City of Beaverton

Boards & Commissions Minute Taking Guide

Beaverton OREGON

How to Take Minutes for Advisory Board and Committee Meetings

Minutes <u>ARE</u> a tangible record of what was done at a meeting--the essential information from a meeting, for:

- Meeting participants, those unable to attend and the public;
- Board/committee members, staff, and City Council;
- Outside agencies that may be impacted by decisions made at the meeting;
- Tracking tasks or timelines assigned to staff or others.

Minutes <u>ARE NOT</u> a minute-by-minute record of what happened at a meeting, nor are they a record of who said what.

<u>Minutes Form:</u>

- Depends on the type of board/committee
  - *State law requires more formal, inclusive minutes for government bodies that make final decisions (councils, school boards, certain commissions, budget committees)*
  - *Advisory boards, NACs, HOAs, staff committees use shorter, to-the-point style for minutes*

<u>Short, Clear, and Concise Minutes are Best</u> Producing long, detailed minutes (when not required by law) is a costly and inefficient use of volunteer/staff time and board review time

- Often results in burnout
- Concise, accurate minutes are easier to read for people who want to learn more about your group's work

<u>What to Include in Minutes:</u>

- Date, time and location of the meeting
- Names of the meeting participants and those unable to attend
- Acceptance or corrections/amendments to previous meeting minutes (write notes on draft copy of minutes)
- Decisions made for each agenda item, for example:
  - Motions made (maker/seconder, vote);
  - Motions that died for lack of a second
    (Note: Withdrawn motions need not be recorded)
  - Actions taken by consensus
  - Directions/assignments to staff, committee members, or citizens
- Next steps

- Items to be held over
- New business brought up that was not on the agenda
- Next meeting date and time (if applicable to the board)

Pre-plan for the Meeting. Pre-planning for the meeting will make it easier to take minutes and produce effective minutes. Meet with the staff liaison or chair to:

- Ensure the agenda format works well for taking minutes.
- Confirm all items of business are listed on the agenda.
- Confirm what final action should be expected for each item (i.e., if a motion and vote are required, or direction to staff is needed, information presentation, or if the board has to make a choice between options presented).
- Check to see if there is anything extra needed for that meeting.
- Prepare the minutes before the meeting (mock minutes)

Tips for Taking Notes

Create a template* using the agenda – fill out all information that already exists (headers, titles, agenda items, standard phrases). This makes it easy for you to jot down notes, decisions, etc., as the meeting progresses.

**If you take minutes on a computer, setup the template in the format of the final minutes to expedite preparing the draft minutes.*

**If you are taking notes by hand, include space below each item on your outline for hand-written notes, then print these out and use this to capture minutes.*

Macros (for standard phrases) can save you a lot of time and typing!

Check-off attendees as they enter the room – prepare an attendance roster of board/committee members and staff, check them off as they arrive at the meeting. For the public, have those who speak at the meeting fill out attendance cards/list to get their names and subject of their testimony. In the minutes, only list guests who spoke at the meeting; do not list general audience that came to listen.

Record decisions or notes on action items in your outline as soon as they occur to be sure they are recorded accurately

Ask for clarification if necessary – for example, if the group moves on without making a decision or you were not sure of the conclusion, ask for clarification of the decision and action. Address your question to the Chair of the meeting, in the following manner: "Excuse me Chair Smith, would you please clarify .....".

Don't try to capture it all – you can't keep up if you try to write down the conversation; clearly record the decisions, assignments, action steps, etc.

Record it – if you are concerned about keeping up with taking notes, consider recording the meeting (e.g., iPad, recording device, etc.) but be sure to let participants know they are being recorded. While you don't want to use the recording to create a word-for-word transcript of the meeting, it can come in handy if you need clarification.

The Minute Writing Process

Once the meeting is over, it's time to pull together your notes and write the minutes. Write the minutes as soon after the meeting as possible while everything is fresh in your mind.

