

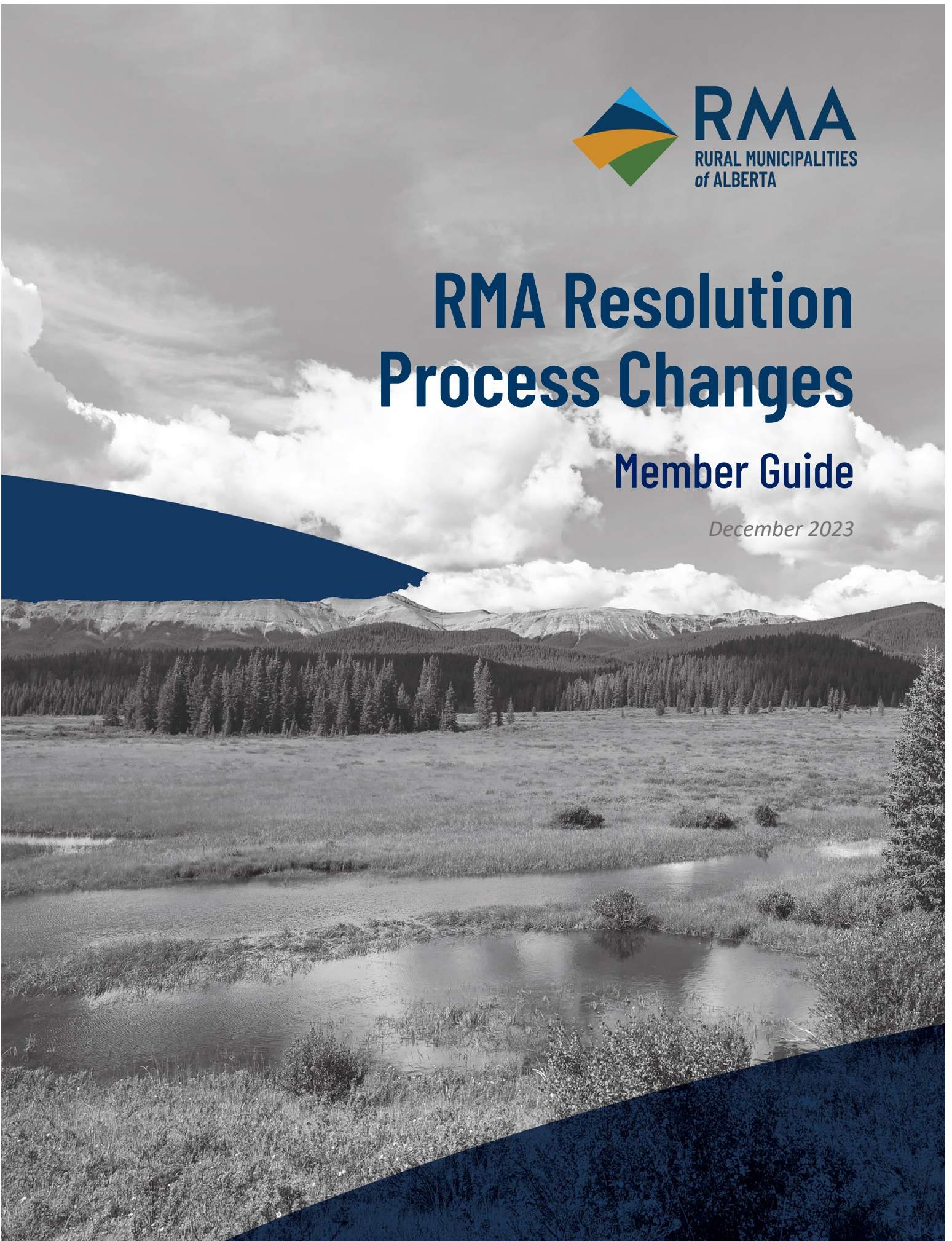


RMA
RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
of ALBERTA

RMA Resolution Process Changes

Member Guide

December 2023



Introduction

Member resolutions are crucial to RMA’s advocacy efforts. They allow members to provide advocacy direction to RMA by endorsing specific positions or calls to action. While the resolution intent is usually directed to the provincial or federal government, the responsibility for undertaking advocacy and striving for action falls to RMA.

