

Meaningful Minutes

Secretary Best Practices

Compliments of Pamela Judd, AICI FLC

M Minutes Have a Purpose

Minutes record any and all official decisions that are made. They are an instant written record of what actually happens at a meeting, typically in the order that it actually happens. Minutes are the permanent record of business conducted during a meeting and especially important at any meeting where people vote. It's important to be concise. Craig Bystrynski put it best, "Minutes should record what is *done* at meetings, not what is *said*. Just record specific motions, votes and key business."

Minutes begin with the organization name, date, full names of participants who are present, list of people absent, the chair or presiding officer who called the meeting to order and the start time. The minutes for each meeting are presented for approval at the next meeting.

Chapter minutes are submitted as part of the Chapter Accord requirements twice per year. *Tip: Include the month/year in your file name and add the file name as a document "footer" to make minute documents easy to organize and locate.*

I Information Recording

Decide which tools are best for you. Typing minutes during the meeting or call via a laptop or computer is ideal; some prefer note taking first and then transcribing. Consider recording the meeting or call to ensure all key ideas and decisions are captured. Your Chapter President can also be a key backup for good note taking. Flag "Action Items" within the minutes and transfer them to a separate Action Items Checklist (Action Item, By Whom, and By When) for distribution to the team, along with the minutes.

N Names Protocol

Use last names only, no first names are used.

U Understanding Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary Procedure is a set of rules for conduct at meetings that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.

An Agenda is a detailed list of specific items, in the sequence in which they will be covered. Format your notes to follow the agenda.

A Motion is a formal way to propose something that the group votes on or agrees to a certain view. It is made by a member who says "I move that..." (which is equivalent to saying, "I propose that"), and then stating the action. *Tip: Don't be shy about asking for clarification during the meeting!*

Motions are Seconded

Every motion should be seconded. This is to prevent time being consumed in considering a question that only one person favors. A Motion gets seconded and the name of the person seconding it is included in the minutes. A motion is seconded by saying "I second the motion," or "I second it,"

The Chair States Your Motion

When a motion has been made and seconded, it is the role of the Chair to immediately *state the question* – e.g. state the exact question that is before the group for its consideration and action. Example: "It is moved and seconded that..." This places the motion before the group for consideration and action. The motion can then be discussed, debated, or move directly to a vote.

Motions can be Amended and Tabled

If a person wants to change (amend) their motion, they can do so and the amended motion gets seconded. If a motion cannot or should not be voted on at the current time, it's postponed (tabled) until the next meeting. Usually the issue has to be studied further or facts may not be available yet.

Motion to Adjourn

The Chair makes a motion to adjourn the meeting. It is seconded and normally all are in favor!

Discussion often follows and is typically not documented in the minutes. Key highlights or resulting action items from the discussion can be included.

Votes are sometimes called for by the Chair by asking "All those in favor of the motion...?" Any opposed? If everyone agrees, the Motion carries. There's no need to ask for abstentions (those who choose not to vote at all), abstentions are not counted toward the outcome of the motion. Vote counts are typically not listed; only the outcome is included in the minutes.

Unfinished Business (Old Business)

Unfinished Business is typically listed at the end of the Agenda. It covers any pending item carried over from the previous meeting. Be specific and list these pending items if you can on the agenda.

New Business

This is an opportunity to introduce any new items for consideration before the meeting adjourns.

T Time Saving Board Meetings – The Consent Agenda

At the International Board, we submit our “reports” typically 10 days before the Board meeting. Reports include our key activities, updates, and progress. The agenda, the previous minutes, the previous Action Items, and our reports are then distributed in advance of the meeting.

The International Board uses a “Consent Agenda” e.g. it includes only those items that require discussion and voting. This saves time because we don’t discuss everything that is each Officer’s report during the Board meeting, but we all have it as a background reference as needed.

E Endings

End with the time that the meeting adjourns, together with Respectfully Submitted, your name and your title. Type up or finalize your minutes you’re your notes as soon as possible while you can remember what occurred!

S Send Promptly and Keep Members Informed

Set a reasonable deadline (7-10 days) to send your minutes to the President for initial review. Consider creating a “Chapter Board Brief” which is a summary of the minutes to share your key decisions and plans with your members.

Questions or suggestions?

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