

Federation of Victorian Film Societies Inc



INFORMATION SHEET 16 - (30th March 2026)

MEETING PROCEDURES

There are many “Bibles” available on how to run a meeting but this document endeavours to provide the essential information as relevant to not-for-profit organisations such as film societies.

Information Sheet 6 “Rules of Committee” describes the roles and responsibilities of the executive and committee members in detail.

Attachment 1 is a two-page summary for anyone intending to chair a meeting – A chairperson’s “Cheat Sheet”.

Attachment 2 describes in detail, the rules of debate for formal meetings.

1 Introduction

The prospect of finding yourself in the unfamiliar surrounds of a meeting in progress can be quite daunting. Fear of the unknown and the lack of knowledge of correct meeting procedures has stopped people from taking on roles or positions on film society committees. Obtaining an understanding of these procedures will allow you to break through this barrier and make a contribution to your film society.

The “rules” outlined here are general meeting rules and will generally apply to any meeting situation. They should be consistent with rules laid down in the film society’s Constitution but if there is any conflict the rules in the Constitution must take precedence. Informal meetings usually operate quite successfully with much less formal rules, but the Chairman should be familiar with the rules to be able to handle all situations correctly.

2 The Meeting

For a meeting to achieve the goal of running a film society effectively a structure needs to be in place for that meeting. If a meeting has little or no structure the results are unproductive and dissatisfying for all concerned. This may be true for both general meetings of all members (eg an AGM) or more routine committee meetings.

3 The Agenda

Prior to the meeting an agenda should be prepared and circulated to all the committee (or all members for a General meeting). This agenda forms the structure of the meeting. It states where and when the meeting will take place and what matters will be discussed. A draft copy of the minutes of the previous meeting (unless distributed earlier), along with any other relevant material that the members should read prior to the meeting, are distributed at the same time as the agenda.

4 The Meeting Structure

The meeting begins when the Chairperson declares the meeting open.

The meeting is unable to begin until the Chairperson declares a quorum. This means that there are enough people in attendance to allow debates to be conducted and decisions to be voted upon. The number of members comprising a quorum is specified in the Society's Constitution. If a quorum cannot be declared within 30 minutes of the meeting's designated starting time, the meeting should be called again for a similar time and place a week later. If no more members attend the reconvened meeting, the Chairperson may be allowed by the Constitution to conduct the less important business with those who are present at that time.

In a less formal meeting, such as a committee meeting, it is common to continue with the meeting with those present and endorse any decisions at the next scheduled meeting. Any contentious items would also be deferred.

If a Chairperson has not taken the chair 15 minutes after the meeting was due to begin, the meeting should elect another Chairperson from among the members present to act temporarily.

5 Apologies

The Secretary is requested by the Chairperson to state the names of those members who formally notified that they were unable to attend the meeting. Those not present should not be assumed to have given an apology. [Note: This is particularly relevant where insurance is concerned. Anyone recorded as an apology is deemed to be not coming to the meeting and therefore is not covered by any Public Liability policy the society may have.]

6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chairperson either asks the Secretary to read the previous minutes, or if they have been circulated, requests that someone move they be "Taken as read".

The Chairperson then asks that someone move that the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted or adopted. If the members do not agree that the draft minutes are accurate changes may be suggested. The Chairperson should ask the meeting to vote on those corrections. If there are only a few minor corrections the Chairperson may ask the members to accept the minutes with the corrections. The vote to adopt the minutes can then go ahead on that basis.

Once the Minutes have been adopted the Chairperson may be required to sign every page of the minutes and hand them to the meeting secretary for filing. It is not appropriate at this time to indulge in debates on decisions which were made at the previous meeting but anyone wishing to discuss or amend a motion agreed to at a previous meeting should wait until the same subject arises in the current meeting or raise it in "Any Other Business".

In the case of an informal meeting the Chairperson may ask "Has everyone read the minutes?" before asking for a motion that they be adopted as a true record. The most important advice about the minutes of a previous meeting is to make sure you read them.

7 Business Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Often the issues for Business Arising from the minutes of the previous meeting are listed in the agenda. Any action items, reports, pieces of information or other matters of substance that were requested at the previous meeting are discussed and a vote is taken on the appropriate action to take.

8 Inward Correspondence

Any letters, facsimiles, emails and sometimes even phone-calls which have been received by the committee are introduced to the meeting here. The Secretary should summarise the correspondence and perhaps group together any which cover similar issues or express similar opinions and summarise them as a single issue. The Chairperson then requests that someone put a motion that the meeting "receive the correspondence". This is an acknowledgment by the meeting that the correspondence has been formally received and that it may now be discussed and acted upon, if necessary.

