

QUICK NOTES

Tips for Minute Taking

Section 116 of the Municipal Government Act of the Province of Prince Edward Island sets out the requirement of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to record and maintain accurate minutes and to record all resolutions, decisions and proceedings of the Council of a municipality. Minutes are a meeting's memory – they form a permanent, historical record of what was on a meeting agenda and the decisions that were made. When necessary, courts recognize the minutes of Council meetings as evidence of decisions made by Council and of actions taken or not taken by members of Council (pecuniary interest). Minutes, therefore, are vital and legal documents of a municipality. The written record should be clear, accurate and concise and include the following essential information:

- ✓ the name of the municipality;
 - ✓ the time, date and place of meeting;
 - ✓ the names of the members present;
 - ✓ the names of members absent (with or without consent);
 - ✓ the name of the CAO (or person acting on their behalf);
 - ✓ the name of the person presiding over the meeting;
 - ✓ the approval of the previous meeting's minutes;
 - ✓ the type of meeting - special or regular;
 - ✓ the name of the mover of every motion, a statement of every motion, and an indication of whether the motion was carried or defeated;
 - ✓ the date of the next meeting if it has not been previously set;
 - ✓ the time of adjournment;
 - ✓ the signature of the administrator and presiding officer;
 - ✓ the original of any bylaw, policy or by-law/policy amendment adopted at the Council meeting;
 - ✓ any other document indicated in the minutes as "Schedule (or Appendix) _____ attached hereto, forming a part of these minutes."
- The minutes should contain all resolutions of the council showing decisions made at a meeting.
 - Minutes should not include detailed discussions or individual opinions such as who said what about a particular matter under discussion.
 - Minutes should reflect the attendance of a delegation, indicating the name of the representative, applicable organization, and a short description of the public issue the delegation brought forward.
 - Resolutions must be appropriately worded, expressing the intended decision being made by Council.

There is no one best format to be used when recording minutes. The only requirement is that the format meets council's needs and any legislated requirements. A style that allows for ease of reading is encouraged. Consider the following pointers in the preparation of minutes:

- Type minutes using marginal notes to identify subject matter;
- Use capital letters in headings;
- Number each resolution; one way to do this is to start numbering at #1 each new year - (e.g., Resolution 1-2011)
- Use correct spelling and punctuation;
- Write in clear and complete sentences; and
- Leave adequate spacing between resolutions.

Following are suggested as some of the things to avoid:

- Do not use only first names when recording the names of the meeting participants;
 - Do not use white-out;
 - Do not erase;
 - Do not add handwritten notes or comments in the margins. Keep in mind that original bylaws are a part of the minutes, so do not write on them; and
 - Avoid the use of acronyms unless they have been prefaced earlier in the minutes. Persons who are not familiar with acronyms such as FPEIM, FCM and IRAC may read minutes and be left wondering.
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Checklist for Minutes

Following is a checklist of some items to consider in the preparation of minutes:

- Begin minutes at the top of a new page.
- Create a footer or a header showing date, page number, and other desired information. Initial information includes: type of meeting; name of municipality; time, date and place held; full names of members present or absent, as well as names of guest speakers.
- Record the Call to Order (including time).
- Record all motions.
- Ensure name of mover of motions that are presented and the outcome of the discussion are recorded.
- Record any delegations to Council, including: - name of presenter, name of organization represented, brief statement of subject matter and time of delegation's presentation – beginning and ending.
- Identify and provide Appendices or Schedules.
- Note the adjournment of the meeting, including time of adjournment.
- Provide Signature lines for the CAO and Presiding Officer

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