

Town Board Motions

(Adopted March 2011)

1. **The basic motion.** The basic motion is the one that puts forward a decision for consideration. A basic motion might be: "I move that we create a five-member committee to plan and put on our annual fundraiser."
2. **The motion to amend.** If a member wants to change a basic motion that is under discussion, he or she would move to amend it. A motion to amend might be: "I move that we amend the motion to have a 10-member committee." A motion to amend takes the basic motion that is before the body and seeks to change it in some way.
3. **The substitute motion:** If a member wants to completely do away with the basic motion under discussion and put a new motion before the governing body, he or she would "move a substitute motion." A substitute motion might be: "I move a substitute motion that we cancel the annual fundraiser this year."

Motions to amend and substitute motions are often confused. But they are quite different, and so is their effect, if passed.

A motion to amend seeks to retain the basic motion on the floor, but to modify it in some way.

A substitute motion seeks to throw out the basic motion on the floor and substitute a new and different motion for it...

Voting on motions when there are several on the floor.

The first vote is on the last motion. In the example above, the substitute motion would be voted on first. If passed, the other two (Basic and Amend) would not require a vote because they become moot. If the substitute in the above example passes, it replaces both the Basic and the amendment to the Basic motion.

If the substitute fails, then a vote is needed on the amendment. If the amendment passes, the basic motion is moot because it was replaced by the amendment.

However, if the amendment fails, the basic motion needs to be voted on. If it passes, it is final. If the basic fails, then the chair determines if a new motion is in order, or does the action item need to be tabled for more information, returned to committee, have staff gather more information, etc. A time for future review of the action item should be established.

**Instructional scenario quoted verbatim from: Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century, 2003, League of California Cities.*