

Do you have a bully on board?



A reader asks how to deal with a bully who intimidates other members of the school board, including the chair. There are several things a body can do to resolve this unfortunate situation.

Points to consider:

- 1) Bullying is never allowed at board or council meetings. It's just common sense that when people are intimidated, angry or frightened, they can't reach good decisions.
- 2) If you have adopted Robert's Rules of Order, you automatically have tools to deal with this situation.
- 3) Even if your body has not adopted Robert's Rules or another parliamentary authority, common parliamentary law supports the necessity for order and respect in meetings.
- 4) The chair has the duty of stopping bad behavior by any member, interrupting the member if necessary.
- 5) If the chair isn't responding as they should, members can raise a Point of Order to request that the chair take action. The chair must issue a ruling as to whether the point is correct or not.
- 6) Any ruling of the chair can be appealed by any two members of the board, in which case the board will decide the matter. (One person makes the appeal and another person seconds it.) Read about Point of Order and Appeal [here](#).
- 7) If a member continues to offend, a majority of the members can sanction the member. (Talk to your attorney before you do this!) The body can pass a motion that will:
 - Request that the member apologize,
 - Censure or reprimand the offender (statement of displeasure by the body)
 - Direct the member to leave the current meeting, or
 - Remove the member from committees to which they have been appointed.



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- 8) It's helpful to have a specific policy to deal with difficult behavior. The City of Kenmore, Washington invested a lot of effort into their Council Rules and Procedures. You will of course have an attorney review your policy to ensure that it conforms to the Federal and state laws governing your board or council.

If you want to go more deeply into the methods that parliamentary procedure offers, another resource is *The Guerilla Guide to Robert's Rules*, by [Nancy Sylvester](#). It provides detailed guidance in the section entitled "Be a Bully Buster."

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