

Consent agenda: great tool for speedier meetings



One of the most useful tools for efficient meetings is a “consent agenda.” This is a single item of business on a regular agenda that includes several items bundled together. The items cannot be discussed or debated. They are approved with a single vote.

PREPARING A CONSENT AGENDA

Before the meeting, the board chair and the executive director, secretary or clerk review the subjects coming up for board consideration, and group together items that are not likely to be controversial. These are bundled together as a single item under the title “consent agenda.” This item is placed on the meeting agenda ahead of anything that will need discussion. Items suitable for listing in a consent agenda might include draft minutes, orders to pay regular bills, approval for routine future expenditures like training, or staff appointments.

REMOVING AN ITEM FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA

When the board reaches that point in the meeting agenda, the chair first asks if anyone wants to remove any item from the consent agenda. If a member so requests, the chair immediately removes the item from the consent agenda. It will be considered either immediately after the consent agenda or at its proper place in the usual order of business. If there is no obvious spot for the item, it can simply be listed under “new business.” Board members don’t need to give a reason for requesting that an item be removed from the consent agenda.



VOTING ON THE CONSENT AGENDA

The chair then takes a single vote on the remaining package of items, and the board votes to approve them *en bloc* (all at once, as a batch). The key point is that if anybody wants to comment about or discuss any item, in any way whatsoever, it is immediately removed and placed on the regular agenda.

If you would like to use this method, you should adopt a special rule of order (read how to do this in our article [What are special rules of order in Robert's Rules](#)) or include the consent agenda in your rules of procedure or standing rules. Note that the treatment of "consent agenda" in Robert's Rules is a little different from the common method outlined here.

CONSENT CALENDAR = CONSENT AGENDA

The "consent agenda" is sometimes called a "consent calendar"—it's the same thing. This method requires that the members read their board packets in advance, review the draft minutes and other content, and be alert when the consent agenda is reached. Since most of our board meetings have far too much to consider for the time available, it can be worthwhile to compress routine matters into this single item, and use the time saved for subjects most worthy of members' time and consideration.

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