

Conducting Business in Meetings

Agendas, Motions, the Minutes and Decorum

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AGENDAS

An **agenda** is a list of meeting activities in the order in which they are to be taken up. It usually includes one or more specific items of business to be discussed. It may, but is not required to, include specific times for one OR more activities.

The basic order of business:

- Minutes: Approval of minutes, or appointment of committee to approve the minutes
- Reports of Officers & Standing Committee Chairmen: Only call on those who have a report to give (yes, check first.) Call on officers first, and then standing committee chairs, in the order they are listed in the bylaws.
- Special Committee Reports: Only call on those who have a report to give (yes, check first.) EXCEPTION: if a committee is ordered to report at a specific meeting, call on them. Call on Special Committees in the order they were created.
- Special Orders (usually things required by the Bylaws): Election of nominating committee, election of officers, installation of officers, memorial services, etc.
- Unfinished Business: Business actually BEGUN, but not completed, at a prior meeting. For example, items postponed to the next meeting, or items laid on the table at the previous meeting. Read the minutes to see if anything qualifies; if not, skip this heading!
- New Business:

MOTIONS

A motion is a formal proposal, made by a member, that the organization do something. It cannot interrupt someone who is already speaking, or other business on the floor. It must be seconded, and is both debatable and amendable. Adoption of a main motion requires a majority vote.

Six steps to handling a motion:

- The member makes a motion ("I move that....")
- Another member seconds the motion ("Second!")
- Chairman states the question ("It has been moved and seconded that...")
- Debate
- Chairman puts the question to a vote ("Is there any further discussion? Hearing none, those in favor of....")
- Chairman announces the results ("The Ayes have it, the motion is adopted, and the organization will....")

Frequently used motions:

- *Amend*: Changes the wording of the motion
- *Commit*: Appoints a smaller group to study the issue
- *Postpone to a Certain Time*: Postpones further consideration of the motion to a specific time at the current meeting or the next meeting
- *Previous Question*: Ends debate and moves directly to a vote
- *Recess*: A brief break
- *Adjourn*: Closes the meeting

MINUTES

Why Take Minutes?

- Keep absent members informed of what happened at the meeting
- Help refresh the memory of those who attended the meeting
- They are the history of the organization
- Official record of the proceedings of the meeting

Secretary *Pro Tem*

- Elected if the secretary is absent (usually by general consent).
- The minutes of that meeting are the responsibility of the Secretary Pro Tem, who signs them.

Content of Minutes:

- First Paragraph:
 - Name of the organization
 - Type of meeting (regular, annual, special or adjourned)
 - Date and time (perhaps location) of the meeting
 - The name and title of the presiding officer
 - The name of the person taking minutes
 - How the previous minutes were handled
- Body:
 - Each subject in a separate paragraph
 - Reports
 - Notice of motions
 - Points of order and appeals
 - The name and topic of guest speakers, but not the content of the speech
 - Each main motion and the maker (not the seconder)
 - All final votes, including counts, if counted votes
 - Complete tellers report
 - List what was DONE, not what was SAID
- Last Paragraph:
 - Time the meeting was adjourned
 - Signature of Secretary (or person taking the minutes)
 - After approval, write "approved" and the date on the minutes
- Approving Minutes:
 - Either read them at the next meeting, correct and approve them
 - Distribute ahead of time, correct and approve (reading not required)
 - Appoint a Minutes Approval Committee, to correct and approve

DECORUM

- Address all debate to the Chairman
- Avoid using a member's name
- Avoid speaking against your own motion
- Be seated during an interruption by the Chairman
- Confine debate to the merits of the pending question
- Refrain from speaking adversely on a prior action that is not pending
- Refrain from attacking a member's motives
- Be courteous

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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