

Minutes record what is DONE, not what is SAID



The biggest problem we encounter in meeting minutes is too much verbiage. Striving to do justice to their job, secretaries sometimes include the arguments that are made, what people say in response, and all the minutiae of discussion. There is a better way! According to Robert's Rules of Order, minutes should record what is DONE, not what is SAID.

- 1) If you follow this guidance strictly, you will prepare **action minutes**. These simply list the actions taken by the body.
- 2) Nonprofit boards and committees may want to prepare **summary minutes**. These include points that were made during the discussion, without attribution to individuals. If you are ever called upon to defend your body's action in a court of law, having summary minutes demonstrates that you exercised due diligence in your discussion. Sometimes state law requires this.
- 3) **Detailed minutes** listing "who said what to whom" have these disadvantages:
 - They tend to personalize and politicize discussions, moving the focus from WHAT the board decides to WHO said WHAT. This has a chilling effect and corrodes your decision-making process.
 - In fact, WHO said WHAT is irrelevant. It is the decisions of the body AS A WHOLE that are important. Discussion is merely a means to an end, not an end in itself.
 - If records are kept of people's arguments, participants can become intimidated and guarded. They may fail to express their true opinion, which is essential for good decision-making. The result can be mere posturing, rather than open expression of genuine concerns.
 - The purpose of minutes is to create an official record of the body's actions. This purpose becomes clouded over and obscured when irrelevant material is included.



- Detailed minutes make it hard to sort out the actions taken from the verbiage. They absorb a lot of staff time and can result in the body's taking too much time to correct the record— "that's not what I said!"
- In the worst case, detailed minutes provide fodder for your opponents should your board ever be involved in a lawsuit. In addition, individual arguments, given in good faith, could create liability for the individuals involved.

It can be hard to convince a group to move from detailed to action or summary minutes. People like to see a record of what they said. Detailed minutes make it easy for someone who wasn't there to follow the argument and feel "in the know." Sometimes the secretary is inclined to just let it flow and write everything down. This can seem easier than selecting out the actions taken, or summarizing the points made. Even so, we recommend that you fight against the tide and commit to making your minutes as concise as they can be.

Learn how to take great minutes on our website at this link
<https://jurassicparliament.com/category/meeting-minutes/>

SAMPLE SUMMARY MINUTES

DINOVILLE SERVICE CLUB FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

August 31, 2020 BC – 7:00 pm

Dinoville, League of Northwest Dino Cities

ZOOM meeting

1. The Dinoville Service Club Fundraising Committee met by Zoom on Monday, August 31, 2020 BC at 7:00 pm. Chair Amy Ankylosaurus and members Brian Brontosaurus, Pat Pteranodon, and Tony Tyrannosaurus were present. Sam Stegosaurus was absent. The meeting was quorate.
2. Secretary Tony presented the meeting minutes of the July 31 meeting, which were approved.
3. Chair Amy shared the Club Treasurer's Report from the last board meeting. Revenue in the second quarter is down by 50% due to the club's inability to hold any social events during the pandemic.
4. The committee discussed possible actions, alternative sources of revenue, and fiscal considerations for the remainder of the calendar year. The following points were made during the discussion:
 - It is unlikely that in-person social events will be possible for the next six months.
 - The club might consider holding virtual social events to keep its members connected. It wouldn't be expensive since no food or beverage is required.
 - The only benefit this would provide is helping members feel better, which is rather pathetic for a club with our noble goals.

- On the other hand, people want to be connected, and it is a service to create a platform for this to happen.
 - Since the bank balance is still over \$10 million, the club can coast for a few months without worrying about its lack of income.
5. After discussion, Pat moved to recommend to the Board of Directors that the club hold a monthly series of Zoom social events in the fall at no charge. The motion passed.
 6. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Prepared by Tony Tyrannosaurus, Secretary

Action Item:

Amy Ankylosaurus to present the committee recommendation to the Board of Directors at its September meeting.

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