

VENTURING MAGAZINE

LeaderThoughts #25 by Michael Brown

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Basics of Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes are too often an overlooked part of group meetings. Few understand their importance; fewer still know how to handle them. This is a mistake, because minutes are a vital part of your organization's records. They are the information on the decisions your group makes. In fact, with many organizations, the minutes of their national boards are important enough that they are put on-line or provided in their national magazines so that all members are aware of them.



One big thing to keep in mind with minutes is: minutes are a record of what decided at a meeting, NOT what was said by members.

What should be in minutes?

First paragraph of the minutes should include:

- kind of meeting (regular, special, etc)
- name of group (if not in the heading)
- date and time of meeting
- place of meeting (optional)
- fact that chairman and secretary were present, or their substitutes (named)
- whether minutes of previous meeting were approved [more on this later]

Organize the rest of minutes by the section of the meeting. Reports of officers, etc. Then any unfinished business and the outcome, then new business. Using your agenda, it should be easy to take notes of the meeting, and turned this notes into minutes.

The body of the minutes should include:

Notation that specific reports were given, and any action that came from them.

All main motions and any motions that bring something back to the group. Motions withdrawn should not be included. For each of these items of business, use a separate paragraph with:

- The name of the person making the motion (but NOT the seconder).
- Wording of the motion that is adopted or disposed of. (ie, if it was amended, give the final form).
- The outcome of motion (pass or failed; or referred to a committee or the like), and any amendments.

Secondary motions that were not lost (failed to pass) or withdrawn.

All points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost.

Any announcements & dates. If a program was given, indicate the topic and name of speaker/presenter, but NOT a review of the program.

The final paragraph should have:

- Time of adjournment
- Signature and date of Secretary, if minutes approved [again, more on this later]

Again, what does NOT go into minutes??

- Secunder's name
- Remarks of guest speakers
- Motions that are withdrawn
- Personal opinion on anything said or done
- The discussion on the motion

What do you DO with the minutes after a meeting?

- Secretary should type them up. With easy access to computers, this should be easy.
- If it's the custom of your group, these UNAPPROVED or draft minutes may be sent to members of the group before the meeting so they may read them. (Advice-- do not send as an email enclosure. Include the text of the minutes within the email.)
- At the next meeting, the secretary will read (really a paraphrasing) of the minutes if not already distributed. (Hence, if you emailed them out, you can forgo the reading of the minutes, saving time.)
- The chair asks for corrections. If none, and no one objects, minutes are approved. If corrections needed, secretary notes them. Once done, and again if no one objects, minutes are approved. (Please note, this is an "assumed motion", you do not need to waste time doing a formal motion with a seconder, and approval is by general consent, not a formal vote. The only reason to NOT approve the minutes is that there is an error in them. The solution is to correct them, which was just asked for.)
- Secretary signs approved (and possibly corrected) minutes, and files them in organization's records. They can then be accessed by members in the future. Many organizations will bind their minutes in a book. This ensures their permanence.

Here is a simple SAMPLE minutes:

The regular bi-weekly meeting of the Crew 777, was held on Tuesday, November 15, 2005, at 7:00 p.m., at the St Peter's Church Fellowship Hall. The Chairman and the Secretary being present.

The minutes of the November 1 meeting were read and approved as corrected.

The report of the Treasurer was received and filed for audit. The crew has \$1,578 on hand.

Unfinished Business

The motion relating to the upcoming fundraiser event, which was postponed from the October 14 meeting, was then taken up. On motion of Peter Smith, the motion was referred to a committee of three to be appointed by the chair with instructions to report at the next meeting.

New Business

Susan Rogers moved and it was seconded "that the Crew organize a crew leadership retreat to be held the second weekend of February to conduct an ILSC." After amendment and further debate, the motion was adopted as follows: "That the Crew participate in a crew leadership retreat to be held the first weekend in March to conduct ILSC."

Program

Susan Smith from the Red Cross gave a First Aid demonstration.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

For further information, both NAP (National Associations of Parliamentarians) and AIP (American Institute of Parliamentarians) have produced booklets on presiding. These may be purchased from their bookstores at their websites. NAP has "Presidentially Speaking: a Guide to Presiding", part of their "Pathways to Proficiency" series. AIP has the booklet "Presiding: You Can Do It!" (\$16).

NAP: www.parliamentarians.org

AIP: www.aipparl.org

(Above based on information by Jim Slaughter at www.jimslaughter.com/uploads/OrderofBusiness.pdf and other sources)