Robert’s Rules of Order: How Meetings Work

LSU Agricultural Faculty Council Meeting
April 24, 2026

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Robert’s Rules of Order: How Meetings Work

Outline

- Structure of meetings
- How decisions are made
- Managing discussion

Meetings Have Structure

Standard elements of a meeting of a deliberative body:

- Call to order
- Approval of minutes
- Reports
- New business
- Adjournment

Question:

Who controls the content and the order of business?

Agendas Must Be Approved

When using an agenda:

- It must be approved by the body
- This happens at the beginning of the meeting
- It can be modified before approval
- Before approval, the agenda is a proposal—not a decision

The body—not the chair—controls the order of business!

Why Is This Important?

He who controls the agenda controls the deliberative body

The Power of the Agenda

The phrase "he who controls the agenda controls the deliberative body" suggests that whoever sets the agenda in a meeting or organization has significant influence over its outcomes and decisions.

This is because the agenda determines which topics are discussed, the order of discussion, and how much time is allocated to each item, thereby shaping the direction and focus of the meeting or organization.

Why This Is Important:

By approving the agenda, the body controls its own order of business—and therefore controls what will—and will not—be considered.

The Purpose of Motions

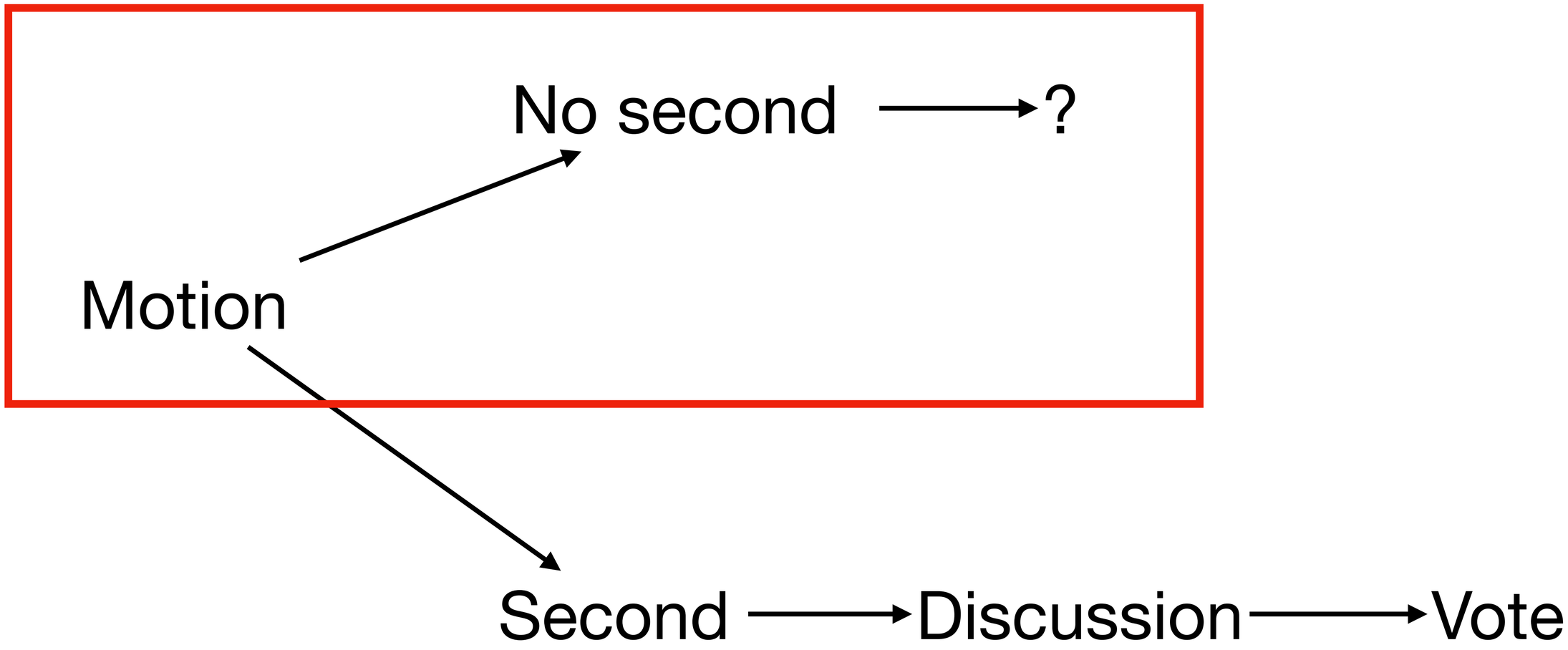
The Key Idea

Decisions are made through
the making and perfecting of motions

The Other Side of The Coin

Discussion outside of the context of a motion is just talking without a clear end in mind.

