

Parliamentary Procedure: Preparing Minutes of a Meeting¹

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The minutes of a meeting are the official record of all business that was transacted during a meeting. They serve as a historical reference for members. As such, an official copy of the minutes should be kept in a manner that is accessible to the membership, yet preserves their integrity as a historical record of the organization. They should be written in a brief and unbiased form, and they should not reflect opinions.

Minutes represent what was actually *done* at a meeting and not what was *said* by any of the members. This means that discussion should NOT be included in the minutes, but rather, the minutes should reflect the outcome or disposition of the motions that were made. Even though a meeting may last for hours, the minutes of the meeting may be less than a page in length, depending upon how many motions were made during the meeting.

Introductory Statement

The first paragraph of the minutes should contain information about the location and nature of the meeting. It should contain the following information, although the order of this information may be arranged to suit the assembly:

- Kind of meeting (regular, special, adjourned regular, or adjourned special meeting)
- Name of the assembly

- Meeting time and date
- Meeting place (unless the assembly always meets in the same location)
- Whether or not the regular chair and secretary were present, and if not, the names of the person(s) who acted for them
- Whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as read (or approved as corrected)
- If the meeting was any type other than the regular meeting, the date of the meeting from which the minutes came

If corrections are made in the minutes and approved by the assembly, those corrections are made in the text of the minutes with no notation as to what the correction was. It is merely stated in the minutes that the minutes were approved “as corrected” if changes are made and approved.

Body of the Minutes

The body of the minutes should contain a separate paragraph for each subject. The following should be included:

- All main motions that introduced a substantive question

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- All motions that brought a question back before the assembly (i.e., reconsider, rescind, take from the table, etc.)
- All secondary motions that were adopted
- Any privileged or incidental motions that were referenced for clarity (i.e., recess, fix the time to which to adjourn, suspend the rules, etc.)
- Unique instances that may better explain the flow of business in a meeting (i.e., advancing a motion in the agenda, a ballot vote being ordered, etc.)
- The substance of oral committee reports
- All notices of motions
- All appeals and points of order (whether sustained or lost), along with the reasons given by the chair for his/her ruling, and
- The hour of adjournment (recorded in the last paragraph)

Additional Rules of Recording and Preparing Minutes

Motions that were withdrawn should only be entered into the minutes if the mention of those motions contributes to understanding the context. For example, if a motion was postponed at the previous meeting to be taken up at the current meeting, and the motion is withdrawn at the current meeting, the postponement at the first meeting should be recorded and the withdrawal of the motion at the second meeting should also be recorded in order to complete the resolution of the original item of business. If mentioned at all, the discussion of a motion should only be mentioned parenthetically (e.g., “after considerable debate”).

The disposition of a motion (whether the motion was adopted or lost) should be included in the minutes; however, the vote should not be recorded unless the motion required a two-thirds vote, the vote was taken by roll call, or a ballot vote was taken. If a roll call vote was taken, the names of those voting on each side of the motion should be recorded, including those who abstained, in order to reflect the presence of a quorum at the time of the vote. Since the chair may vote as any other member of the assembly, no mention of the chair voting or not voting should be mentioned in the minutes. Minutes should be signed by the secretary and may be signed by the chair.

Other rules pertaining to what should be included in minutes are as follows:

- The first and last name of the person who made the motion should be entered into the minutes, but the name of the person who seconded the motion should not, unless ordered by the assembly.
 - The actions of a committee of the whole or a quasi-committee of the whole should not be entered into the minutes; however, the fact that the assembly went into a committee of the whole or a quasi-committee of the whole should be mentioned and the committee’s report recorded.
 - If a committee report is considered to be of such importance that the assembly wishes to make it part of the formal record of the organization, the assembly may order it recorded into the minutes in full. If so, the secretary should enter the full committee report into the minutes.
 - The informal consideration of an item of business should be entered into the minutes just as if the question had been considered in a formal manner.
 - The name and subject of a guest speaker may be entered into the minutes, but no effort should be made to summarize the speaker’s remarks.
 - The declaration by the chair in naming an offending member as part of disciplinary procedures, as well as any disorderly words leading to the naming—along with the chair’s direction to the secretary to record the action—should be entered into the minutes.
 - Recording devices may be used by the secretary to assist in the preparation of minutes, but a transcript of the meeting should not be adopted as the minutes of a meeting.
- ## Reading and Approval of the Minutes
- Most groups meet at a regular time that is within a quarterly time interval, and their meetings do not last longer than one day. For these groups, the following procedures apply for the reading and approval of minutes:
- The minutes of a regular meeting are normally read and approved at the beginning of the next regular meeting,

immediately after the call to order and any opening ceremonies.