Resolutions are debated and endorsed by members twice each year, at RMA’s spring and fall convention. Once endorsed, resolutions are active and directly influence RMA’s advocacy for three years.

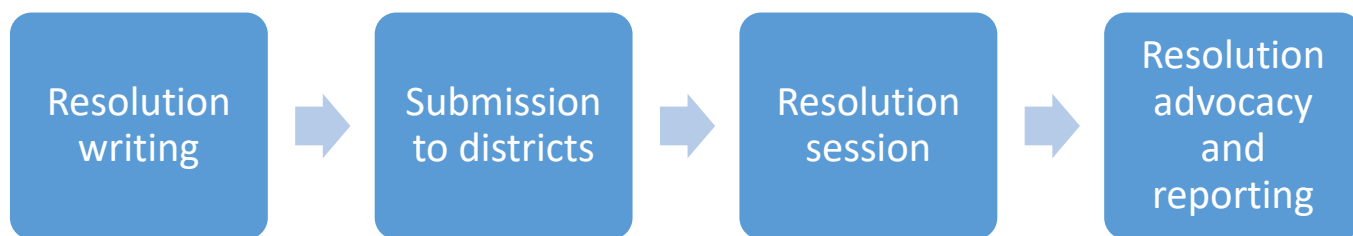
While debate and endorsement at conventions may be the most visible aspect of the resolution process, there are many steps involved in developing, debating, and refining resolutions that take place before they reach the convention floor. The overall resolution process is guided by RMA’s Resolutions Process Policy. As with all association policies, the RMA Board of Directors reviews the Resolutions Process Policy every three years to ensure that the process meets member needs.

The Board reviewed the Resolutions Process Policy in August 2023. During this review, the Board approved several changes to the policy that will impact all phases of the resolution process. Because district meetings in advance of the RMA Fall 2023 Convention had already begun when the policy changes were approved, the Board directed that the changes not be implemented until December 2023. This would allow municipalities and districts time to understand the new process prior to holding district meetings in early 2024 in advance of the RMA Spring 2024 Convention.

How to use the guide

This guide is intended to provide member municipalities with a breakdown of changes to the policy and how they may impact all aspects of the resolution development process – from the initial drafting of a resolution within a municipality, to placement on a district meeting agenda, to submission to RMA, to the debate and voting process during the convention. None of the policy changes are drastic, and combined they should simplify the process and encourage more consistency in resolution structure.

Changes are broken down based on the phase of the process they apply to. Phases are as follows:



Each change will include a reference to the specific section of the policy impacted, the purpose/intent of the change, and how it will impact the process.

Note that not all changes made to the policy are reflected in this guide; some are very minor and focus on internal RMA roles and responsibilities.

Phase 1: Resolution Writing

Section B of the policy outlines requirements for the sections that must be included in a resolution and the format/key contents that should be included in each section.

Phase 1 changes:

Change: Encouragement of operative clauses focused on outcomes rather than specific wording changes.	Policy section: B.6, A.6.g
Purpose/intent: An outcome-focused operative clause (resolution ask) allows RMA to be more flexible in advocacy efforts and work with the government on multiple approaches to solve an issue, rather than be bound to a specific legislative or policy change that may not be a government priority.	
Process impacts: This addition encourages members to develop outcome-oriented operative clauses, and does allow the RMA resolutions committee to work with members to amend resolutions after they have been passed at district meetings to focus on outcomes more than specific changes.	

Change: Limit length of background section to 1,000 words	Policy section: B.7
Purpose/intent: Limiting the length of resolution backgrounds will allow for a shorter resolutions package and more consistency across resolutions.	
Process impacts: In some cases, municipalities may find it difficult to condense background into 1,000 words. RMA staff are available to support this process, and members are encouraged to utilize links to relevant external documents within the background section.	

Change: Increased accountability on RMA to provide quality resolution-writing resources and supports	Policy section: B.8
Purpose/intent: This new section outlines the resources that RMA will make available to members and regularly update. It also requires RMA to offer members at least one annual resolution-writing webinar as a refresher on best practices, etc.	
Process impacts: Placing accountability on RMA to provide more proactive resolution-writing resources and support should increase resolution consistency and quality and reduce workloads for municipalities responsible for writing resolutions.	