How a Decision Happens



Are All Motions Worthy of Being Seconded?

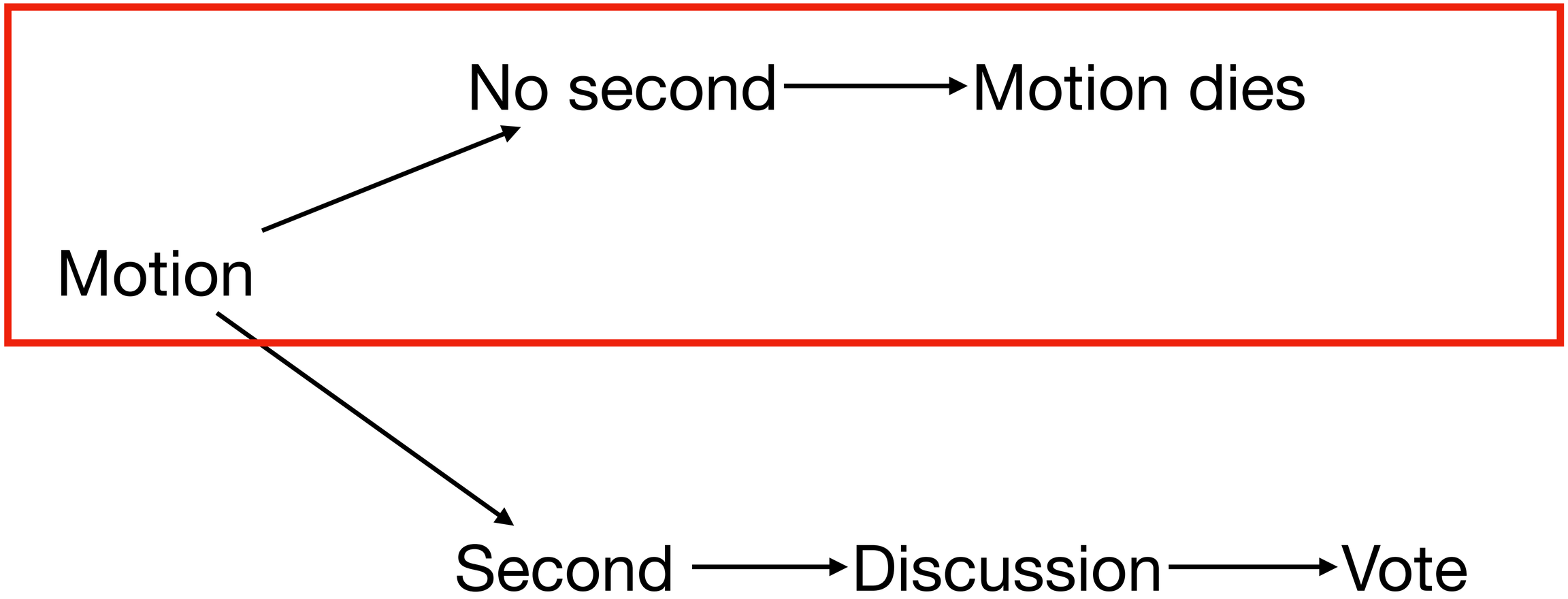

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The Power of the Second

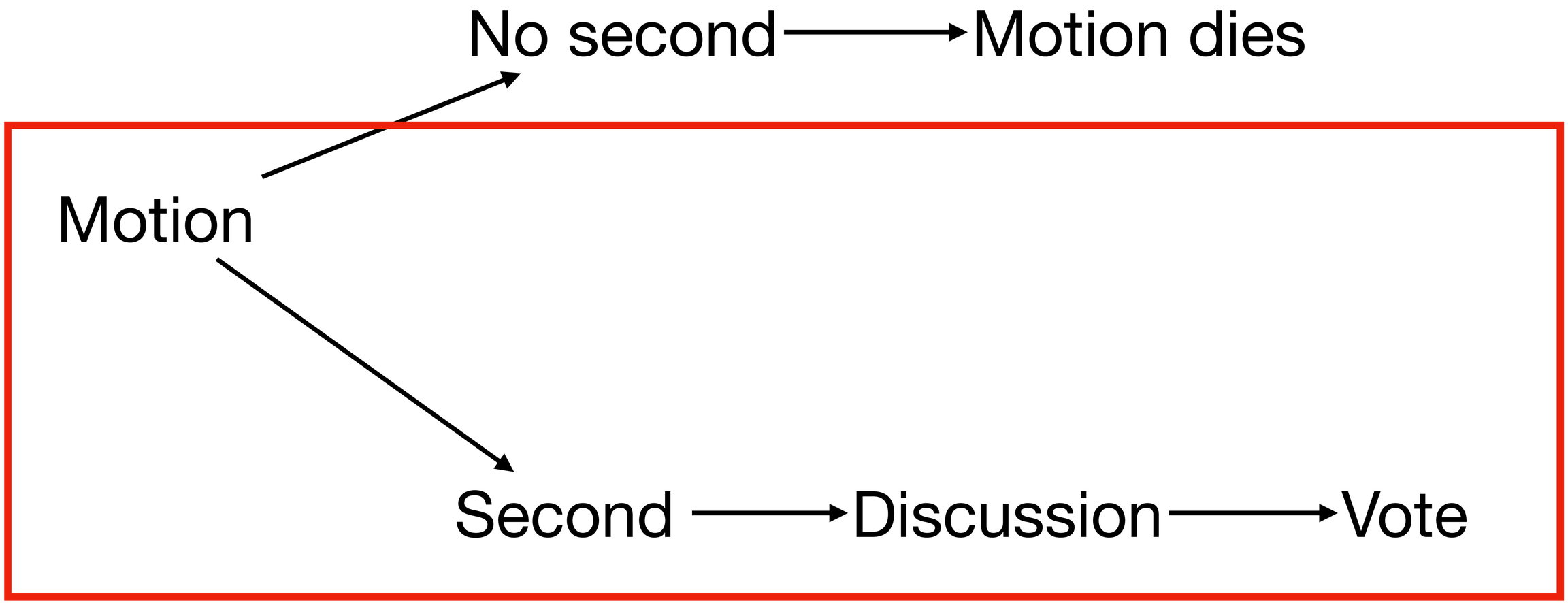
- Seconding a motion is necessary in order for the motion to be considered, even discussed.
- If you believe that a motion is worthy of discussion, feel free to second it.
- Never feel obligated to second a motion.
- A second doesn't mean you support the motion—it just means you think it's worth discussing. Seconding a motion does not obligate a person to vote in favor of it.
- If a motion is not seconded, the motion dies and business moves on to the next agenda item.

The second is what opens the door to discussion.