Review your outline and if necessary, add additional notes or clarify points raised. Also check to ensure all decisions, actions and motions are clearly noted (listen to the tape or ask your staff liaison for clarification).

Check for sufficient detail when needed (i.e., if there was extensive discussion on an item with differing points of view between the board members):

- Include a short statement of each action taken by the board and a brief explanation of the rationale for the decision
- When there is extensive deliberation before passing a motion, summarize the major arguments. If there are differing opinions, summarize the pro and con positions:

Example:

"The committee majority supported the recommendation because…"

"The committee minority opposed the recommendation due to concerns regarding..."

Edit to ensure brevity and clarity, for easy reading.

EffectiveMeetings.com offers some tips from the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP):

- Be objective.
- Write in the same tense throughout
- Avoid using people's names except for motions or seconds. This is an official business document, not about who said what.
- Avoid inflammatory or personal observations. The fewer adjectives or adverbs you use, the better.
- If you need to refer to other documents, identify them and indicate where they may be found. If they were submitted for the record, indicate that in the minutes but DO NOT rewrite their intent or try to summarize them.
- Use positive language. Rather than describing the discussion as heated or angry, note "concern was expressed."
- Number the pages and insert Draft watermark across each draft page.
- Don't force yourself to write the minutes in the actual chronological order of the discussion - it may not work.
- Focus on action items, not discussion. The purpose of minutes is to reflect decisions made and record actions to be taken, by whom and when.
- When you finish the minutes, ask the staff liaison and/or chair to review

- the draft for accuracy. Incorporate their revisions and use that draft for the board packet. By taking the time to record proper meeting notes you ensure the time and effort that went into a meeting was not wasted.
- Do not include any information that will embarrass anyone (for example, "Then Terry left the room in tears").

When meeting minutes aren't effective, the time spent in meetings is wasted. Without good meeting notes or minutes, we may not remember or recognize:

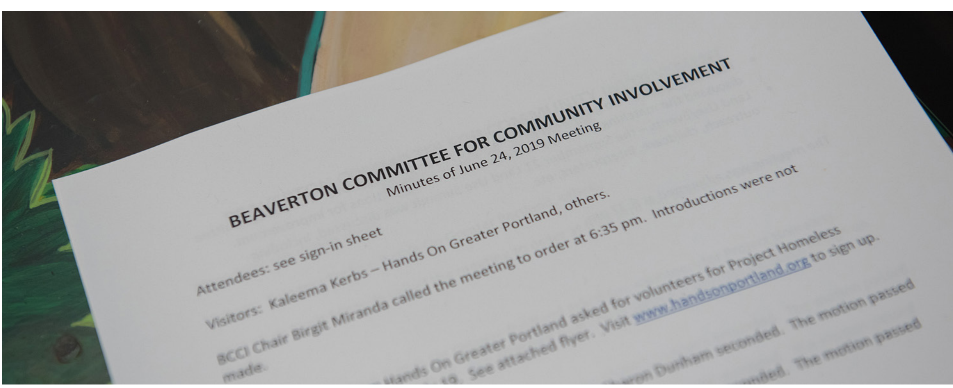
- What was decided in the meeting
- What was accomplished in the meeting
- What was agreed to in terms of next steps

When we can't remember the items above, we end up going in different directions and then meeting again for the same original purpose.

Filing/Storage of Meeting Minutes

Most committees and boards review and by motion either approve or approve with amendments the minutes at the beginning of the subsequent meeting. If the minutes were amended, the motion is to "approve the minutes as amended." Incorporate the amendments into the final approved minutes and have them signed.

The final approved minutes are an official document and are kept as a permanent record of the City. The final original should be sent to the Records Management Division for scanning and filing. Keep a copy for your records (if needed) and they may be published online for the public.



Beaverton OREGON

Notes

This manual is produced as a service of
the Neighborhood & Public Involvement Program

If you have comments or suggestions please contact:
Lani Parr, 503-526-2243
neighbormail@BeavertonOregon.gov

www.BeavertonOregon.gov/Neighborhoods

(updated January 2020)