

Jean Lash, CFWC Recording Secretary 2018 - 2020

What do you believe goes into the minutes?

The minutes should include the title of the group that is meeting, the date, time, venue, and the names of those in attendance (if the group is small). The minutes should follow the order of the agenda with a basic, almost vague, summary sentence or two for each item, along with the name of the person who presented it. The minutes should include a brief overview of pertinent discussion items, indicating what decisions were reached and what future actions are required.

One of the most difficult things I found about taking minutes is knowing what to write down and what to leave out. Don't try to write everything down – it's impossible and not useful. Minutes are not a blow-by-blow description of what was said.

Motions should appear in their place of order in the agenda, recording the name of the person presenting, the script of the motion and indicate Motion made, seconded, and carried.

Lengthy lists or documents presented during the meeting should not appear in the body of the minutes but should be attached.

Watch for automatic word processor corrections which may actually be inaccurate interpretations of your intended words.

If I find that I may have incorrect information in my notes, I immediately contact the presenter and ask for clarification. This eliminates corrections once the minutes are submitted for review.

Minutes should conclude with meeting end time and Recording Secretary's signature.

Is it wise to use Acronyms?

I write the entire title and then use acronyms. For example, California Federation of Woman's Club (CFWC) would be written when first referred to. I then use CFWC in text to come.

What do you believe should be reviewed by an active participation or participant in the Assembly mentioned in the minutes?

This person should focus on typos, incorrect statements, incorrect titles, or organization names. People tend to read the section of the minutes that they presented for accuracy and that's it.

What is your #1 hint to anyone considering the role of Recording Secretary?

Be prepared to review your notes as soon as the meeting ends, and you return home. I try to get the minutes typed within one week so that they can be reviewed while everything is fresh in your mind and the attendee's minds.

Ann Skowbo, CFWC Recording Secretary 2016-2018

'Robert's Rules of Order' was the source I used to write my CFWC magazine articles and workshops when I was the CFWC Recording Secretary. As you have Parliamentarians on your list for information, this material will not be addressed. A registered Parliamentarian may order booklets containing Responsibilities of Officers. Robert's explains how to correct errors in your minutes when using the computer.

The Recording Secretary should receive a copy of the President's scripted agenda prior to the meeting. This copy should also be available on her computer enabling her to 'cut and paste' making changes or additions easily. Officers and chairmen making reports should provide a copy for their Secretary in the same manner. This will shorten her time.

Computer spellcheck is wonderful; however, your dictionary will be able to assist when there are several spellings of the same sound, i.e. 'to, too, two'. Proofreading your completed document a few days later may help locate additional changes. Note any member's names with unusual spellings.

Your questions:

1. Information that is being reported as finished, motions or updating of needed information. No side conversations.
2. Whether it is a familiar acronym to this organization or not, you may wish to explain its actual meaning the first time it is used with the shortened version throughout the remaining minutes. Some have been used for so long, they have been included into daily conversation.

3. I found asking the top three officers to review what they reported, sometimes it did clarify or strengthen this report, i.e. using a complete title instead of the commonly used initials.

4. Minute readers usually review and submit their findings of the minutes; unless, it is a closed meeting with only those attending submitting comments. An example: the review of an employee/member for dismissal. Robert's has a provision for this type of a meeting.

5. a. One piece of advice I received on taking the position was not to take comments or corrections personally. They were meant to clarify information and clean up typos. Insufficient information or other errors might influence a future decision.

b. It is helpful to have someone pre-edit your copy. It cleans up punctuation, typos, and incomplete thoughts prior to the assigned proofreaders. At the CFWC level your roommate would be a good choice.

Sharie Meyer, CFWC Recording Secretary 2014 - 2016

1. What do you believe goes into "The Minutes?"

Everything that occurs in the meeting factually represented so as to present a clear picture of the professional/business/ etc. happenings of the meeting

2. Is it wise to use Acronyms?

Yes, with reservations.

An acronym for a long-named entity

An acronym presented in brackets immediately following the first presentation of a full name.

An acronym if the full name would be used no more than 3 times in quick succession. (i.e., on the same page of the minutes). Most minutes should be no longer per session than 2 pages; 3 pages rarely [reasonable size font].

