

CITY OF MADISON  
**OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY**  
Room 401, CCB  
266-4511

DATE: November 7, 2007

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: **Mayor Dave Cieslewicz, Common Council Members**

FROM: Michael P. May, City Attorney

SUBJECT: **Point of Order – Motion to Adjourn: Non-Debatable**

Both *Robert's Rules of Order*, §21, and the standing rules of the Common Council, Sec. 2.10, Madison General Ordinances, provide that a motion to adjourn is always an order. Moreover, under *Robert's Rules*, the motion to adjourn is not a debatable motion.

This has raised some concern among Alders that a motion to adjourn might be made and approved when there were important items left on the agenda to consider. Since the motion is not debatable, it might be impossible for members of the Council to be aware of those pressing issues.

However, despite the labeling of a motion to adjourn as not debatable, *Robert's Rules* makes several specific exceptions. *Robert's Rules* provides in §21, page 230 (10<sup>th</sup> Ed) as follows:

Although the privileged motion to Adjourn is undebatable, the following parliamentary steps are in order while it is pending:

- To inform the assembly of business requiring attention before adjournment;
- To make important announcements;
- To *make* (but not to take up) a motion to reconsider a previous vote;
- To make a motion to reconsider and enter on the minutes;

- To give notice of a motion to be made at the next meeting . . . where the motion requires previous notice . . . and to move to set a time for an adjourned meeting if there is no meeting scheduled for later within the same session.

Because *Robert's Rules* does allow members of the assembly to point out agenda items that require immediate attention, or to make other important announcements, this information could be brought to the Common Council prior to voting on a motion to adjourn.

If a member of the Council needed to bring such information to the attention of the Council prior to voting on a motion to adjourn, the members should rise either to a point of order or a point of information, and be recognized by the Chair. It is important to note, however, that providing such information is not to turn the motion to adjourn into a debatable item.

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Michael P. May  
City Attorney

cc: Assistant City Attorneys  
Lisa Veldran