If correspondence sent to the meeting is considered offensive, the meeting can vote on a motion, "not to receive" it. Alternatively, the meeting can decide that the correspondence should be "received and lie on the table". This means it will not really be dealt with. It is effectively in limbo until such time in the future that it is "taken from the table" and discussed.

Any issues raised in correspondence may now be dealt with in turn. The Chairperson may rule that any matter raised be deferred until a more appropriate time in the meeting.

9 Outward Correspondence

It is usual at this point that the Chairperson ask the Secretary to summarise any outward correspondence and call for it to be endorsed.

10 Reports

Reports and submissions that have been written for the meeting or include information relevant to the work of the meeting are tabled and discussed. A motion is required that a report be received. This means that the report exists, as far as the meeting is concerned, and a discussion or debate may now take place on the contents, interpretation and recommendations of the report. Motions are able to be put for or against the recommendations of the report or to ask the author to consider further issues or reconsider issues on the basis of particular information.

11 Sub-Committee Reports

Verbal or written reports may be sought from all or some of the active sub-committees. They may be simply for information or may require some action to be agreed upon. The Chairperson should request that any action to be taken be described in a motion, which must then be put to the meeting, and will become an "Action Item" if passed.

12 General Business

Items so listed in the agenda are discussed or debated. A debate usually begins with the Chairperson calling on someone to move a motion.

General business items are announced singly by the Chairperson and a discussion or debate follows each one. Motions that suggest methods of resolving

issues are put forward and voted on. Once the motions receive a simple majority, or a majority as defined in the Constitution, they become resolutions. Sometimes amendments to a motion are put forward before an original motion has been voted on. Only after the amendments are debated and voted upon can the revised substantive motion be brought to the vote.

In the case of more formal meetings, General Business consists of motions that are moved and seconded by participants of the meetings. A seconder is someone who agrees that a motion should be debated. In more informal meetings however, the need for a motion and seconder to initiate discussion may be ignored.

13 Any other Business

It is at this point in the meeting when members are able to raise any additional issues they feel are important. These include any items which were not listed on the agenda.

No extremely important or complex issues should be raised unannounced. If an urgent matter must be dealt with by the meeting, the Chairperson should be informed before the meeting begins. A revised agenda can then be drawn up in the time that remains before the meeting is due to begin. If the Chairperson feels that any of the issues brought up for discussion are too complex or troublesome, he may call for another meeting to discuss the issue or alternatively, put it on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting.

14 Close of Meeting

Once all the issues have been put forward and discussed the Chairperson advises members of the date and time of the next meeting. The meeting is now officially closed.

15 Points of Order

Points of Order may be raised at any time by anyone at the meeting and must be dealt with immediately by the Chairperson. They will normally relate to the process of conducting the meeting and may reflect perceived unfair treatment of participants. The Chairperson should rule on the Point of Order and explain his ruling but if there is still dispute may need to take a motion and call for a vote and even stand down while the point is being settled. This is covered in more detail in attachment 2.

16 Motions and Discussions

It is always preferable that motions and amendments be submitted in writing to the Chairperson. In a formal meeting such as an AGM the constitution may in fact not allow motions "from the floor", ie from a meeting participant. In this case the Chairperson needs to evaluate the intent of the motion and "Take it on notice" if it is significant but allow it for example, if a vote of thanks.

In a formal meeting a discussion needs a motion to be proposed and seconded before a discussion can start, and a vote to decide the outcome.

In a less formal environment, for example a committee meeting, the Chairperson may allow discussion to be introduced and continue without a formal

motion. However, no final decision should be made nor action agreed without a formal motion which is proposed, seconded and passed by a vote.

There are more formal procedures for true debates, but most societies will only ever need to apply the basic procedures described here. They are described for information in attachment 2.

A Chairperson should not impose any opinions or views on the meeting unless requested but should endeavour to have all committee air their opinions and have their say.

A Chairperson may not propose a motion but may suggest that someone else do so to allow the discussion to proceed.

When a vote is called for, the Chairperson does not generally have a vote, but in the event of a tie may have a casting vote to remove a deadlock. Where a Chairperson is permitted to vote in the first instance, he may also have a second, casting vote if needed. The Chairperson's casting vote usually supports the status quo even if the vote is the reverse his earlier vote.

17 Roles of Committee Members

The roles of committee members, including the executive, are described in detail in Information Sheet 06.

18 What Can You Do?

To be an active and effective member of a meeting, you must:

- be well prepared.
- make sure you have read the agenda.
- be aware of the topics that will be discussed.
- be involved.
- be a good listener.

