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***Town Meeting Time v. Robert's Rules of Order v. Demeter's Manual***  
***Quick Motion Comparison Table***

The table below compares the rules concerning motions in Richard B. Johnson *et al.*, *Town Meeting Time* (3d ed. 2001) (TMT), Henry M. Robert, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (10th ed. 2000) (RONR), and George Demeter, *Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law & Procedure* (Blue Book ed. 1969) (DEM). RONR's treatment of motions is indicated in the table in **black bold typeface**. TMT's treatment of motions is indicated in the table in *blue italic typeface*. DEM is very similar to RONR. In the few instances when DEM is different from RONR, DEM is in *green regular typeface*. Distinctions between RONR and TMT are highlighted in *yellow*. Distinctions between RONR and DEM are highlighted in *grey*. If, on a particular point, there is a difference between all three authorities, RONR and TMT are highlighted in *yellow* and DEM only is highlighted in *grey*. If the authorities are identical with a slight nuance on a particular issue, or if only one authority contains a particular motion, only the point of distinction is highlighted.

Under the category of Ranking Motions, motions are ranked in the table below from highest to lowest precedence. The precedence of unranked incidental and restorative motions is described in the notes to the table. For a more detailed discussion of the distinctions between TMT and RONR, please see the author's articles, *Differences in Basic Approach Between Town Meeting Time, the Parliamentary Authority for New England Town Meetings, and Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, *Parliamentary Journal* v. 45, no. 1, p. 14 (Jan. 2004), and *Distinctions in Handling Procedural Motions in Town Meeting Time and Robert's Rules of Order*, *Parliamentary Journal*, v. 45, no. 2, p. 52 (April 2004).

Motion	Second Required	Debat-able	Amend-able	Can Interrupt	Recon-siderable	Vote Required
<b><i>I. RANKING MOTIONS</i></b>						
<b><i>A. PRIVILEGED MOTIONS</i></b>						
<i>i. Dissolve or adjourn sine die<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Majority</i>
<b>ii. Fix a Time to Which to Adjourn</b> <i>Fix a Day to Which to Adjourn</i> <i>Motion ranks lower in TMT</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>No</b> <i>No</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>No</b> <i>No</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i>
<b>iii. Adjourn</b> <i>Adjourn to a Fixed Time or Recess</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>No</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>No</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>No</b> <i>No</i>	<b>No</b> <i>No</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i>
<b>iv. Recess</b> <i>TMT treats To Recess as a form of Adjourn to a Fixed Time</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Majority</b>
<i>v. Point of No Quorum<sup>2</sup></i> <b>Point of No Quorum</b>	<i>No</i> <b>No</b>	<i>No</i> <i>No</i>	<i>No</i> <i>No</i>	<i>No</i> <i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i> <i>No</i>	<i>Chair rules</i> <i>Chair rules</i>
<i>vi. Fix the Time to (or at) Which to Adjourn<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Majority</i>

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<b>vii. Raise a Question of Privilege</b> <i>Question of privilege</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	<b>Chair Rules†</b> <i>Chair Rules†</i>
<b>viii. Call for the Orders of the Day</b> <i>Call for the Orders of the Day</i> <i>TMT uses Point of Order</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	<b>2/3 to override</b> <b>Member Demand</b>
<b>B. SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS</b>						
<b>i. Lay on the Table</b> <i>Lay on the Table</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	Negative only <i>Yes</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>2/3</i>
<b>ii. Previous Question</b> <i>Previous Question<sup>4*</sup></i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>No</i>	<b>2/3</b> <i>2/3</i>
<b>iii. Limit or Extend Limits of Debate</b> <i>Limit or extend debate*</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>No†</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	<b>2/3</b> <i>2/3</i>
<b>iii. Postpone Definitely</b> <i>Postpone to a Time Certain<sup>5</sup></i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i>
<b>iv. Commit or Refer</b> <i>Commit or Refer<sup>6</sup></i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i>
<b>v. Amend<sup>7</sup></b> <i>Amend or Substitute</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	Yes§ <i>Yes§</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i>
<b>vi. Postpone Indefinitely</b> <i>Postpone Indefinitely</i> <i>Postpone Indefinitely</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i> <i>Yes</i>	Yes   <i>Yes  </i> <i>Yes  </i>	No <i>No</i> <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i> <i>No</i>	Affirma- tive only <i>Yes</i> <i>Yes</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i> <i>Majority</i>
<b>C. MAIN MOTION</b>						
<b>i. Main Motion</b> <i>Main Motion<sup>8</sup></i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i>
<b>ii. Advance an Article<sup>9</sup></b>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Majority (2/3 if for mere jockeying)</i>
<b>II. INCIDENTAL MOTIONS<sup>10</sup></b>						
<b>i. Point of Order</b> <i>Point of Order</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	<b>Chair decides</b> <i>Chair Decides</i>
<b>ii. Appeal<sup>11</sup></b> <i>Appeal</i> <i>Appeal</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i> <i>Yes</i>	Yes¶ <i>Yes¶</i> <i>Yes¶</i>	No <i>No</i> <i>No</i>	Yes <i>No</i> <i>No**</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i> <i>Yes</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i> <i>Majority</i>
<b>iii. Suspend the Rules</b> <i>Suspend the Rules</i>	Yes <i>Yes</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	No <i>No</i>	<b>2/3††</b> <i>2/3††</i>



