



All page numbers are references to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th ed., unless otherwise noted. Send questions to the Associate Editor, Mark Moriarty, PRP

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#### QUESTION:

I was recently involved on a bylaws and standing rules amendment committee. A member texted a couple of days before the general meeting vote and chastised me for not having a signature page or the names of all the committee members on the front page as well as not having the dates of amendment cited at the bottom of EVERY page of the document. Having worked in another nonprofit with the regional and national committees on revising the local chapter bylaws and standing rules, I had never heard of doing such before her text and was perplexed as to where she heard about it. I did, however, have our chapter secretary note all the names of our committee members involved with the bylaw amendments at the meeting. Also, I was called out on having the general membership vote on a policy amendment which was in our standing rules. I quoted from Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised - "To amend them takes either a majority vote with previous notice or, without notice, a two-thirds vote or a vote of a majority of the entire membership of the voting body." Can you advise me on how to proceed?

#### RESPONSE:

Check the minutes of prior meetings. Minutes are the official written record of the meetings of an organization or group. They'll likely contain a record of what was done or presented at last year's meeting.

Committee reports are generally presented and written to the executive council or the board of the parent assembly. Committee reports typically are submitted in writing, except for brief reports in small assemblies, and provide the information requested from them by the parent committee. RONR (12<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Section 51:2 provides:

*"A report of a board or committee can contain only what has been agreed to by a majority vote at a regular or properly called meeting of which every member has been notified...A presentation of facts or recommendations made merely upon separate consultation with every member of a board must be described thus to the parent assembly, and not as an official report of the board." (Emphasis added).*



The minutes will contain the wording of the motion that was adopted. They'll also contain the names of the members in attendance. You can check to see if what you've been told is in fact correct.

Some organizations have and follow their own unique customs.

*"[A] particular practice may sometimes come to be followed as a matter of established custom so that it is treated practically as if it were prescribed by rule. Such an established custom is adhered to unless the assembly by a majority vote, agrees in a particular instance to do otherwise, or, if a customary practice is or becomes in conflict with the parliamentary authority or a written rule, and a Point of Order is made citing the conflict, the custom falls to the ground". RONR (12<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Section 2:25.*

The signature page, the names of all committee members on the front page and the dates of amendments at the bottom of every page of the document may be a custom of the organization. If so, the custom will likely be recorded in the minutes.

Standing rules require only a majority vote to adopt, but to amend them takes either a majority vote with previous notice, or without notice, a two-thirds vote or a vote of a majority of the entire membership; but be careful. Sometimes organizations have different names for their rules. Sometimes they are called "Standing Rules,". Sometimes they are called "Guidelines" or "Policy Statements."

If the policy amendment deals with parliamentary procedure, such as the order of an agenda or rules of debate, it would be considered a rule of order. Rules of order are intended to have stability from meeting to meeting. For this reason, to adopt or amend special rules of order requires previous notice and a two-thirds vote, or else, with or without previous notice – a vote of the majority of the entire membership of the voting body. (not just of those who are present at the meeting).