

Letter to the Editor
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Contact: Ms. Terry Pastika,
Executive Director, Community Lawyer.
Citizen Advocacy Center 630.833.4080

Rules of Procedure

Government bodies use rules of parliamentary procedure to conduct meetings in a fair and orderly manner. Following parliamentary rules ensures that the consensus of the majority of aldermen is followed while the rights of the minority of aldermen are protected.

At the February 6, 2006 City Council meeting, three aldermen utilized a parliamentary rule to force the Council to delay voting on two ordinances. The aldermen utilized this rule after a request to delay taking a vote was rejected by a majority of the Council. The action by the three aldermen caused confusion and vocal resentment by some.

Although specifically referred to in Elmhurst's Code, the rule is not commonly utilized. There was significant Council discussion about whether or not forcing the delay of a vote was an abuse of parliamentary rules, an intentional obstruction to conducting business, or a proper action according to parliamentary procedures.

I found the comments about abuse of procedure and obstruction ironic because the same could be said for when aldermen have used a different parliamentary rule to force a Council vote. Several times I have seen Council members make a motion to "call the question" in the midst of a debate. This procedural move mandates that Council debate must come to an abrupt end and alderman have to vote on the issue.

Debate regarding how procedural rules impact conducting the people's business is certainly worthy. However, to be true to the cause, the debate needs to encompass how all aldermen use rules of procedure.