KEY POINTS ON MEETING MINUTES FOR PUBLIC BODIES

1. Minutes should record what is done, not what is said. Don’t use “he said, she said.”
2. Minutes should include each main motion and its disposition (passed, failed, referred to committee, withdrawn). Minor procedural motions (such as approving the agenda) do not need to be included.
3. Keep track of amendments, but do not include each individual amendment in the minutes. Instead, include the final text of the motion.
4. Voice votes may be recorded in the minutes as “the motion passed” or “the motion failed.” Roll call votes and counted votes must be recorded in full detail.
5. According to Robert, do not record the name of the seconder in the minutes. However, if a higher authority requires this, do include it.
6. Include all points of order and their disposition. This becomes precedent for the future.
7. Withdrawn motions are not normally included in the minutes.
8. Minutes cannot be altered to include something that didn’t actually happen.
9. Including something “on the record” is a privilege of the body.
10. If the body wants to give reasons for its actions, use a resolution with “whereas” clauses.
11. Reports can be received for filing separately. They do not need to be part of the minutes.
12. Minutes should include the specifics of any election held and the full text of any policy adopted.
13. It is burdensome and inefficient for staff to be expected to write down summaries of oral reports. If a body wishes to include reports of committees or other bodies in its minutes, the committee should be requested to provide the summary.
14. In our view minutes do not have to include specifics of public comment. It is sufficient to say that “public comment was taken.”
15. It is no longer considered necessary to include the words “respectfully submitted” above the clerk’s signature.
16. A person does not have to have been present at a meeting in order to vote on approving the minutes of that meeting.
17. Minutes are not approved at a special meeting. Rather, they are held over until the next regular meeting.
18. Minutes of executive session, if any are kept, are approved and recorded separately from minutes of regular session.
19. Draft minutes may be included in the agenda packet but should not otherwise be posted or distributed before they are approved.
20. Approved minutes can be changed at any time using the motion “to amend something previously adopted.” The changes are noted on the minutes being changed, with signature. According to Robert, details of the changes are not included in the minutes of the meeting at which the changes are made.

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