PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE
A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Are your meetings stressful and chaotic when your group is attempting to make a decision?
Do multiple individuals attempt to carry on several conversations at the same time, while others sit in the back of the room and are disengaged from the topics being discussed?
Would you like organized, efficient meetings with positive decision making experiences for participants?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you need to know and implement the basics of parliamentary procedures. Meetings run ineffectively can result in arguments among participants, poor decisions being made, and people leaving the meeting feeling confused and frustrated.

Parliamentary procedure is a method of running effective meetings by providing a way of conducting business in a fair, orderly, and democratic manner. The purpose is to help a group of decision makers stay on track and accomplish their goals. Think of parliamentary procedures as the rules of the road. Without them you would not know which side to drive on, when to stop, when to go, or who has right of way. However, it is important to understand that the "rules" of parliamentary procedure are simply guidelines to follow, not laws. The most commonly used system of parliamentary procedure is Roberts Rules of Order, which provides an in depth description of procedures used in conducting meetings.

The fundamental elements to understand about parliamentary procedure are:
- Only one item of business may be handled at a time.
- All participants have the right to discussion and information.
- All members (participants) have equal rights, privileges, and obligations.
- The majority rules and has the right to make decisions.
- The minority has rights which must be respected.

The key to understanding parliamentary procedure and using it effectively is learning the motions, methods, and lingo, then practice using those skills. Because it is easy to become overwhelmed by all of the motions, one should only concentrate on those that will be used on a regular basis. For an in-depth review of parliamentary procedure, one should refer to Roberts Rules of Order. For a detailed PowerPoint resource, visit the Texas AgriLife Extension website: http://buildingconnections.tamu.edu.

REFERENCES
