

GENERAL CONSENT

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There are times when a Chair faces a situation in which there seems to be no opposition when handling routine business or on a question of little importance. Generally, in a meeting of a deliberative assembly, (a quorum being present of course), business is conducted using a formal procedure of motion, debate, and & vote. However, if there are no objections, action could be taken on items of routine business, such as adoption of the minutes by general (or unanimous) consent. Only items that are every day items, mundane or routine, should be handled in this manner. The procedure of using general consent is to expedite business by eliminating the need for formal votes on routine questions in which the existence of a consensus is quite likely.

One of the principles of Parliamentary Law is that the rules are designed for the protection of the minority. When there is no minority to protect, there is no need to so strictly enforce the procedures. Under these conditions, the method of general consent can be used either to adopt a motion without the steps of stating the question, asking for a seconder, debate, putting the motion to a formal vote.

To use general consent, the chair simply states for example: **Chair:** The minutes having been published (*or printed or distributed*) are there any errors or omissions? (*Pause and wait for a response - don't wait too long - just long enough to see if there is going to be a reaction.*) IF there is no response - "There being no errors or omissions, the minutes are adopted as published."

If there is a response and a correction is made the Chair states "Are there any further errors or corrections?" (*Pause again*). "There being no further corrections, the minutes are adopted as corrected."

If anyone objects, the chair simply proceeds to state the question on the motion, calls for any debate (unless it is an "undebatable" motion), and put takes the vote as per usual. If there had been no motion has been made, the Chair must first ask, "Is there a motion to ... *stating the proposed action*".

If an objection is made with reasonable promptness, even though the chair may have already announced that there had been "no objection," the Chair should disregard the announcement and proceed to state the question in the usual manner. "General consent" does not necessarily mean or imply that every member present is in favour of the proposed action; it may only mean that those who might be opposed feel that it is not worthwhile to spend time debating the issue, and simply accede.

When a member does object, the member may not necessarily oppose the motion itself, but may merely think that a formal vote should be taken, so the Chair should not feel offended. No member should hesitate to object if he feels it is desirable to do so, but he should not object merely for dilatory purposes.

The correction and approval of minutes is a good example of business that is normally handled by general consent. Another example may be, where the bylaws don't preclude such action, allowing a speaker additional time in debate. If the Chair sees that the members are obviously absorbed in listening to a speaker who seems near the end of his remarks, the Chair may use General Consent to allow the speaker to conclude the remarks, even though the individuals debate time has expired.

*Please note: The preceding information is provided in good faith as BASIC information and does not cover all situations, The author accepts no responsibility for anything which occurs directly or indirectly as a result of using any of the suggestions or procedures addressed in this article. All suggestions and procedures are provided in good faith as **general guidelines only as not all circumstances and situations can be covered** and suggestions above should be used in conjunction with relevant legislation, constitutions, rules, laws, bylaws, and with reasonable judgement.*