

Recording Effective Meeting Minutes

This document outlines the main requirements and techniques for recording meetings for formal committees.

The Senate Bylaws state that standing committees of Senate will operate under the terms of reference of, and in adherence to, the policies and procedures set by Senate. See the Senate website at <http://www.ufv.ca/senate/resources/> for *Guidelines for in-camera meetings*, and <http://www.ufv.ca/senate/standing-committees/> to find *Rules of Conduct for Senate Standing Committees*.

Recording minutes

Minutes for Senate, Senate standing committees, and the Board of Governors use a decision-only approach, which captures only decisions made and actions authorized. Minutes shall generally exclude discussion summaries and verbatim minutes should be avoided; however, when decisions are not straight forward or are controversial; a brief point-form summary of the main points that led to a decision or that were included in a report may be included.

The following should be recorded:

- Each item of business, indicating whether a decision was made, action taken, or the issue was left unresolved or deferred to another meeting (and the date of that meeting)
- All motions and outcomes, whether passed, defeated, tabled or postponed
- Expected actions, by whom, and expected deadline

The following should not be recorded:

- Speakers' experiences
- Old material that has already been recorded
- Redundant information
- Personal comments
- Any judgments, adjectives, or adverbs that suggest good or bad qualities, such as "Mr. Smith's capable assistant read an excellent report on . . ."

Recording motions

A motion is a formal proposal that the decision-making body will vote on. A main motion should be clear, concise, unambiguous and complete. Record the exact wording of the motion. The names of the movers and seconders of any motion shall be recorded in the minutes, unless the bylaws or committee procedures state otherwise.

Recording voting outcomes

Usually, voting outcomes are clear and there is no need to count the votes. The minutes should state whether the motion was carried, defeated, or the vote was postponed, withdrawn, etc. The names of those voting for or against any motions shall not be recorded in the minutes. Members who vote against or abstain from any motion may request to have their names recorded in the minutes.

Recording amendments

For a housekeeping or "friendly amendment" (i.e., a non-controversial change) to a motion, there is no need to record it separately. The final wording of the motion is all that is necessary.

For a substantive or contentious amendment, the group may want to record it separately, even if rules of order suggest you record only the final wording of the motion.

Recording addenda

An agenda item added to the agenda after its publication is to be recorded in the minutes as an addendum. Any item distributed or circulated as part of the new agenda item is to be attached to the minutes of the meetings, as an appendix. Example: *A procedures document titled Effective Senate Meetings (hereby known as Appendix A in the minutes) was circulated to the committee for review.*

Recording Delayed or Avoided Voting

The following indicates how to record decisions to delay or avoid a direct vote on a motion:

Motion	How to record
Move to postpone consideration of the main motion to a future date	<i>MOTION: THAT (group) supports postponement of the motion until (date) meeting.</i>
Move to table the motion	<i>MOTION: THAT (group) supports the tabling of the motion until later in the meeting in order that (action to be taken).</i>
Request that the motion be withdrawn Note: If a main motion is withdrawn shortly after it was introduced, there is no need to record it or the fact that it was withdrawn.	<i>By unanimous consent, the motion was withdrawn. Or (if not unanimous): The mover requested permission to withdraw the main motion. By a vote of 20 in favor to two against, the main motion was withdrawn.</i>

Recording minutes of closed or “in-camera” meetings

Guidelines for In-Camera Meetings of Senate and its standing committees are available at <http://www.ufv.ca/senate/resources/>.

Closed or “in-camera” meetings are held to discuss confidential matters. Sensitive issues are often discussed so minutes should include only the minimum information necessary to record the decision making process. The following are guidelines for recording minutes of closed meetings:

- The focus of the minutes should be on decisions made by the group.
- Discussion summaries should not be recorded if the organization could be exposed to risk. Specifically, discussion summaries of human resource-related decisions (hiring, firing, discipline, etc.) should be omitted.
- If discussion summaries are recorded they should be kept to a minimum, in concise point-form, avoiding identification of who said what.

The decisions made in an in-camera session are normally included as an information item on the committee’s next meeting’s regular agenda. Some in-camera decisions may be excluded from this practice or delayed until the information is clearly within the public domain. The minute taker must seek guidance from the chair or the University Secretary as applicable.

References

The Minute Taker’s Handbook

Mina, E. (2004). *Mina’s Guide to Minute Taking: Principles, Standards & Practical Tools* (Vancouver, BC: Eli Mina Consulting)