IOM: Acronyms could be in BF &/or underlined when first used so as to make it easy to find if one needs to be reminded of its meaning.

3. What do you believe should be reviewed by an active participant mentioned in The Minutes?

If I understand this question correctly, I would say that it is the responsibility of anyone who announced something, gave any kind of presentation, or authored a motion for accuracy, etc., to verify the accuracy of their portion of the minutes.

4. What do you believe should be reviewed by a participant of the Assembly in The Minutes?

IMO any member in attendance at a meeting should read the minutes with an eye to factual correctness particularly if the member has taken any notes during the meeting.

In paragraph 3 the question is asked: "What's actually reviewed?"

Strangely enough this seems to be a continuing question, problem, and issue.

Robert's gives an answer, but few Recording Secretaries check that source and many find such an answer to be too pedantic for their taste.

Some see the minutes as an opportunity to display their writing abilities or have a desire to "spice up" what is considered a tedious, boring segment of the meeting (if read). If the minutes are sent by print – e-mail, newsletter, etc. – the secretary may be trying to make the minutes exciting enough to cause the members to read them.

"Just the facts, ma'am" could be the motto for secretaries as that is what should be the basis of the minutes. Who, what, and sometimes when and where, note that I did not include "why" in that listing. "Why" is dangerous and leads many a secretary astray. Philosophical reasoning on an issue, private why/why not re a motion, the emotional reasons for a service project sometimes [rarely] should be included as it gives vital information for future reference, and other times has no business being in the minutes as it does not add to the meeting's concrete business information. The valid pros and cons of a hard-fought motion probably should be included so as to lay out, possibly for future reference, the club's thinking. As examples: An announcement of an upcoming club feeding of the homeless project should not include adjectives re the state of the homeless problem nor

should the expressions of gratitude of the individuals being fed be in the minutes.

The above is tricky and where the professionalism of the officer must come into play. Perhaps one suggestion might be of value. When trying to decide whether or not to include something in the minutes, ask whether whatever it is “clutters” them. Does it take away from the simplicity of the reporting? Does it add to the facts needed to be included or just “gussy them up?” Does it change or affect what is being recorded? Does it make the minutes clearer?

And then, there is the subject of typos or misspellings. In today’s technological age, a typo should be rare given the use of Spell Check, etc. Misspellings, particularly of names, is another matter. Any member should be free to address that. But how? Frankly, if the minutes are available to be read before the next meeting and the “are there any corrections or additions” question, an e-mail or a phone call or text message listing any typos or misspellings is a simple courtesy to the secretary. More significant corrections/additions such as something missing from the minutes would be appropriate in real time so that all members are made aware of the change.

Joyce Opjordan, CFWC Recording Secretary 2012 - 2014

Robert’s in Brief pages 144-154 has a great outline of the job. However, I will add some of my ideas to your questions.

1. What do you believe goes into The Minutes? This is covered in Robert’s so I will not include it in my answer.
2. Is it wise to use Acronyms? If using Acronyms, one should use the full name the first time and cite (to be referred to as: My example would be Tierra Adorada District (to be abbreviated as TAD)
3. What do you believe should be reviewed by an active participant mentioned in The Minutes? Accuracy of information! If the person’s name is spelled correctly. Hopefully, the secretary has spell and grammar check on her computer, but let’s not nitpick the poor secretary!
4. What do you believe should be reviewed by a participant of the Assembly in The Minutes? The minutes are the history of the organization so as a dues paying member, I believe they should be

available to all members. In serving as a secretary, I have done that and never found it to be a problem. Anything that is private to a board or executive committee should be done in an executive session. Those are private!

5. What is your #1 Hint to anyone considering the role of a Recording Secretary?

- a. Be prepared with the necessary tools that you will need during the meeting to accurately record the information in the minutes.
- b. Write while the information is fresh—don't put the task of "until later when I have more time.
- c. Use spell & grammar check!!!
- d. Ask for help. A good friend with a red pencil is priceless.
- f. Distribute the minutes to your executive committee ASAP.
- g. Brush up on parliamentary procedure. In the absence of a parliamentarian, you may be asked to help when questions arise.

I would like to thank each of these ladies for their candid responses and hope that you shall seek the position of Secretary at your level and beyond!