



Minutes Don't Just Happen

Every organization needs a responsible individual to be its secretary. The role this person plays is an important one in the running of a successful meeting and to the success of the organization.

As a secretary you should have good writing, note taking, summarizing and public speaking skills as well as some knowledge of parliamentary procedure. You should be familiar with the organization and topics under discussion. It is important that you be chosen because of your special skills and talents.

Responsibilities of the secretary

This factsheet focuses on the responsibilities of the secretary at meetings. Other responsibilities of the organization secretary may include:

- providing relevant information, ideas and opinions as a participant in the meeting
- keeping an accurate set of minutes of each meeting in the records of the organization
- keeping an up-to-date membership list
- handling the organization's correspondence
- distributing minutes to members and notifying them of upcoming meetings
- keeping a list of all committees and members
- providing the chairperson with assistance in preparing the agenda, advice on meeting procedure, reference materials and information retrieved from the records
- keeping necessary minutes and files for the organization's archives
- making meeting and physical set-up arrangements; the meeting planning checklist may help in preparing for your meeting
- as the outgoing secretary orientating the new secretary of your duties and responsibilities

Meeting Planning Check List	
Meeting objective:	Date:
	Time: to am/pm
	Place:
Participants:	<input type="checkbox"/> Room reserved
	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda (meeting notice)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepared
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sent
	<input type="checkbox"/> Visuals prepared
Meeting Material	
<input type="checkbox"/> Note pads, pencils	<input type="checkbox"/> Name/place cards
<input type="checkbox"/> Name badges	<input type="checkbox"/> Handouts
Equipment	
<input type="checkbox"/> LCD projector	<input type="checkbox"/> Laptop
<input type="checkbox"/> Screen (size)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pointer
<input type="checkbox"/> Charts	<input type="checkbox"/> Microphone
<input type="checkbox"/> Marking pens	<input type="checkbox"/> Extension cord
<input type="checkbox"/> Lectern	
Food, Beverage	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee	<input type="checkbox"/> Juice/Soft drinks
<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch	
Post Meeting	
<input type="checkbox"/> Action minutes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Next meeting	
Room Layout	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div>	
Note: Designate No Smoking Area	

Minutes

The purpose of the minutes is to:

- Provide a permanent record of the proceedings of a meeting.
- Keep track of progress.
- Inform absent members.
- Help in the orientation of new members to the committee/organization. With many committees/organizations experiencing high turnover, the minutes, with a brief outline of the discussion, can bring new members up to date quickly.
- Provide a useful guide for evaluating a committee's/organization's work.

Minutes don't just happen

In writing the minutes, it is important that you as the secretary sit where you can see the members of the meeting and clearly hear what is being said. Otherwise, it will be hard to keep up with the discussion, and time will be lost in repeating information.

Agenda items should be numbered. While writing the minutes, the secretary can identify or index the minutes with the items on the agenda (see example). The agenda is then attached to the minutes and filed as a complete package.

Minutes should be as brief as possible, yet still maintain their accuracy. The decision about the type of minutes and how much to include can be the group's decision or made between the chairperson and the secretary.

A basic set of minutes should include:

1. The name of the organization/committee.
2. When and where the committee/organization met.
3. Who was present, and who chaired the meeting. For larger groups it may be easier to record who is absent.
4. Adoption of the last meeting's minutes.
5. The matters discussed and any decisions that were made. Business matters should be divided into old and new business. Old business usually refers to items from the minutes of previous meetings. New business refers to items that have not been addressed by the committee/organization before. When recording items of business, the motion, who made the motion, the seconder, and whether it was carried or defeated should be included.

6. Agenda items for the next meeting; this could include unfinished business or assignments given to sub-committees. The list serves as a good reminder to the committee/organization.
7. The time and place of the next meeting.
8. The secretary and chairperson's signature.

The following sample set of minutes includes all of the above and illustrates how the minutes could be indexed with the agenda for easy reference.

Anywhereville Agricultural Society Director's Meeting January 11th, 8:00 p.m. Anywhereville Community Centre.	
Agenda	
1.	Welcome.
2.	Minutes of last meeting.
3.	Old Business. 3.1 - Proposal re date change of spring fair.
4.	New Business. 4.1 - Delegates to directors' workshop. 4.2 - Report from promotions committee. 4.3 - _____
5.	Future agenda.
6.	Date of next meeting.
7.	Adjourn - 10:30 p.m.

Minutes of the Anywhereville Agricultural Society Director's Meeting January 11th, 8:00 p.m. Anywhereville Community Centre.	
1.	The meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Mr. A., who welcomed all those present. Absent with notification, Mr. B.
2.	Minutes of the December 6th meeting were read, corrected and accepted.
3.	Old Business. 3.1 - MOTION: Mrs. C./Mr. D. that the date of the spring fair be changed to the Victoria Day weekend. Discussion In favour a) _____ b) _____ Against a) _____ b) _____
	DEFEATED
4.	New Business. 4.1 - MOTION Mr. E./Mr F. that Anywhereville Agricultural Society send three delegates to the "Roles and Responsibilities of Agricultural Society Director's workshop." 4.2 - promotions committee reported that _____. 4.3 - _____
5.	Future agenda. a) finalize plans for spring fair. b) sponsorship of 4-H clubs. c) report from toyshow committee.
6.	Next meeting. - February, 8th, 8:00 p.m., Anywhereville Community Centre
7.	Meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.
	Chairperson _____ Secretary _____

Here's another option

Once a decision has been voted on at a committee/ organization meeting, the members then take "ownership" of that decision. Given this principle of "group ownership," the names of the mover and seconder of a motion are not needed. What is important is that the group has made a decision and only this is recorded.

Helpful hints

- Keep the minutes in a three-ring binder with a separate section for annual meeting minutes.
- Always have more than one pen/pencil on hand and lots of paper.
- If a lengthy report is given, obtain the notes from the person giving the report and summarize. Rather than recording excess information, refer in the minutes to the committee/organization files where committee/ organization minutes will be kept.
- Request the lengthy motions be written out and given to you.
- Have ready with you sheets of paper with the following:

_____ moved that _____

seconded by _____

_____ carried/not carried

This will help speed up motions being written by you.

- As soon as possible after the meeting, write up the final version while it is still fresh in your memory.
- Complete a "meeting action plan" (see back page) to summarize duties, responsibilities and deadlines agreed to during the meeting.

The secretary's work is never done... or maybe it just seems that way. Your position requires a high commitment of time and enthusiasm because you have many responsibilities to your club or organization. A primary responsibility is the writing of clear and concise minutes. Through the minutes you ensure that an accurate history of the organization and its members is kept. These records provide a sense of continuity to the organization as each year passes.

This is adapted from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's publication *Minutes Don't Just Happen*, 1989, written by N. Geleynse and R. Black.

For more information, contact

Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 310- FARM (3276).

Website: www.agriculture.alberta.ca

Meeting Action Plan

Organization:

Committee:

Chair:

Attendees:

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Item	Action taken/Action to be taken	Assigned to	Deadline

Meeting adjourned at: