

## Guidelines for Placing Items on PGI Proposed Agenda

Professional Geologists of Indiana, Inc., January 10, 2007

A Commentary by Charles W. Zuppann

Items for the proposed agenda should be stated in the form of a positive motion to do something (except for reports, where nothing is voted on).

For example, this is a correctly stated motion:

1. PGI will pay its president \$1 million per year.

These are not:

1. Discuss PGI president's pay.
2. Should we pay the PGI president \$1 million per year?

The advantages of following the "correct" procedures are:

1. Everyone knows exactly what the "discussion" is about. In parliamentary procedure lingo, "discussion" means to speak in favor of a motion, against a motion, or to offer one or more amendments to a motion. Anything not directly speaking to the motion interferes with an effectively run meeting and the Chair should re-focus the discussion.
2. A decision can always be reached simply by conducting a vote.
3. The Secretary's job of recording minutes is made much easier because each decision of the Board, subject to modifications made during the discussion, is already written down. We should probably require that double-spaced copies of each motion be provided by the individual making the motion, just to make edits and amendments easier to record.
4. If the items are submitted for the proposed meeting agenda according to announced deadlines, everyone on the Board has a chance to ponder a proposal in advance of the meeting, as opposed to making hurried decisions "on the spot" at the meeting.
5. If the above procedures are followed, at least one person, the motion's author, will have given an issue serious thought in advance of the meeting. Yes, it does take a little more effort to place a complete motion on the agenda, but everyone benefits as a result.
6. The procedures are "correct" because they are stipulated in Article IX of PGI's Bylaws which cites *Canon's Concise Guide to Rules of Order, 2 ed.*, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, as authority for all procedural questions not specifically answered elsewhere in the Constitution or Bylaws.

So, what about "open discussions" on one or more topics at a meeting? Brainstorming certainly has its place, but generally not within the context of the formal meeting. I suggest placing such open-ended items at the end of the agenda—the very end, in fact, after the formal meeting is adjourned. Those interested in sticking around could do so, others could leave. Since formal decisions involving a proposal to do something will not be decided at that time, a quorum is unnecessary. The results of the brainstorming would potentially be incorporated into the next meeting's proposed agenda.

You might also ask whether adhering to the procedures will handcuff the Board's ability to make rapid decisions when necessary. The answer is no, our procedures allow us to modify the rules for running a meeting whenever it's agreeable to the quorum present. Also, it's worth mentioning that the Board is not a large body, and some latitude can be permitted as long as things are running smoothly.