Is it acceptable if a voter moves to "table" an article (majority vote) without a time set to take the article off the table, or should the moderator ask the voter to rephrase the motion to "postpone indefinitely" (two-thirds vote)?

Answering this question requires a reading of both Vermont law and *Robert's Rules of Order*. Under Robert's Rules, the maker of the motion can use either motion, depending on what result is desired: A motion to postpone indefinitely drops the main motion without a vote on it, and essentially kills the motion; a motion to lay on the table enables the assembly to lay the pending question aside temporarily, in place of something requiring immediate attention by the assembly. Henry M. Robert, III., *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* § 11, 17 (10th ed. 2000).

The trump card here that cannot be ignored is Vermont law: "A warned article voted on at an annual meeting shall not be submitted to the voters for reconsideration or rescission at the same meeting after an assembly has begun consideration of another article . . ." 17 V.S.A. § 2661 (a). The question that arises when trying to harmonize parliamentary law with Vermont law (which will supersede) is whether an article has actually been *voted on* when it is "tabled." VLCT believes that if an article has been warned, discussion on the merits has begun, and a motion has been made to postpone indefinitely, it cannot be revived. Motions to postpone indefinitely, while they are subsidiary to the main motion, go directly to the substance of the question, and therefore, probably constitute a "vote" for purposes of 17 V.S.A. § 2661 (a). The motion to postpone indefinitely is akin to a "no" vote on the actual question.

However, a motion to lay on the table can be voted on without violating 17 V.S.A. § 2661 (a). This would cause the main motion to be set aside, and not voted on its merits, while more immediate business is addressed, such as a motion to recess because of temperature problems, etc. VLCT believes a motion to lay on the table does not constitute "voting" for purposes of 17 V.S.A. § 2661 (a).

VLCT News, February 2003