Phase 2: Submission to Districts

After a resolution is drafted by an individual municipality, they are responsible for forwarding it to their district for debate and voting at the next district meeting. While each district has their own process for accepting, reviewing, and voting on resolutions, several changes to the policy are intended to ensure resolutions are in the proper format before they reach district agenda packages.

Phase 2 changes:

<p>Change: Require RMA district chairs to share resolutions submitted for district meetings with RMA staff in advance of finalizing district meeting agendas. RMA will verify that all required sections are included in the resolution, but WILL NOT provide any comments or changes on resolution content or wording.</p> <p>Chairs will be required to provide RMA with at least three business days to review the resolutions.</p>	<p>Policy section: C.4 and C.5.</p>
<p>Purpose/intent: Currently, RMA receives resolutions passed at the district level in many different formats. RMA staff typically work directly with sponsoring municipalities to amend the resolutions to ensure they adhere to the policy requirements. Focusing on using a consistent resolution format prior to district meetings will reduce the administrative burden on municipalities and RMA staff, and increase the likelihood that resolutions do not significantly change between district meetings and the RMA convention.</p>	
<p>Process impacts: Districts may be required to push forward their deadline for submission of member resolutions to allow for time to send to RMA and, if needed, work with members to ensure all sections are included. This could also impact resolutions submitted at district meetings from the floor.</p>	

<p>Change: Districts submit endorsed resolutions to RMA within one week of district meeting.</p>	<p>Policy section: B.6 and B.7</p>
<p>Purpose/intent: This change ensures that RMA receives district-endorsed resolutions in a timely manner and ensures that the full resolutions package can be developed and shared with the resolutions committee. RMA’s convention preparation deadlines are often quite short, particularly related to printing handbooks, so receiving resolutions from districts as soon as possible is crucial.</p>	
<p>Process impacts: May impact post-district meeting process for some districts.</p>	

Phase 3: Resolution Session

The resolution session takes place during RMA’s spring and fall convention. It provides an opportunity for sponsoring municipalities to present their resolution, other members to ask questions and debate the resolution intent, and results in voting on whether RMA should adopt each resolution as part of its advocacy “marching orders.” The resolutions session follows a formal process outlined in the policy.

Phase 3 changes:

Change: Remove requirement for resolutions to be seconded	Policy section: F.3, F.10, F. 14
Purpose/intent: As resolutions are already endorsed at district meetings, seconders are redundant during the convention resolution session because support from multiple RMA members has already been confirmed.	
Process impacts: Removing the seconder requirement will improve the efficiency of the resolution session.	

Change: Remove requirement for acceptance of Order Paper	Policy section: E.6, as well as a clause in section F removed completely.
Purpose/intent: Accepting the Order Paper usually occurs by a show of hands and is typically a formality. The Order Paper is available weeks in advance so if there is an error members have opportunity to inform RMA before the resolution session begins.	
Process impacts: Removing the Order Paper vote will improve the efficiency of the resolution session.	

Change: Remove requirement for resolutions committee members to read resolution title and operative clauses during session	Policy section: Clause in section F removed completely.
Purpose/intent: RMA intends to continue the practice of having Resolutions Committee members read the title and operative clause of each resolution. Removing this will allow the Committee Chair with flexibility to bypass this process in the event that the resolutions session is running long.	
Process impacts: Removing the reading of titles and operative clauses as a mandatory requirement introduces more flexibility in the process and reduces risk of the session running over time.	

Phase 4: Resolution Advocacy and Reporting

After resolutions are endorsed, RMA is responsible for sharing them with relevant government ministries and stakeholders, advocating on them, and periodically updating members on any changes or progress. The policy includes high level requirements for how this occurs while providing RMA with flexibility to take different approaches depending on the resolution’s focus.

Phase 4 changes:

Change: Clarify RMA resolution reporting requirements	Policy section: Removal of various clauses from section H, creation of a new section I titled “Resolution Reporting”
Purpose/intent: Creating a specific section on how RMA will report on resolutions during their three-year active lifespan enhances transparency and accountability to members, and is much more straightforward than the previous version of the policy, which had reporting requirements scattered throughout.	
Process impacts: This will not change RMA’s reporting process but will clarify it within the policy.	

Change: Addition of clause formalizing RMA’s process for receiving and initially acting on newly endorsed resolutions.	Policy section: I.1
Purpose/intent: RMA has an existing process for assigning initial statuses to resolution and seeking government responses. Formalizing this in policy will ensure members are aware of this.	
Process impacts: No changes to existing process, focus is on enhancing transparency.	