- The chair calls for the reading of the minutes and, after they are read, asks for any corrections. The chair then calls for approval of the minutes (either as read, or as corrected) by unanimous consent.
- If a draft of the minutes is sent to members in advance of the meeting, the minutes are not usually read since it is presumed that the members will have already reviewed them. However, if any member requests they be read at the meeting, the secretary should do so. Correction and approval of the minutes are handled in the usual way even if they are not read.
- A formal copy of the approved minutes is placed in a minutes book. The formal copy contains all corrections that were made, if any. Once the membership votes on minutes, those become the official record of business. Any draft copies of minutes, such as those sent to members, are not valid and should not be retained.
- If an adjourned meeting is held, the minutes of the meeting that set the adjourned meeting are read and approved. The minutes of the adjourned meeting are read at the next meeting.
- A special meeting does not approve minutes; its minutes should be approved at the next regular meeting.
- A motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes is not a request to omit their reading altogether. It merely allows the group to delay their consideration until a later time.
- As noted above, minutes are normally read at the beginning of a meeting. However, if the assembly does not wish to have the reading and approval of minutes at the beginning of the meeting, it may, by majority vote and without debate, dispense with the reading of the minutes. The minutes can then be taken up by majority vote without debate at any later time during the meeting while no business is pending. If the minutes are not taken up before the meeting adjourns, they are read and approved at the following meeting before the minutes of the later meeting are read.

For groups who do not meet within a quarterly time interval and whose meetings do not last longer than one day, the executive board or an appointed committee may be authorized to approve the minutes. In sessions that last

longer than one day, such as conventions, the minutes of meetings held the preceding day are read and approved by the convention at the beginning of each day's business except as the convention may authorize the executive board or a committee to approve the minutes at a later time. Any minutes that have not been approved previously should be read before the final adjournment.

When minutes are approved, the word "Approved" should be written below them with the secretary's initials and the date. If an error or material omission is found in the minutes after their approval (even if found many years later), the minutes can then be corrected by means of the motion to *Amend Something Previously Adopted*, which requires a two-thirds vote, a majority vote with notice, the vote of a majority of the entire membership, or unanimous consent.

Example of Minutes

The regular meeting of the Gator FFA Chapter was held on Thursday, December 8, 2012, in the chapter meeting room at Gator High School. Chapter President James Cole called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Brooke Compton served as secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as corrected. Officer and committee reports were deferred to our next regular meeting.

Ms. Jessica Russell moved that the chapter sponsor a hayride for our members. After considerable discussion concerning the date of the event, Mr. Curtis Yerdon moved to amend the motion to add the words "on January 28, 2013, at 6:00 p.m."

The motion was made to postpone indefinitely the motion to amend along with the main motion. Mr. Yerdon rose to a point of order stating that the motion to postpone indefinitely could only be applied to main motions. The point was sustained and the motion to postpone indefinitely was ruled out of order.

Ms. Tina Jones moved to refer the pending amendment and motion to sponsor a hayride to the Recreation Committee. The motion to refer was lost.

Mr. Jordan Hunter moved to postpone the motion and amendment to the January chapter meeting. The motion to postpone definitely was lost.

Mr. Daniel Eck moved to limit debate on the amendment to two debates per side. The motion to limit debate was adopted by a two-thirds vote of 20-4.

Mr. Chris Cornelius moved to take a five-minute recess. The motion to recess was lost. Mr. Cornelius called for a division of the assembly. After a rising vote the motion to recess was again lost.

The amendment to add the words “on January 28, 2013, at 6:00 p.m.” was adopted.

The amended motion that our chapter sponsor a hayride on January 28, 2013, at 6:00 p.m. was adopted.

Ms. Bridgette Marsh moved to fix the time to which to adjourn to the next regularly scheduled meeting at 8:00 a.m. on February 5, 2013. The motion was adopted.

Ms. Kate Bass moved to adjourn. The motion was adopted. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m. and will reconvene at 8:00 a.m. on February 5, 2013.

Chair’s Signature: James Cole Secretary’s Signature: Brooke Compton

References

Robert, H. M. (2011). *Robert’s rules of order newly revised* (11th ed.). Philadelphia: DaCapo Press.