MINUTE TAKING TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Sheri Minard
Objectives

- The Importance of Minutes
- What every minute taker needs to know
  - Your role as a minute taker
  - The definition of minutes
  - The minute takers tool box

- Organizational Tips
  - The agenda
  - Before and after the meeting

- What to include/What to ignore
  - Set up of Minutes
  - Guidelines of what to include
  - Motions and resolutions
The Importance of Minutes

Meetings Require:

- **A good chair** – someone who can lead the group efficiently and effectively throughout the topics
- **An accurate minute taker** – someone who can record the decisions that were made at the meeting and the actions to be taken for the future
- **Agenda** – is an important document – this is your success checker. It states whether your group is staying on track and meeting its goals.
What every minute taker needs to know

- The role of the minute taker
- The definition of minutes
- The impact of privacy legislation
- The Minute Taker’s Toolbox
- QUIZ – What every minute taker needs to know
What every minute taker needs to know

- The characteristics of an effective chair
  - Knowledgeable
  - Good time management skills
  - Objective
  - Good speaker
  - Good listener
  - Makes everyone feel comfortable
  - Works well with the minute taker
What every minute taker needs to know

- The characteristics of a good minute taker
  - Knowledgeable
  - Good time management skills
  - Objective
  - Good speaker
  - Good listener
  - Makes everyone feel comfortable
  - Works well with the chair
What every minute taker needs to know

Privacy Legislation

Public’s right to access information

Organization’s right and need to protect information
What every minute taker needs to know

• What Records are Accessible?
  • All emails (from desktops, laptops and Smartphones)
  • All electronic files and databases
  • Expense claims and accounts
  • Non-final drafts and working notes
  • Handwritten notes, spreadsheets, sketches
  • Agendas and meeting minutes
What every minute taker needs to know

Minutes are a permanent, formal record of the policies, decisions, and other business that occur at a meeting.
What every minute taker needs to know

- Robert’s Rules of Order

“In an ordinary society, unless the minutes are to be published, they should contain mainly a record of what was done at the meeting, not what was said by the members.”
What every minute taker needs to know

- The Minute Takers Toolbox

1. Think ....
What every minute taker needs to know

The Minute Takers Toolbox:

- The agenda
- The chair
- Other members
- Previous minutes
What every minute taker needs to know

Summary

- Never think of the minutes as a separate-step process (think slinky)
- A good agenda is the basis of good minutes
- Knowing why an item is on the agenda will help you record the appropriate comments.
- Don’t be afraid to check with the chair and the members as to why an item will be discussed.
Organizational Tips

- The agenda
- Before the meeting
- At the meeting
- After the meeting
Organizational Tips

The Agenda

- Meetings without Agendas are:
  - Frustrating
  - Non-productive
  - Eventually attendance falls off
  - Difficult to take minutes
Organizational Tips

- Best Agendas should include:
  - Meeting name/time/date
  - Time limits for each topic on the agenda
  - Names
  - Items in descriptive words
Organizational Tips

- Agendas for Formal Meetings:
  - Approval of minutes of previous meeting
  - Reports
  - Correspondence – such as email, letters
  - Business arising from previous minutes
  - New business
  - Date of the next meeting
  - Attachments
  - Time of Adjournment
  - Names and phone numbers of persons to send regrets to
Organizational Tips

Before the meeting:

- Design your own template for your minutes when you first assume the task
- As you type the agenda, do a cut and paste of the topics for discussion in the minutes
- Discuss with the chair how members’ handout materials will be handled.
- Remember the more you get done before the meeting, the easier it will be to prepare the final minutes.
Organizational Tips

At the meeting:

- Arriving early and speaking to all the participants will reduce the stress of the process
- Short hand, long hand and tape recorders are tools that require more work after the meeting
- Using a computer/laptop requires more work before the meeting
- Corrections to minutes must be made on the minutes concerned and noted on the meeting minutes where the correction was identified
Organizational Tips

After the Meeting:

