) - At least two-thirds of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote, excluding blanks and abstentions, at a regular or properly called meeting at which a quorum is present.

U

Unanimous consent- A time-saving procedure whereby routine business or questions of little importance are decided/approved without taking a formal vote. See **general consent**.

Undebatable motion- A motion on which discussion is not permitted.

Unfinished business- Matters not completed at the previous meeting, which are included on the agenda of the current meeting.

V

Vacancy- An office or position which has not been filled or which is otherwise not occupied by an incumbent.

Vacate the chair- The process whereby the regular presiding officer leaves the chair and another individual presides.

Variance- An exception to certain development standards such as setbacks, building height, lot dimensions and other zoning code requirements.

Voice vote- The process of voting by voice where an "Aye" vote indicates for or in favor and a "No" vote means against or not in favor.

Vote- A formal expression of the will, or opinion, or preference of the members of an assembly in regard to a matter submitted to it.

W

Withdraw (as a motion) - To take back or remove from consideration.

Y

Yeas and nays- Another term for a roll call vote.

Yield- Give precedence to; give way to. A lower ranking motion yields to a motion of higher rank.

Yield the floor- When a member who has been recognized as "having the floor" finishes speaking, he is said to "yield the floor" after he sits down.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

ADT – Average Daily Traffic

AG – Attorney General

CAFR – Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

CDBG – Community Development Block Grant

CDD – Community Development District

CERT – Citizens Emergency Response Team

CILB – Construction Industry Licensing Board

CIP – Capital Improvement Program

CMC – Certified Municipal Clerk

CO – Certificate of Occupancy

COBRA – Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act

COP – Certificate of Participation

COPS – Community Oriented Policing Services

CRA – Community Redevelopment Agency

DBPR – Department of Business and Professional Regulations

DCA – Department of Community Affairs

DEP – Department of Environmental Protection

DRI – Development of Regional Impact

DROP – Deferred Retirement Option Plan

DROW – Drainage Right-of-Way

EDC – Economic Development Council

EOC – Emergency Operations Center

EIS – Environmental Impact Statement

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

ERC – Equivalent Residential Connection

ERU – Equivalent Residential Unit

FDEP – Florida Department of Environmental Protection

FDOT – Florida Department of Transportation

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

FPUA – Fort Pierce Utility Authority

FRDAP – Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program

GASB – Governmental Accounting Standards Board

GFOA – Governmental Finance Officers Association

GIS – Geographic Information System

GO – General Obligation

HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act

HUD – Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (federal)

IJR – Interchange Justification Report
ISTEA – Intermodal Surface Transportation & Efficiency Act
JPA – Joint Participation Agreement or Joint Planning Agreement
LAP – Local Agency Program
MIS – Management Information Services
MMC – Master Municipal Clerk
MPA – Metropolitan Planning Area
MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization
MSA – Municipal Service Area or Metropolitan Statistical Area or Medical Savings Account
MSBU – Municipal Services Benefit Unit
MSTU – Municipal Special Taxing Unit
NPDES – National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS – National Resource Conservation Service
OMB – Office of Management & Budget
PD&E – Plan, Design & Engineering Study
PSA – Police Service Aide
PUD – Planned Unit Development
RFI – Request for Information
RFP – Request for Proposal
RFQ – Request for Quote
ROW – Right-of-Way
RPC – Regional Planning Commission
RTC – Resolution Trust Company
SAD – Special Assessment District
SCADA – Supervisory Control Data Acquisition
TAC – Technical Advisory Committee to MPO
TCCLG – Treasure Coast Council of Local Governments
TCBA – Treasure Coast Builders Association
TCRPC – Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
TDC – Tourist Development Council
TEFRA – Tax Equity & Fiscal Responsibility Act
TIF – Tax Increment Financing
TPL – Trust for Public Land
TRIM – Truth in Millage
UBC – Uniform Building Code
ULP – Unfair Labor Practice