GOV-04: RMA Resolution Process

Date Approved: June 15, 2017

Next Review Date: September 2025

Reconfirmed: June 13, 2019

Amended: May 20, 2021

Reconfirmed: September 23, 2021

Amended: August 17, 2023

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to formalize the parameters involved for the resolution process used by the RMA. It includes aspects of the resolution process including oversight, guidelines, resolution types, writing and submission guidelines, the resolution session and the handling of endorsed resolutions.

Policy Statement: As a method of deriving member direction, the resolution process is fundamental to informing the RMA's advocacy priorities. As such, this policy formalizes all aspects of the resolution process to provide clarity and consistency.

A. Resolution Oversight

1. The board shall establish a Resolutions Committee that comprises the five district chairs, or appointed designates, and is chaired by a board representative. The RMA Vice President shall be offered first right of refusal to Chair the Resolutions Committee. Should the Vice President choose not to chair the resolution committee, another board member will be appointed by the President. The board representative is determined at the RMA board organizational meeting.
2. Each district shall appoint a committee member and an alternate and notify the RMA of appointments on an annual basis. Districts may amend committee members as needed when extraordinary circumstances arise.
3. The RMA will provide annual training on the resolutions policy for all committee members.
4. A parliamentarian shall be engaged to support the chair during the Resolutions Session. The parliamentarian shall be appointed by the RMA Board of Directors on an annual basis.
5. The Resolutions Committee shall have power to order the resolutions to determine the order paper.
6. The RMA and/or Resolutions Committee may:
 - a) Amend the title, grammar, wording or format of the resolution provided it does not change the intent,

- b) Amend or shorten the resolution background to enhance readability,
- c) Consolidate resolutions of similar intent or subject matter and notify sponsoring municipalities of the consolidation,
- d) Divide resolutions with multiple unrelated proposals for action into separate resolutions;
- e) In the event that a resolution is deficient in meeting the guidelines of resolutions as outlined in this policy, require the sponsoring municipality(ies) to remedy the deficiency prior to adding the resolution to the order paper,
- f) In the case of submitted resolutions that duplicate the requests made in an active resolution, recommend to the resolution sponsor that the resolution be removed from the order paper, and
- g) In consultation with the sponsoring municipality, alter the operative clause of the resolution to be more outcome-oriented (see s. B6).

Unless specifically stated, the Resolutions Committee may use their discretion as to whether to consult with the sponsoring municipality when making any of the changes above.

B. Resolution Writing Guidelines

1. Resolutions must include a title, preamble (whereas), operative clause (therefore be it resolved) and member background and shall be in the form:

WHEREAS ...; and
 WHEREAS ...;
 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta...
 Member Background

2. Resolutions must address a topic of concern that is relevant to municipalities on a provincial or federal basis.
3. The title must provide a clear indication of the resolution's intent.
4. The preamble must provide clear, brief, factual context for the operative clause.
5. The operative clause must include the following:
 - a) A proposal for action (the "ask" of the resolution)
 - b) A resolution target (the ministry or organization required for acting to achieve the ask)
6. Members are encouraged to develop operative clauses that seek an outcome to a problem or issue, rather than a specific change to legislation, regulation, policy, etc. In most cases, an outcome-based approach will improve the likelihood of RMA achieving a successful advocacy result.
7. Resolutions must be accompanied by background information outlining the following where appropriate, and should not exceed a word count limit of 1000 words:

- a) The history of the issue,
 - b) Issue impacts, noting the provincial and/or federal impacts of the issue, where applicable,
 - c) Past or current advocacy efforts by the RMA or other organizations,
 - d) Recent incidents or developments,
 - e) Specific legislation linkages, and
 - f) Other stakeholders with a vested interest.
8. RMA will support quality resolution development by making available and regularly updating the following resources:
- a) Provide, regularly update, and make available resolution-writing support documents, including but not limited to templates, FAQs, writing tips, sample resolutions, resolution "dos and don'ts," etc.
 - b) Offer members at least one resolution writing support webinar annually to enhance their understanding and skills in crafting effective resolutions.
 - c) Identify and clearly communicate to members the RMA resolution writing support staff, offering guidance and personalized assistance.
 - d) Publish a bulletin at least three weeks in advance of the first summer and first winter district meeting, providing links to the above supports.