- Re-read your notes as soon as possible after the meeting
- As you prepare the minutes, begin work on the agenda for the next meeting
- The minute only become the official minutes after they have been approved by the meeting members at the next meeting
- File the minutes in a spot they can be easily retrieved in the future
- Have a system for the disposal of notes, tapes, etc
What to include/What to ignore

- Set up of Minutes
- Guidelines for What to include
- Motions and Resolutions
- EXERCISE – What to Include
- QUIZ – What to include
What to Include/What to Ignore

Set Up of Minutes

- Headers of Minutes Should Include...
  - The name and type of the meeting
  - Date, start time, and location
  - Names of meeting members (present or absent)
  - Identification of the chair and the minute taker
  - Names of those present who are not official members: *in attendance or guest*
  - Whether the minutes of previous meeting were approved
What to Include/What to Ignore
Set Up of Minutes

- Bodies of the Minutes should include...
  - Separate sections for each topic (multiple paragraphs can be used)
  - Motions and names of movers of the motions (formal minutes)
  - Any action for follow up (including names and dates)
  - Brief discussion of information
  - Last paragraph should state hour of adjournment and date of next meeting
What to Include/What to Ignore
Set Up of Minutes

• Additional Roberts’ Rules
  • The name of the seconder of a motion – unless ordered by the assembly – need not be recorded
  • The name and subject of a guest speaker can be given but no effort should be made to summarize his marks
  • When a committee report is of great importance to show the legislative history of a measure, the assembly can order it “to be entered in the minutes,” in which case the secretary copies it in full in the minutes.
What to Include/What to Ignore
Set Up of Minutes

- More Robert’s Rules
  - A vote is not needed to adjourn a meeting. The chair can ask if there is any further business – pause – and then if there is not further business state that the meeting is adjourned.

Minutes would read: There being no further business, the chair adjourned the meeting at 9:15pm
Guidelines for What to Include

- You Should Record
  - Key points only once
  - Issue Debate – only include the pros and cons
  - New information
  - All motions and their results
  - Expected actions, who is responsible and deadlines
Guidelines for What to Include

- What should not be recorded
  - Housekeeping information
  - Speaker’s experiences
  - Old Material
  - Personal comments
  - He said/she said dialogue
Guidelines for What to Include

- When are names needed...
  - To provide an attendance list
  - To show the mover of a motion
  - To assign actions/tasks
  - To identify a presenter
  - To fulfill the wishes of someone who asks that his or her name be recorded in the minutes (because of an objection)
Guidelines for What to Include

• Suggested Phrases:
  • It was discussed
  • It was pointed out
  • It was reviewed
  • It was decided
  • It was agreed
  • It was suggested
  • After discussion, the following points arose
Guidelines for What to Include

• Success Checker:  
  5 Questions
  • Does it add new information the group needs?
  • Does it give absent members necessary information?
  • Will it provide history?
  • Does it assign responsibility and deadlines?
  • Does it “close the loop”?
Motions and Resolutions

- **A Motion is ...**
  - A proposal put before a group for discussion and a vote
  - Motions state what action the group will take or what views it intends to uphold.

- The format of your Motions should be same for all meetings
Motions and Resolutions

A Resolution is...

- Is a motion phrased in a special style.
- It involves conditions or background information starting with the word WHEREAS follow by clauses starting with the word BE IN RESOLVED.
Motions and Resolutions

- Recording
- Make sure you include:
  - Whether the motion/resolution was carried or defeated
  - Motions must be seconded before the chair can open the discussion/call for a vote.
    Name of the seconder – depends on your parliamentary authority as to whether its included or not
- Do Not Record
  - Final minutes should not show the process of how a motion was “wordsmithed”. Only put in the final motion or resolution.
Listening Skills

- Hearing is physiological
- Listening is a learned activity
- Active listening is an acquired skill
- You can listen twice as fast as the average person can speak
Listening Skills

Seven Important Steps

- Try to stay relaxed (reducing stress levels will help)
- Do your homework before the meeting
- Listen carefully to how the words fit with the agenda’s goal
- Lay aside your biases
- Stay in the room mentally
- Be confident (in your ability)
- Watch your posture