There are four steps to good listening.

- hearing - receiving the sound.
- attending - focusing on what you are hearing.
- understanding - interpreting and evaluating what you hear.
- remembering - storing the information.

References

1. Walsh, F., The Meeting Manual, AGPS, Canberra, 1995.
2. Elizabeth Wilson, DTM
3. Whitehorse Film Society Committee Handbook.
4. Probus Club Handbook. Probus Centre – South Pacific Inc.

For feedback or more information admin@fvfs.org.au

Attachment 1

MEETING PROCEDURE SUMMARY

The Chairperson's typical Agenda and 'Cheat sheet'

1. Quorum

Establish that there is a quorum present. The number of members constituting a quorum is defined in the club's Constitution. For a General meeting (eg AGM), it may be a defined percentage of financial members. For a Committee meeting it is more likely to be a defined number of committee members.

2. Apologies for Non-Attendance

Secretary to advise the meeting of the apologies received for the meeting. Apologies should not be assumed for anyone not in attendance,

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes may be read out by the Secretary or if they have been circulated before the meeting the Chairperson may request that someone move:

- a. Motion - "That the minutes be taken as read." Moved by
- b. Secunder
- c. "All in favour" (Vote by members)... "Passed".

The Chairperson then calls for someone to move:

- a. Motion - "That the minutes be confirmed." Moved by
- b. Secunder
- c. Amendments or alterations to minutes as read.
- d. Vote by members

4. Business arising from minutes.

It is important that the Chairperson is familiar with the minutes and any matter which may arise.

5. Correspondence Inwards.

Secretary outlines the correspondence received.

- a. Motion - "That the correspondence be received."
- b. Secunder
- c. Vote by members

Discussion is not necessary, except possibly an amendment not to receive a particular item.

6. Business arising from the correspondence.

This can include a motion proposing some action as a result of correspondence or the Chairman can defer discussion later in the meeting.

7. Correspondence Outwards

No motion is normally required, although if it is desired to approve the sending of letters then the appropriate motion is "That the outgoing correspondence be endorsed".

8. Reports

Before a formal meeting the Chairperson should ascertain which officers will present reports and during the meeting, call upon them when appropriate.

In a less formal situation such as a committee meeting the Chairperson may call for any reports during the meeting

Unless making an announcement about a future happening, each person making a report should conclude their report with a motion "That the report be received (or adopted)" as appropriate.

- a. Motion - as above.
- b. Seconder.
- c. Discussion on content of report.
- d. Vote by members.

9. General Business

Business that has been notified to the Secretary before the meeting and included on the agenda is dealt with here.

The following is the method of obtaining a decision on a motion:

CHAIRMAN: I will now put the motion "That....."

"All those in favour.... (Pause)

Those against (Pause)

"I believe the Ayes/Nos have it (Pause in case someone disagrees and requests a recount of hands) and I declare the motion/amendment carried/lost."

10. Other Business

This time is generally reserved for reminders of upcoming events, questions of clarification or motions of thanks etc.

The Chairperson may refuse to accept any motions of a significant nature at this time requesting they be "taken on notice" for a future agenda.

Most constitutions do not allow motions during this time, but the Chairperson may accept motions of thanks, questions of clarification etc.

Attachment 2.

RULES OF DEBATE FOR FORMAL MEETINGS

Motions - **All motions, questions, statements and comments must be directed through the Chair.**

Motions must be **MOVED** and **SECONDED** before being debated. If it is not seconded, a motion lapses.

The MOVER of the motion may (and usually does) speak in support of the motion after it as been formally moved and seconded.

The President is not permitted to move or second any motion apart from moving a President's report (if presented)

The **SECONDER**, after formally seconding a motion, may speak immediately after the mover or may reserve the right to speak later in the debate; however, the seconder forfeits this right if a vote is called for before she/he has had a chance to speak.

Each member may speak **ONCE ONLY** in favour of or against the motion, **WITHIN THE TIME ALLOWED**.

At the conclusion of the debate and before the motion is put to the vote, the **MOVER** of the motion has the **RIGHT OF REPLY**. Neither the seconder of the motion nor the mover of an amendment, even when the amendment has been carried, has the right of reply.

Amendments - An **AMENDMENT** may be moved by a member who agrees with the motion in principle but wishes to suggest a change in detail. An amendment cannot be accepted if it negates the substance of the motion.

The Chairperson shall accept only **ONE** amendment to a motion for consideration at any one time. The amendment must be disposed of before a further amendment can be considered.

