

CONSENT AGENDA

Presbytery of Cincinnati

What is a “consent agenda”, and how will it make our meetings go faster?

At every presbytery meeting, at least a few items come to the agenda that do not need any discussion or debate because they are routine procedures. A consent agenda (*Robert's Rules of Order* calls it a “consent calendar”) allows the presbytery to approve all these items together without discussion or individual motions. Depending upon the organization, this can free up anywhere from a few minutes to a half hour for more substantial discussion.

What belongs on the consent agenda?

Typical consent agenda items are routine, procedural decisions, and decisions that are likely to be noncontroversial. Examples include:

- Approval of the minutes;
- Approval of many Committee on Ministry items (calls, contracts, continuing membership, commissioned lay pastor agreements, pastor emeritus/a, moderator appointments, etc.);
- All reports provided for information only;
- Correspondence requiring no action.

How are consent items handled?

A consent agenda can only work if the reports and other matters for the meeting agenda are known in advance and distributed with the agenda package in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting. A typical procedure is as follows:

1. When preparing the meeting agenda, the Moderator and Stated Clerk determine whether an item belongs on the consent agenda.
2. The Moderator and Stated Clerk prepare a numbered list of the consent items as part of, or as an attachment to, the meeting agenda.
3. The list and supporting documents are included in the agenda documents in sufficient time to be read by all members prior to the meeting.
4. Near the beginning of the meeting, the Moderator asks commissioners what items they wish to be removed from the consent agenda and discussed individually.
5. If any commissioner requests that an item be removed from the consent agenda, it must be removed. A commissioner may request that an item be removed for any reason. They may wish, for example, to discuss the item, to query the item, or to register a vote against the item.
6. Once an item has been removed, the Moderator may decide whether to take up the matter immediately or place it on the regular meeting agenda.
7. When there are no more items to be removed, the Moderator reads out the numbers of the remaining consent items. Then the Moderator states, “If there is no objection, these items will be adopted.” After pausing for objections, the chair states, “As there are not objections, these items are adopted.” It is not necessary to ask for a voice vote or show of hands.
8. When preparing the minutes, the Stated Clerk includes the full text of the resolutions, reports or recommendations that were adopted as part of the consent agenda.