C. Resolution Submission Guidelines

1. Resolutions may be submitted for consideration at the convention by:
 - a) A group of full members (RMA districts, see section D.1)
 - b) The Board of Directors (see section D.2)
2. Resolutions must be approved by a motion of the council(s) of the sponsoring municipality(ies) or by the RMA Board of Directors, in the event of board-endorsed resolutions.
3. Resolutions must be endorsed at a duly constituted district meeting prior to being submitted to the RMA's resolution session, with the exception of emergent resolutions and board-endorsed resolutions.
4. Prior to being added to district meeting agendas, RMA district chairs are required to share submitted resolutions with RMA for the purposes of ensuring that the resolutions are in the proper template and that all mandatory sections are included. RMA will not provide any comments on resolution content or wording as part of this process.
5. District chairs must ensure that RMA is provided at least three (3) business days to review the resolutions.
6. Districts are responsible for submitting resolutions to the RMA within one week of the completion of the district meeting in which the resolutions were endorsed.

7. If district meetings are one week or less prior to RMA's resolution deadline, the resolutions must be submitted prior to the resolution deadline.
8. Resolutions and supporting member background must be submitted electronically in Microsoft Word.

D. Resolution Types

1. District-endorsed resolutions are those submitted by a full member or group of full members through their respective district-approved process, provided it receives endorsement at a duly constituted district meeting.
2. Board-endorsed resolutions are those submitted by the RMA Board of Directors. These resolutions may be brought forward to allow membership endorsement on a formal plan or report, or to address an issue the board deems pertinent. Board-endorsed resolutions shall follow the same timelines and process as district-endorsed resolutions.

E. Emergent Resolutions

Emergent resolutions are defined as those submitted following the RMA resolutions deadline as identified in the Resolutions Submission Guidelines. The meeting dates of individual RMA districts do not have a bearing on emergent resolutions. A sponsoring municipality that is unable to have a resolution submitted to their own district may work with another municipality to co-sponsor the resolution at the other municipality's district.

1. Resolutions submitted after the resolution deadline assigned for each RMA convention will be forwarded to the Resolutions Committee for consideration as emergent resolutions.
2. An emergent resolution is defined as one submitted to the RMA after the resolution deadline that deals with an issue, legislative, or policy change that has arisen after the resolution deadline and requires action prior to the next RMA convention.
3. Written justification explaining why a resolution is emergent must be submitted to the Resolutions Committee along with the resolution itself.
4. Justification on why the resolution is emergent should not be included in the actual resolution document, including the background.
5. If the Resolutions Committee does not deem a submitted emergent resolution as meeting the criteria of "emergent" as defined in section E.2 of this policy, the resolution will not be added to the order paper. The Resolutions Committee Chair or designate will inform the resolution sponsor(s) of the decision of the Resolutions Committee.
6. If the Resolutions Committee deems a submitted emergent resolution as meeting the criteria of "emergent" as defined in section E.2 of this policy, the resolution will be added to the order paper at the start of the resolutions session. Additions of emergent resolutions will be voted on using a simple majority.

7. If the Resolutions Committee deems a submitted emergent resolution as “emergent,” the sponsoring municipality(ies) must provide and distribute adequate copies of the emergent resolution to all full members in attendance at convention prior to the start of the resolutions session. Convention registration numbers will be shared with the resolution sponsor to advise of the number of emergent resolution copies required.

F. Resolutions Session

1. For the purposes of the resolutions session only, quorum shall be defined as representation of a majority greater than 50% of the RMA full member municipalities who are eligible to vote. Quorum will be counted at the start of each resolutions session.
2. Only elected officials of full members are eligible to vote on resolutions and can only cast their individual vote on each resolution. Elected officials shall only use one voting device during the resolutions session.
3. Minutes will be taken for the resolution sessions including a record of the mover of each resolution and the voting results.
4. Voting may be by electronic means, by show of voting credentials, or by other methods as determined by the RMA.
5. Only elected officials of full members shall be allowed to speak during the resolutions session. Associate members, member administrative staff and guests may be permitted to speak upon recognition by the chair and consent of majority of the voting members. They may not move or second a resolution, or vote. Those speaking during the resolutions session must clearly state their name, position and jurisdiction.
6. The resolutions session shall be carried out per the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order, except where those rules may be in conflict with the bylaws and policies of the RMA.
7. If any emergent resolutions are to be presented, they will be incorporated into the Order Paper, which will be voted on at the start of the resolutions session.
8. All resolutions require a three-fifths (3/5) majority to be endorsed.
9. A sponsoring municipality may declare its intent to withdraw a proposed resolution when the resolution is introduced. Before making a motion, the sponsor shall request to withdraw the resolution. Unless there is opposition from one member, the session chair shall declare the resolution withdrawn and no further debate or comments will be allowed. If there is opposition from one or more members, the resolution will remain on the Order Paper.
10. Each resolution requires a mover. The mover will be allowed up to five (5) minutes to present the resolution.

