

Bylaws Committee

It is advised that every permanent organization, such as County and State Extension Councils, have rules to define the organization, provide for efficient and equitable transaction of its business, and protect its membership. These rules generally deal with basic structure and operation of the organization itself (i.e., name, purpose, etc.). Typically, these rules can be in a single document called “bylaws.”

A bylaws committee is essential for each Extension Council. Bylaws committee members can volunteer to serve or be appointed by the council president. Bylaws committee members should serve a specified term (1, 2, or 3 years as designated in the organization’s bylaws) to ensure rotation. The bylaws committee may consist of an officer along with other general members. Bylaws committee members should be well-versed with knowledge of the Council’s bylaws to ensure that business is being conducted as defined. A working knowledge of parliamentary procedure is also beneficial.

Duties of the Bylaws Committee

Each council should have a bylaws committee to review the current bylaws yearly and to prepare proposed changes to ensure bylaws remain up to-date. When bylaw amendments are completed, copies of the proposed bylaws should be given to every member in advance of the the meeting at which they are to be considered and action will be taken (as specified or at least one to two weeks prior). Here are a few tips to remember when making changes to bylaws:

- Changes to the bylaws require a motion at the meeting.
- A quorum must be present to consider any motions.
- The motion should be made by the bylaws committee chair or a member of the committee. No second is required when the motion comes from a committee.
- Separate motions for each bylaw amendment will allow each change to be considered individually with time for discussion and a vote to decide whether to accept or decline the amendment.
- A majority vote is necessary to adopt bylaw amendments. The bylaws may define a specific parameter for the majority (simple majority, two-thirds vote, etc.)
- Bylaws become effective immediately upon their adoption unless otherwise stated.

Consider providing a copy of *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief* as a reference tool for the bylaws committee.

References:

- Hall, B. (2014). *Simplified Handbook of Parliamentary Procedure*, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service. <https://www.uaex.uada.edu/publications/PDF/MP350.pdf>.
- Robert, H.M. III, Honemann, D.H., and Balch, T.J. (2020). *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised In Brief*, Public Affairs, Hachette Book Group, New York, NY.

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