

Minutes—The Official Record of Your Organization

Our experience on earth is divided into two segments—the historic period and the prehistoric. The only difference, really, is that during the historic period someone kept notes of what was happening. That's right, they kept minutes.

Your organization's minutes are its official and written record. Good minutes are no real mystery, and they are documents that most organizations value. Why? Because they record such important information as:

- 1) What issues were raised?
- 2) What solutions were considered?
- 3) What decisions were made?
- 4) What offers of help were accepted and what assignments were made?
- 5) What concerns remain to be considered later?



Minutes should always be taken during all meetings of organizations or their committees. Then anyone wishing to know what happened can find out. A written record assures us that the important details will not be forgotten.

What is written down?

If an agenda has been developed (and it should have been), the secretary should be able to follow it, recording the general discussion about items contained in the agenda. All motions, and their seconds, should be recorded, including what was moved and by whom, and whether or not the motion carried. A record of who voted should be recorded. If the chairperson requests a roll call vote, the vote of each present member of the committee should be recorded, with the chairperson voting last.

Who takes the minutes?

The minutes should be taken by the organization (or committee) secretary, or, in their absence, the person appointed as acting secretary for the meeting. Whoever chairs the meeting should appoint a temporary secretary if the official secretary is absent. One of the actions in most meetings will be the vote to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Avoid the temptation to routinely approve the previous meeting's minutes without fully considering them. Reviewing the last meeting in its entirety will assist members in being of what happened, who promised to do what, and what was left to be done.

Moreover, if there is a difference between what the secretary thought was the group's feelings and what really was, a review of the minutes will disclose the difference.

Who gets copies of the minutes?

Minutes should be given to all committee members of course, as well as all others who promised to do something for the group—even if they were “volunteered”. If the minutes are mailed well in advance of the next meeting, everyone knows what was done, what needs to be done, and who has to do it. The organization progresses well, no one is taken by surprise at the next meeting, and

corrections to the minutes can be made if needed. Also, the secretary, in reading the last meeting's minutes can make any additions to the upcoming agenda by reviewing what decisions were tabled.

Minutes should include:

- ✓ The name of the organization or committee
- ✓ Who was present and absent
- ✓ The date and place of the meeting
- ✓ Topics discussed
- ✓ The motions made
- ✓ Who made the motions
- ✓ Whether the motions carried or not
- ✓ Who said they would do something
- ✓ What it was they said they would do, and when
- ✓ What was left to future meetings
- ✓ The starting and ending times of the meeting

Less Time, More Impact

*An Oconto County University
Extension Leadership
Development Fact Sheet*

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We hope your organization remembers, "The good work of years of effort are made up of minutes."

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