11. Following the mover, the chair will call for members requesting clarification, proposing amendments or speaking in opposition to the resolution. The speaker will have a two (2) minute time limit. If no one rises to speak in opposition or offer an amendment to a proposed resolution, the question will be immediately called.
12. A member of the RMA Board of Directors shall be permitted to speak to provide clarity on a resolution's intent as presented that may be impacted by RMA advocacy efforts.
13. No member may speak in favour of a resolution unless a member first speaks in opposition.
14. Once a member has spoken in opposition of the resolution, debate will continue with each speaker having a two (2) minute time limit. Before the vote, the chair will allow the mover two (2) minutes total to present final comments.
15. Deferral of resolutions back to the sponsor, or tabling a resolution until a future convention will not be permitted. All resolutions included in the Order Paper will be voted on during the resolutions session in which they are introduced.
16. If the resolutions session runs short of time, the Chair has the authority to recess the session until a later time within the same convention to accommodate the presentation, debate and voting on remaining resolutions.

G. Amendments

1. A friendly amendment is one that is so simple or uniformly acceptable that it can be adopted by unanimous consent during debate. This eliminates the need for the formal amendment procedure including a second, debate, and vote. The Resolutions Chair will ask if there is any objection to including the amendment in the resolution and if there is no objection, the resolution will be amended. If there is one or more objections, the amendment will be processed using the formal procedure of second, debate, and vote. Either procedure means the assembly makes the decision on whether an amendment is made to the resolution.
2. It is at the discretion of the Resolutions Chair whether any amendment will first be processed by unanimous consent or by the more formal procedure of requiring a second, debate and vote.
3. When an amendment is processed using the formal process, it requires a mover and a seconder. The mover and seconder of the amendment will be allowed a combined two (2) minutes to speak to the amendment. Then the debate proceeds as outlined in Section F of this policy.
4. Submission of amendments to the chair or RMA designated staff in writing in advance of the start of the resolutions session is encouraged.
5. Only one amendment will be accepted at a time, and only one amendment to the amendment is permitted at a time.

6. A simple majority vote is required to pass all amendments.

H. Endorsed Resolutions

1. Resolutions passed by the voting delegates shall not be amended or modified.
2. Endorsed resolutions inform the advocacy efforts of the RMA. As such, relevant government ministries and other organizations are sent the relevant resolutions and asked to provide responses.
3. Concurrently, the RMA incorporates the positions outlined in the endorsed resolutions into the organization's advocacy strategy and other relevant documents.
4. Resolutions that receive the endorsement of the voting delegates shall be active for three (3) years.
5. Twice yearly, typically following each convention, the RMA will advise members of what resolutions are expiring.
6. Expired resolutions may be renewed by following the regular resolution procedure of bringing resolutions forward as outlined in the Resolution Submission Guidelines.

I. Resolution Reporting

1. The RMA Board of Directors will receive and assess government resolution responses and policy activities that affect the achievement of resolution objectives as they are received. Upon evaluation, both the response received and the RMA's assessment will be posted on the RMA resolution database. Following this, any status or development changes for resolutions will be communicated to members through a member bulletin. This bulletin will include links to the specific resolution entry on the RMA resolution database, ensuring that members are promptly and comprehensively informed of any updates.
2. The RMA disseminates advocacy responses and updates on a regular basis formally through the Resolution Status Update biannually, and in various meetings and speaking opportunities directly with RMA members.
3. The RMA's resolution database is publicly accessible on the RMA website.
4. The RMA will provide a monthly bulletin in Contact newsletter providing an advocacy update on a rotating selection of active resolutions.