

AFG Area 9 – Florida North Guidelines

Comparing Knowledge-Based Decision Making and Robert’s Rules of Order

The World Service Committee introduced Knowledge-Based Decision Making in 2006. Area 9 adopted the KBDM process for an informed group conscience and suspended its use of Robert’s Rules of Order. KBDM aligns with the following AI-Anon Principles:

- Tradition 1: Our common welfare comes first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity.
- Concept 4: Participation is the key to harmony.
- Concept 5: The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard.
- General Warranty 3: That all decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by unanimity.

The table below illustrates the differences between the two approaches

Robert’s Rules of Order	Knowledge-Based Decision Making
Robert’s Rules is rarely followed exactly as written. The Newly Revised 11th Edition is 669 pages long; quotes below are from that edition or the “In Brief,” second edition.	No one person or structure is the “expert” that determines how an issue should be decided. There are no “points of order” determined by a book of rules. The group, through conversation and dialogue, decides what is important to discuss and how to proceed on matters of timing, who speaks when, how long to have the discussion, etc.
A motion is necessary for any discussion to begin. “To begin the process of making any decision, a member offers a proposal by making a motion. . . . Strictly speaking, there should be no debate on a matter before a motion regarding it has been made.” (In Brief, p. 19)	There is no predetermined end result in a KBDM discussion. As the discussion moves forward, a solution to the issue may become evident. Or, the group may decide they do not have enough information about an issue to make a decision at that time. They may decide to gather more information and continue the discussion at a later date. The group may also find that there is no need to take any action on the issue.
A motion describes a specific action to be taken; there is an end in mind from the outset. “It is very important to say precisely what the words of the motion are to be. The group votes on exact language, not on a vague idea.” (p. 20)	The presenter of the issue “frames” it as clearly as possible, then there is a thorough examination of the issue without a particular end in mind. The “solution” evolves from the discussion.

<p>Geared toward efficiency and getting the decision made in a timely manner. “A prime value of parliamentary procedure is that it provides processes through which an organization, large or small, can work out satisfactory solutions to the greatest number of questions in the least amount of time.” (p. 7)</p>	<p>Our aim is to hear our Higher Power’s will for us, which is expressed in each participant’s question and opinion. In this open dialogue, everyone’s needs are heard, expectations and preferences are acknowledged, and ethical dimensions are considered. The process of listening to each other with goodwill is more important than the decision itself.</p>
<p>The process of refining and defining alternate possibilities or solutions – or putting off a decision until a later meeting – is cumbersome and requires a series of votes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If the main motion doesn’t address the issue at hand, it has to be voted on or amended before a new motion can be discussed. (p. 53) 2. If more information is needed, another motion must be made and voted on, allowing that to happen. (p. 53) 	<p>The KBDM process isn’t “legalistic” and rule-bound. Through dialogue, our members refine the solution so that it solves the problem at hand.</p>
<p>Debate (not conversation or dialogue) is the presumed style of communication: “Debate means discussion on the merits of the action—that is, whether the proposed action should or should not be taken.” (p. 23)</p>	<p>We speak and listen in a culture of trust and goodwill, aware that our Higher Power is present in each person’s contribution to the conversation. We are all equal and everyone is valuable. We respect all ideas and do not tolerate domination.</p>