Motion	Second Required	Debat- able	Amend- able	Can Interrupt	Recon- siderable	Vote Required
<b>iv. Objection to Consideration of the Question</b>	No	No	No	No**	Negative only	2/3
Objection to Consideration of the Question	No	No	No	No**	Yes	2/3
<i>Not permitted by TMT</i>						
<b>v. Division of a Question</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
<i>Division of a Question*</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Majority
Division of a Question	Yes	No	Yes	No**	No	Majority
<b>vi. Consider Seriatim<sup>12</sup></b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
<i>Separate Consideration*</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Majority
Consider <i>seriatim</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
<b>vii. Division of the Assembly</b>	No	No	No	Yes	No	1 Member Demand
(standing vote, no count)						
<i>Division of the Meeting (counted vote)</i>	No	No	No	No	No	7 Member Demand <sup>††</sup>
Division of the Assembly (standing, counted vote)	No	No	No	No	No	1 Member Demand
<b>viii. Motions Related to Voting</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes§§	Majority§§
<i>Fix the Method of Voting<sup>13</sup></i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
<b>ix. Motions Related to Nominations</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
<i>Nominations to Committees<sup>14</sup></i>	No	No	No	No	No	Plurality
Close Nominations/Reopen Nominations	Yes	No	Yes	No		
<b>x. Request to be Excused from a Duty</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Negative only	Majority
<i>Request for resignation<sup>15</sup></i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
<i>(Not recognized by TMT)</i>						
<b>xi. Request Leave to Withdraw or Modify a Motion<sup>16</sup></b>	Yes	No	No	Yes¶¶	¶¶	Majority
<i>Withdraw or Modify a Motion</i>	No	No	No	No	No	Majority
Withdraw a Motion (only)	Yes	No	No	No	Negative only	Majority
<b>xii. Point of Information<sup>17</sup></b>	No	No	No	Yes	No	Chair responds
<i>Question of Information</i>	No	No	No	No**	No	Chair responds
<b>xv. Other Requests<sup>17</sup></b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Majority
<i>Requests of any kind</i>	No	No	No	No	No	Unanimous Consent

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<b>III. RESTORATIVE MOTIONS</b>						
<b>i. Take from the Table</b> <sup>18</sup> <i>Take from the Table</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>No</b> <i>No</i>	<b>No</b> <i>No</i>	<b>No</b> <i>No</i>	<b>No</b> <i>No</i>	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i>
<b>ii. Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted</b> <sup>19</sup> <i>Rescind</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>Yes</b>    <i>Yes</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>No</b> ** <i>No</i> **	<b>Negative only</b> <i>Negative only</i>	<b>Majority w/ notice***</b> <i>Majority w/ notice***</i>
<b>iii. Discharge a Committee</b> <sup>19</sup> <i>Discharge a Committee</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>Yes</b>    <i>Yes</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>No</b> ** <i>No</i> **	<b>Negative only</b> <i>Negative only</i>	<b>Majority w/ notice***</b> <i>Majority w/ notice***</i>
<b>iv. Reconsider</b> <sup>20</sup> <i>Reconsider</i>	<b>Yes</b> <i>Yes</i>	<b>Yes</b>   ¶ <i>Yes</i>   ¶	<b>No</b> <i>No</i>	<b>No</b> ** <i>No</i>	<b>No</b> <i>No</i> †††	<b>Majority</b> <i>Majority</i>

\* In TMT, the Moderator can take this action on his/her own initiative.

† If the chair denies the member's request, the member can make a main motion if the matter is truly privileged.

‡ Under TMT, *Limit or Extend Limits of Debate* is not amendable, per the flyleaf table, pp. 90–91, and 101. Per p. 93, it is amendable.