How a Decision Happens



How a Decision Happens

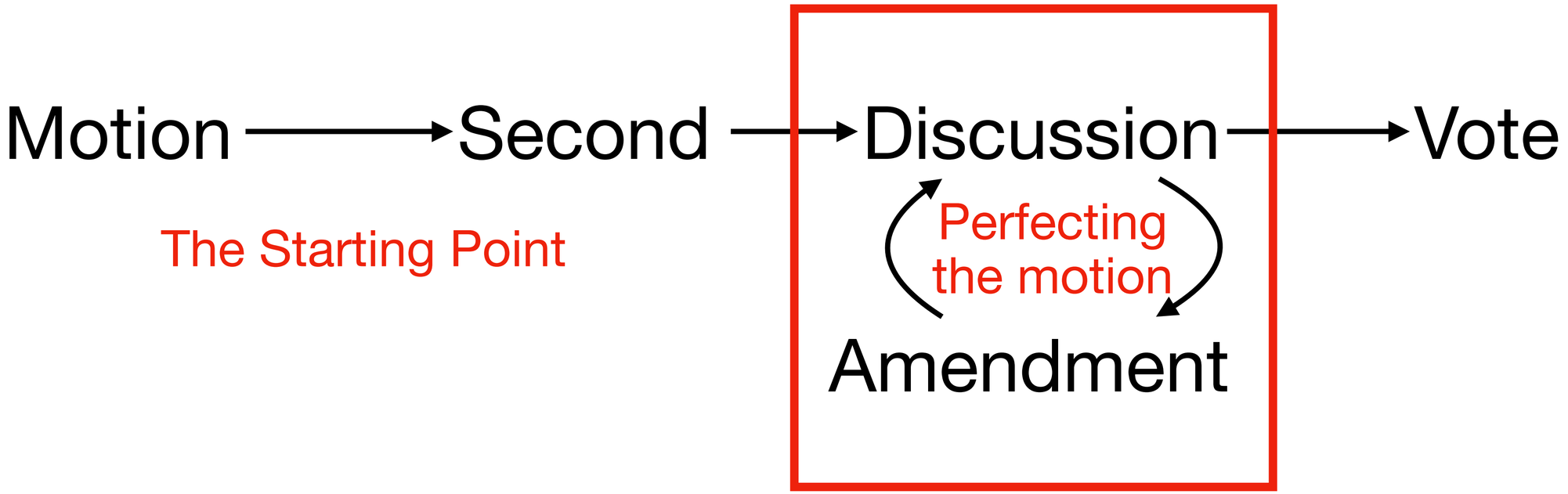


How a Decision Happens

Motion → Second → Discussion → Vote

This is actually a bit oversimplified

How a Decision Happens



Why Following This Process Matters

- Everyone knows what is being discussed
- Discussion stays focused on the motion
- Everyone knows what is being voted on
- Decisions are clear and recorded in the minutes

Managing Discussion

- Discussion must be orderly and respectful (never personal)
- Comments are directed towards the chair
- Speak when recognized by the chair
- One person at a time
- Stay focused on the motion
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to speak

What This Means for AFC

- Motions focus discussions and clarify decisions
- Discussion stays on topic
- Everyone has a voice
- Outcomes are clear