An amendment must be **MOVED** and **SECONDED** and each member has the right to speak **ONCE** for or against the amendment, even if they have spoken previously on the motion.

A member who wishes to "amend an amendment" or suggest a more acceptable amendment may **FORESHADOW** a **FURTHER AMENDMENT** to be moved **AFTER** the vote on the amendment under consideration. This is a useful device for advising members of another option.

When an amendment is carried, the **AMENDED** motion becomes the **MOTION**, subject to further amendment. If it is not amended further, the (amended) motion is put to the vote.

A Resolution - When a motion is CARRIED it is recorded as a RESOLUTION of the meeting.

Withdrawing a Motion - The mover of a motion, with the consent of his seconder, may seek permission to WITHDRAW THE MOTION. Permission to withdraw is granted by resolution of the meeting; however, a motion may NOT be withdrawn if an amendment has been moved and seconded, until the amendment has been debated and voted upon.

To save the time of the meeting a mover of a motion may, with the consent of the seconder, seek permission to WITHDRAW the motion IN FAVOUR OF THE AMENDMENT under consideration. (In this event, if permission is granted, the original motion is nullified and the mover of the amendment, which has become the motion, is the mover who has the right of reply).

Terminating the Debate - After members have spoken for and against the motion, the chairperson indicates his/her intention to put the motion. At this time, the mover may exercise or waive the right of reply. No further debate is allowed after the mover has replied.

Any member, at any time during the debate, may move THAT THE MOTION BE NOW PUT. This motion is NOT DEBATABLE and must be put immediately. If the motion "that the motion be now put" is carried, then the motion under discussion also must be put without further debate, provided that the mover may still exercise his right of reply.

Points of Order - A POINT OF ORDER should be raised ONLY to direct the attention of the chairperson to a procedural error, a departure from the rules or a motion or an amendment that, if carried, would be unconstitutional or unlawful.

When a member raises a point of order (by standing or raising a hand and saying: "Point of Order, Mr or Madam Chair!") the Chairperson must halt proceedings and ask the member to state the point of order.

After the member has stated the reason or reasons for raising the point of order, the Chairperson gives a ruling, either upholding or disallowing the point of order. The debate then continues.

A point of order must NOT be accepted if it is raised to refute a statement made in debate. A point of order MAY be raised, for example, to remind the Chairperson that the person who is speaking has spoken earlier in the debate, or that a speaker's time has expired, or that the material being introduced by the speaker is not relevant to the debate, or that the chairperson has neglected to apply any rule of debate or procedure.

Motion of Dissent - If a member disagrees with the ruling on a point of order, a MOTION OF DISSENT may be offered as follows: "With respect, I move dissent from the chairperson's ruling." If the motion is seconded, the chairperson vacates the Chair, which is then occupied by a deputy or vice chairperson.

Addressing the deputy, the chairperson states the reasons for the ruling, quoting the relevant rules or constitutional provisions on which the ruling was based. The

following motion is then put, WITHOUT DEBATE: "That the chairperson's ruling be upheld."

After the vote, the chairperson resumes the Chair and the debate resumes with any variation in procedure dictated by the decision of the meeting in the vote.

Leave to Make a Statement - A member who has spoken once in a debate may, under certain circumstances, be granted LEAVE TO MAKE A STATEMENT, to provide an explanation or clarify a misunderstood or misinterpreted point.

Leave to make a statement may be granted ONLY by resolution of the meeting. A motion that leave be granted, if seconded, is put WITHOUT DEBATE.

If leave is granted, the statement must be limited to the provision of factual information only. This device may NOT be used as an opportunity to introduce further argument.

Rescinding a Resolution - After the lapse of time specified in the constitution or rules, a MOTION TO RESCIND a resolution may be offered. If carried, such a motion nullifies the original resolution.

In most organisations a rescission motion is not accepted until after a certain time has elapsed or unless a notice of motion has been given in advance of the meeting.

Suspension of Standing Orders - If it becomes necessary or desirable to depart temporarily from the prepared agenda to deal with an extraneous matter, STANDING ORDERS may be SUSPENDED by resolution.

Usually the chairperson asks for a motion for the suspension of Standing Orders (stating the reason: e.g. to welcome a new member; to introduce a distinguished guest; to deal with an emergency), which, if offered and seconded, is put without debate.

After the extraneous matter has been dealt with the meeting, again by resolution, resumes Standing Orders.

Casting Vote - Depending upon the constitution or rules of the organisation, the chairperson may have a deliberate as well as a casting vote.

When a casting vote is called for the chairperson traditionally casts a vote so as to preserve the status quo IRRESPECTIVE of the nature of his deliberate vote.