Highly Effective Meetings

## Creating Effective Meeting Minutes

# Overview

Meeting minutes—generally taken by the board secretary or governance chair—provide a physical record of the meeting discussion and are a resource for members who were absent. When a board meeting’s outcomes impact other collaborative activities or projects within the organization, meeting minutes can also serve as a reference guide and a reminder to board members of tasks assigned to them.[[1]](#footnote-1) This tool provides guidance for capturing, creating, and sharing meeting minutes with your board.

# Steps for Capturing Board Meeting Minutes

We believe there are four key steps for writing quality meeting minutes that contribute to an effective charter school board meeting:

* Use the agenda as a guide
* Capture the basics during the meeting
* Type up the full meeting minutes
* Distribute and share meeting minutes

## Use the Agenda as a Guide

A meeting agenda is helpful for both running a board meeting as well as capturing the meeting minutes. Use the agenda as a guide or outline for both taking notes and preparing the minutes. Match the order of the discussion topics to those of the agenda.

## Capture the Basics During the Meeting

Be sure to document the date, time, and names of the meeting participants. During the meeting, record any decisions made as well as action items agreed to by the board. Also record voting outcome details including the members who made each motion, who seconded each motion and the final vote tally. Additionally, you will want to take note of items to be addressed at a future meeting, such as discussions that will carry over or questions that need to be answered. Finally, document the date and time for the next meeting.

## Type Up the Full Meeting Minutes

It is best practice to write up the minutes immediately after the meeting while the discussion is fresh in your mind. Review your agenda with notes capturing the basics and add additional notes to clarify points raised during the meeting. Verify that all decisions, actions, and motions are clearly noted and provide a brief explanation of the rationale for each notable decision. Additionally, when there is extensive deliberation before passing a motion, summarize the major arguments.

### Tips on Writing Style

* Be objective
* Write in the same tense throughout
* Minimize the use of adjectives and adverbs
* Edit to ensure brevity and clarity

## Distribute and Share Meeting Minutes

While you may use a word-processing tool like Microsoft Word to type up the minutes, be sure to create a PDF of your document and email that version—and not the original–-to the board. This will ensure that the meeting minutes are preserved. If your board members are using Google Docs (or another cloud storage service) for document sharing, you can simply “share” the final PDF document with that group once it has been finalized.

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# Sample Committee Meeting Minutes

ABC CHARTER SCHOOL

MEETING MINUTES

COMMITTEE NAME: Governance / Executive Committee

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: May 12, 2012: 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

IN ATTENDANCE: Joe, Melissa, Sam, Tricia,

Emily (Board President), Megan (School Leader)

RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD (IF APPLICABLE):

The governance committee moves to expand the size of our board to a minimum of 12 members and a maximum of 15 members.

We’ve debated this issue for two years. Now that the school is expanding to add high school years, we anticipate that board work will increase and that we will also need greater diversity of skills and thought at the board table. We do not want to burn out board members, and we think there will be many upsides to this decision.

* Benefits/advantages/desired outcomes: greater diversity; greater breadth of skills sets; more circles of influence for our fundraising; opportunity to develop more board members for leadership positions; we will have more board members to place on committees
* Downsides: it will arguably require more of Megan’s time to work with a larger board, but she has indicated that the benefits outweigh the downsides. We will want to be attentive to our continued ability to work well as team as we grow.

Alternative options discussed: we considered leaving the board size range at 9 to 12 members but felt that won’t be sufficient for the challenges and work ahead of us.

The committee is unanimous in bringing this recommendation to the board.

OTHER DISCUSSION TOPICS:

Committee discussed ideal board composition and gaps, including technology skills, fundraising skills, and leaders of Latino descent.

ACTION STEPS:

* Formally recommend a bylaws change re: board size at the June board meeting.
* The board will begin its annual board self-assessment process starting in July. Joe and Melissa will lead the process and set expectations with the board at the June board meeting.

1. http://www.wildapricot.com/membership-articles/how-to-write-effective-meeting-minutes [↑](#footnote-ref-1)