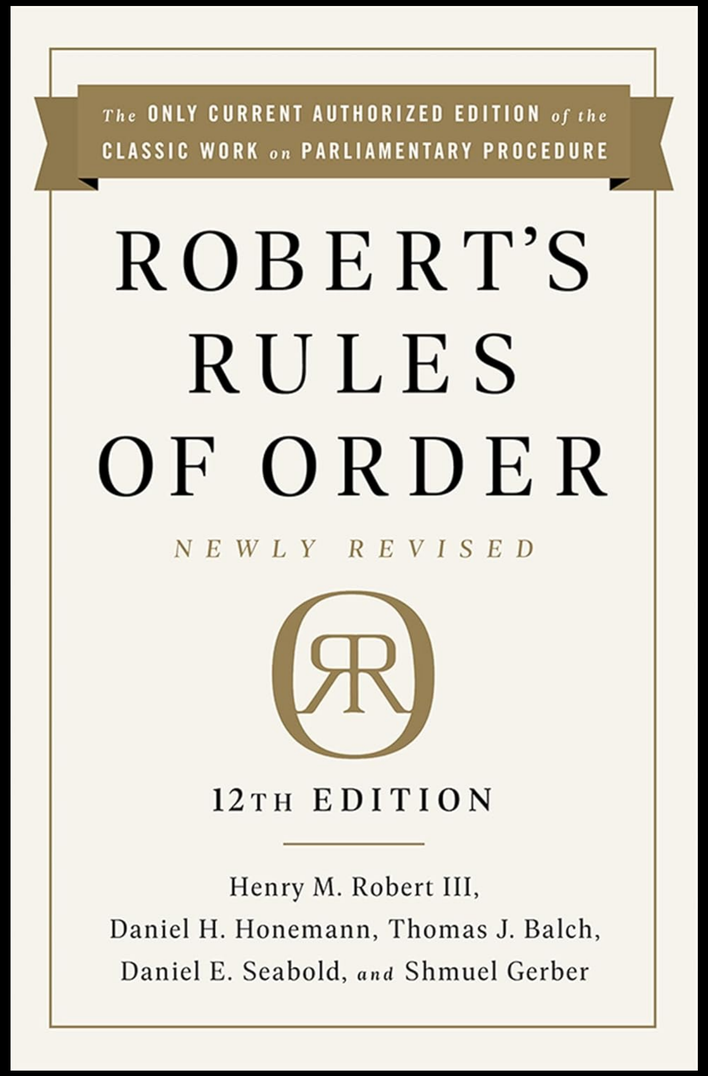
Looking Ahead

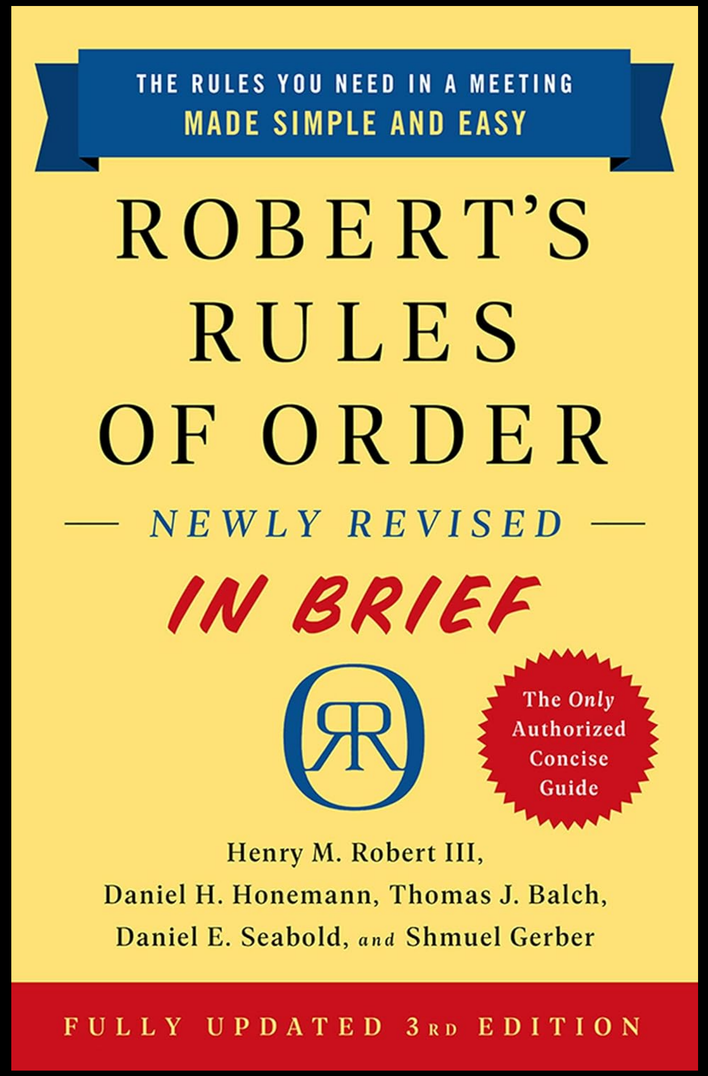
May Presentation

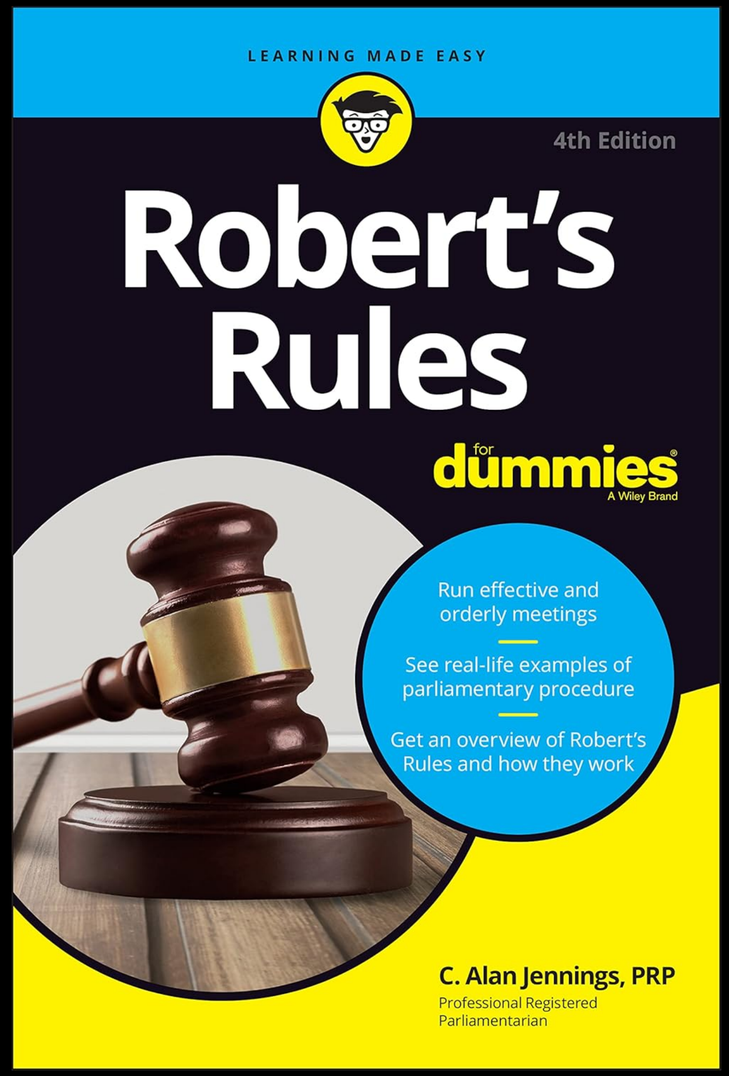
The Motion-Amendment Process — The “Secret Sauce” of effective decision making by deliberative bodies

- Amendments
- How motions change
- How agendas can be modified

Resources


The ONLY CURRENT AUTHORIZED EDITION of the CLASSIC WORK on PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE
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