§ Only first and second degree amendments are permitted.

|| Debate may go to the merits of the underlying question. In TMT, this is implicit in the text for Postpone Indefinitely and Reconsider. In DEM, this is implicit in the text for Rescind.

¶ Under RONR, TMT, and DEM, Appeal and Reconsider are undebatable if the underlying motion is undebatable. **Under RONR and DEM, members are limited to one speech on an appeal.** *Under TMT, there are no limits on the number of speeches on an appeal.*

\*\* In order to make when another on floor, but before he/she begins to speak. With Rescind and Discharge a Committee under RONR and DEM, it is in order to give notice of intent to make at the following RONR meeting (TMT session) when another is on the floor but before he/she begins to speak. Under RONR and DEM it is in order to make, but not take up, the motion To Reconsider when another is on the floor but before he/she begins to speak.

†† Suspend the rules is impermissible if the rule in question protects absentees. **Under RONR, the percentage vote required to suspend the rules is proportionally higher than 2/3 if the rule in question protects a minority greater than 2/3.** *Under TMT, if the rule protects a minority greater than 2/3, it may only be suspended by unanimous consent.*

‡‡ Under TMT, 7 members may demand verification of a vote by a division or poll (roll call). The Moderator in his/her discretion decides whether to take the second vote by division or poll.

§§ Under RONR, To Close the Polls is not reconsiderable; on To Re-Open the Polls, only a negative vote is reconsiderable. To Close the Polls requires a 2/3 vote. *TMT does not mention closing and re-opening the polls.*



||| **In RONR motions relating to nominations are undebatable.** DEM does not recognize motions relating to nominations. In both RONR and DEM, nominations themselves are debatable; To Close Nominations is not reconsiderable; on To Re-Open Nominations, only a negative vote is reconsiderable; To Close Nominations requires a 2/3 vote; and **elections are by majority vote.** TMT does not recognize motions relating to nominations. Under TMT, elections are by plurality.

¶¶ Under RONR, To Withdraw or Modify, if made by someone other than the original mover with his/her assent, does not need a second. Reconsideration is permitted only for a negative vote on To Withdraw, and for any vote on To Modify.

\*\*\* Under RONR, alternative vote without notice is 2/3 or a majority of the entire membership. Under DEM, alternative vote without notice is 2/3 only.

††† Per the flyleaf table and TMT p. 84, To Reconsider is not reconsiderable. TMT p. 80 indicates that To Reconsider can be infinitely reconsidered unless there is an adopted rule to the contrary.

<sup>1</sup> Under TMT, To Dissolve is only in order after all articles in the warrant have been addressed. In RONR to dissolve a meeting of an organization meeting less frequently than quarterly is a main motion. If the organization meets at least quarterly, To Dissolve is treated as an ordinary privileged motion To Adjourn. Under RONR, there is no requirement to address all previously noticed business/warrant articles before dissolution.

<sup>2</sup> In RONR, lack of quorum is treated as Point of Order, but it cannot interrupt. In DEM, a point of no quorum is an incidental motion, not a privileged motion.

<sup>3</sup> In RONR, Fix a Time to Which to Adjourn has a higher rank than in TMT. In RONR, Fix a Time at Which to Adjourn is an unprivileged main motion.

<sup>4</sup> A member may not end a speech with a call for the previous question.

<sup>5</sup> In RONR a motion can be postponed to next RONR session (TMT meeting), if it falls within a quarterly time interval. In TMT, a motion can only be postponed to an adjourned date of the same TMT meeting (RONR session), but not to a subsequent special meeting.

<sup>6</sup> In TMT, referral to the selectmen implies the power to act.

<sup>7</sup> RONR includes special rules on different types of amendment—strike out, add, insert, strike out and insert, and substitute. TMT does not include special rules for different types of amendments.

<sup>8</sup> TMT recognizes both positive and negative main motions. A negative main motion is used to defeat a warrant article/previously noticed item of business. RONR does not allow negative main motions, but achieves the same effect for a previously noticed item of business through an incidental main motion to Postpone Indefinitely.

<sup>9</sup> Under RONR, to treat an item of business outside of its heading in the standard order of business or to change the order on an adopted agenda requires a motion To Suspend the Rules. To advance an item of business on an advisory agenda (as opposed to an adopted agenda), a member would move To Suspend the Rules to advance an item before its category of business in the adopted order of business or Raise a Question of Privilege to introduce a coexisting incidental main motion to change the advisory order of business items within the new business items.



