

## Using the Consent Agenda

The consent agenda (which is also called the consent calendar in Roberts Rules of Order) is another tool for an efficient meeting. The consent agenda is a procedure where a group of items, all of which have been previously distributed in the meeting packet, are approved in a single motion without discussion. An obvious item which could be in the consent agenda would be approval of the minutes from the previous meeting. Other routine items could be continuation of the relationship with the cooperative attorney, correspondence not requiring action or documentation that an informational report was presented to the board. The possible advantage of the consent agenda is the time savings of combining several agenda items. The time savings obviously depends on how many routine items are typically on the agenda. The disadvantage is the possibility of increasing “rubber stamping” and not fully considering issues.

A cooperative board or other group considering a consent agenda should pass a simple policy describing its use. The policy should specify that any member can remove an item from the consent agenda. It should also state that items on the consent agenda will be voted on simultaneously without discussion. The policy should also state how items removed from the consent agenda will be added to the regular agenda. Some board’s place them immediately following the consent agenda while other boards place them at the logical point of the regular agenda. If the consent agenda is implemented an agenda item is either handled with no discussion or removed from the consent agenda. There should not be any “one quick question”.

The time savings of the consent agenda can be debated. Some boards question whether items not requiring discussion need to be on the agenda at all. Alternatively they could simply be handled by the manager. Providing and reading information prior to the meeting and differentiating between routine, discussion and action items are definite tools for an effective meeting. The consent agenda fits into that efficient system but it is an option, not a necessity. Most board members and managers have reached the legal age of “consent” so you can make your own decision.

Source: *Phil Kenkel and Bill Fitzwater Cooperative Chair*,  
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