



Robert's Rules and Conducting Meetings

Question:

At the last (annual) board meeting the election of new officers was one of the orders of business. The Superintendent temporarily served as the Chair to conduct this item of business. A motion was made to "retain the same officers for the upcoming school year." There was no call for any nominations. One of the board members asked if this was proper procedure and the temporary chair ruled that it was and a vote was called for. The motion passed 3-2. Robert's Rules of Order stipulate that it takes a 2/3rds vote in the affirmative to close nominations; however, there had not been any call for nominations. Any input or comments would be appreciated.

Answer:

The first thing to do when any procedural questions arise is to refer to your district's policy manual. Your district should have a policy that addresses school board meeting procedure and the duties of officers and it should be the guide for action. Furthermore, if Robert's Rules have been the approved method for conducting meetings then those rules should also be investigated and followed. The ISBA Model Policy on the duties of the chair does not allow for a non-board member to act as chair, or in any other elected board role.

Our policy states that "The Chairman is permitted to participate in all Board meetings in a manner equal to all other Board members, including the right to participate in debate and to vote. The Chairman may not make a motion, but may second motions." Under this policy, the Chairman has no need to hand over control of a vote to other person because he or she is allowed to both participate and to vote on all issues, including the elections of officers. The only limitation is on making motions, however, the Chair is free to call for nominations.

The version of Robert's Rules that I use as a reference, has a section regarding boards which states "the board cannot delegate its power/responsibilities to others". However, I am aware that there are situations under Robert's Rules where one can suspend the rules and appoint someone else to conduct a particular point as temporary chair. I have also seen where the body will suspend the rules to have another member serve as chair for that particular meeting only. However, it is a complicated process and one that is very damaging to the harmony of the board. I would not recommend this practice. Going forward, I would review your policy manual's section on the Board of Trustees at the next meeting so that all board members are familiar with the policies and procedures in place. If you would like any policy assistance, ISBA offers a variety of policy services.

contact us with your question:



Idaho School Boards Association

PO Box 9797
Boise, ID 83707-4797

phone (866) 799-4722
fax (208) 854-1480

web www.idsba.org
email info@idsba.org

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