<sup>10</sup> In RONR, incidental motions have no rank, but have precedence if appropriate when made. *In TMT, incidental motions take the rank of the motion out of which they arise.*

<sup>11</sup> In RONR, the question posed on appeal is, "Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?" It takes a majority in the negative to overrule the decision of the chair. *Under TMT, the question posed on appeal is, "Shall the Chair be reversed?" It takes a majority in the affirmative to overrule the decision of the Moderator. Because of the wording of the enabling statutes, there is a question as to the applicability of Appeal in most Massachusetts towns. TMT p. 111.*

<sup>12</sup> In RONR, the chair may treat a motion *seriatim* on his/her own initiative, but only subject to a countervailing motion adopted by the assembly.

<sup>13</sup> *Under TMT, in a representative town meeting, a 2/3 vote is required to vote by ballot; in an open town meeting, the Moderator can take a vote by ballot on his/her own initiative.*

<sup>14</sup> *In TMT, this motion actually elects to committees, rather than choosing procedures related to nominations to committees or other positions. TMT assumes nominations are made from the floor. TMT mentions a motion To Close Nominations with rules similar to the parallel motion under RONR.*

<sup>15</sup> Request for Leave to Resign is classed by DEM as an incidental main motion needed only for resignation from membership. In DEM, acceptance not necessary for resignation from office and prospective resignations cannot be accepted until their effective date.

<sup>16</sup> In RONR a Request to Withdraw may be made until commencement of voting. *TMT p. 119 states that a Request to Withdraw may be made until commencement of voting; p. 65 says a Request to Withdraw may be made until completion of voting.*

<sup>17</sup> *TMT treats this motion as a simple question, addressed to the discretion of the Moderator.*

<sup>18</sup> In RONR, Take from the Table has the rank of a main motion, but the maker has priority in recognition over others rising at the same time. It is not subject to subsidiary motions. *In TMT, Take from the Table has the rank of a main motion. It is subject to applicable subsidiary motions. It is subject to any applicable rules limiting reconsideration.*

<sup>19</sup> In RONR, Rescind/Amend Something Previously Adopted and Discharge a Committee have the rank of a main motion. *In DEM Rescind and Discharge a Committee have the rank of a main motion. Amend Something Previously Adopted is implicitly treated as a component of Rescind, as Rescind is amendable, but it is not discussed in the text. In TMT, Rescind is treated as a form of Reconsider, combining in one vote reconsideration of an earlier adopted motion and defeat of the motion. TMT does not recognize Discharge a Committee and suggests reconsidering or rescinding the referral to the committee, if necessary.*

<sup>20</sup> In RONR, to make the motion To Reconsider has priority in recognition, but the body may not be able to take up the motion To Reconsider at the same time. To take up the motion To Reconsider has the same precedence as the motion to be reconsidered. The motion To Reconsider must be made on the same day as or on next business day after motion to be reconsidered. The motion To Reconsider may only be made by a member who voted on the prevailing side on the motion to be reconsidered. *In TMT, the motion To Reconsider is taken up when made. Reconsider has the rank of motion to be reconsidered. Reconsider may be moved on any day within the same TMT meeting (RONR session). Only Rescind (a form of Reconsider in TMT) can be moved at a subsequent TMT meeting (RONR session) upon warrant notice. TMT has no requirement for the mover to have voted on prevailing side.*

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Other distinctions:

(A) Under TMT, all business must be previously noticed as articles (business items) in the warrant (call of the meeting). There is no standard order of business and no way of raising new business items not previously noticed.

(B) Under TMT, unless limited by bylaw, rule, or a motion to limit debate, there are no limits on number and time of speeches in debate. Under RONR, members are limited to two ten-minute speeches per motion.

(C) TMT allows repeal by implication of prior inconsistent motions. RONR considers the subsequent inconsistent motion invalid unless specifically reconsidered or rescinded, or adopted by a 2/3 vote or a majority of the entire membership.

(D) Under TMT, more than one motion may be made under the same article. Under RONR, after a motion has been disposed of, no substantially similar motion can be made during the same session unless the first motion is first reconsidered.

(E) RONR and TMT give opposite meanings to the terms *meeting* and *session*. Under RONR, there are several meetings in a single session treated as a single unit procedurally although it may take place over several days. Under TMT, there are several sessions in a single meeting treated as a single unit procedurally although it may take place over several days. The best analogy for the Chair or President in RONR is the Moderator in TMT and for the Secretary in RONR is the Clerk in TMT.

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