HOW TO TAKE MINUTES

Taking good minutes at a board meeting is crucial to accomplishing the goals of the meeting. Minutes are more than a general accounting of board discussions; they serve as an official record of the meeting itself. Minutes can be used to track progress, detail future plans, and serve as a reference point for the future. Additionally, minutes should reflect a record of motions, votes, and abstentions.

STEP 1: PREPARATION FOR THE BOARD MEETING

At the beginning of his or her term, the board secretary should discuss with the board president if there is a preferred minutes format. Reviewing past meeting minutes or minutes from other organizations may serve as a helpful template. Before each meeting, the secretary should acquire or generate a meeting agenda that includes the names of all attendees, noting which is a board member, guest, or speaker.

STEP 2: WRITING THE OFFICIAL RECORD OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Review the agenda to gain the full scope of the meeting. Add notes for clarification. Review actions, motions, votes, and decisions for clarity. Edit the record so that the minutes are succinct, clear, and easy to read. Any members absent from the meeting should be able to reproduce the meeting’s discussion from the minutes and be able to act on any follow-up or action items proposed.

It’s better to attach meeting handouts and documents that were referred to during the meeting to the final copy, rather than summarizing the contents in the minutes.

STEP 3: SIGNING, FILING, AND SHARING MINUTES

Once the minutes are written, the secretary should sign them to make them official. The secretary (or whoever has been delegated to take minutes) is responsible for sharing the minutes with the rest of the board. Make sure the president has approved the minutes before sharing in print or online.

Common mistakes in taking board meeting minutes

- Failure to document a quorum
- Ambiguous description of board actions
- Lengthy delays in providing minutes after a meeting
• Delays in approving minutes from past meetings
• Failing to file and manage documents