



Administrative Professionals Week

9 Mistakes Even Good Minute-Takers Make

1. Not setting standards in advance. What goes in, what gets left out? How long should summaries of discussions be? How will voting be done? Many minute-takers go into meetings without having gotten on the same page with those who will refer to the minutes later. Before you even begin your role as minute-taker, prepare a set of standards for board members/attendees to review.

2. Being unfamiliar with the terms and concepts that will be discussed. The better your comprehension of the subject matter, the less you'll have to ask for clarifications.

3. Failing to see the big picture. "If I were looking at these minutes six months from now, what would I really want to know?" is the question you should be asking yourself. It'll save you from taking down too much irrelevant detail, and it will remind you what the company's goals in preserving minutes are.

4. Assuming everyone will get the gist. There shouldn't be too much room for interpretation of what someone meant in a set of minutes. Write them as if no one knows the meeting participants or the subject matter.

5. Not establishing how to signal when there needs to be a clarification or slowdown. Both you and the organizer of the meeting must know immediately when it's time for a brief interruption. You don't want to be tentatively raising a finger again and again, unable to get someone's attention.

6. Missing something while scrambling to keep up. It's one of the worst moments in minute-taking: realizing that you've simply fallen behind because there's been a burst of activity. The best minute-takers know how to condense things in their own notes for expansion later, when they have time to settle. It comes with experience.

7. Letting the details slip. The date, time and location of the meeting, plus the time it began and ended, the type/category of meeting, along with all items on the agenda: Make sure it's all in there for the record. Even the smallest detail can cue the memory of someone reviewing the notes later.

8. Allowing dud formatting through. Minutes present a visual challenge to the eye; there's a lot of unfortunate but necessary clutter. Take a few minutes to make them appealing and visually clear.

9. Poor organization. Meeting minutes so often get thrown into manila folders or dumped onto the computer network under a ballooning file. If someone has to scroll too much to find a set of minutes, it means that you haven't properly and clearly tiered your folder system. Add text to file names that hint at the focus of a meeting.

Meeting Minutes Sample: *Can you spot the 3 errors?*

MINUTES OF THE LIBRARY BOARD'S MEETING

February 2, 2018

Present:

Mr. Erik Brann (Chair)

Mr. Amos Garrett (Vice Chair)

Ms. Merry Clayton

Ms. Maureen Tucker

Mr. Patrick Moraz (Recording Secretary)

Absent: Overend Watts

Staff members in attendance: Artimus Pyle

Guest in attendance: Signe Anderson

I. Call to Order and Recognition of Guest

Mr. Brann called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. The meeting was held in Suite 200 of the Brill building at 1619 Broadway.

II. Review of Mission Statement

"To preserve American music history in all formats for future generations."

III. Minutes of the Meeting from January 28, 2018

The following amendments were made to the January 28 minutes: VI. Old Business, Item D., second bullet, change "\$320,000" to "\$240,000."

Mr. Garrett made a motion to approve the minutes of January 28 with the above change. Seconded by Ms. Tucker.

IV. Announcements

There will be a meeting with the county zoning board on March 15 to decide where the memorial to Paul Kantner will be moved. Suggestions include:

- 33rd Street Transit Center
- Metropolitan Archive of Modern Rock
- Staten Island City Hall Annex

V. Executive Session

Mr. Brann called the meeting into Executive Session. The 2019 strategic plan was discussed, with general agreement that a special session in May should involve the public.

VI. Old Business

Ms. Tucker gave an update on the progress of contracting hosts for the annual gala.

VII. New Business

A. Conversion of vinyl albums to digital files

A proposal has been made to the city to temporarily house the effort to convert the private record collection of Syd Barrett to digital files. The budget has been capped at \$200,000 for the effort.

Comments from the Board:

- Budget figures may be inaccurate, as the size and scope of the collection have yet to be defined
- Legal department has yet to weigh in on how best to set rates for and pay for the temporary workers

Ms. Clayton made a motion to move 50% of the proceeds from December's L.A. fundraising dinner to the effort, totaling \$30,000.

B. Requests for Membership

I noted that requests for membership rose 18% in 2018. Praise was given to Ms. Tummelson for her efforts. Ms. Tummelson asked Ms. Tucker for her help in procuring more funding for direct mail efforts.

VIII. Open Discussion

Topics of discussion included:

- Improving security at the Red hook facility
- Possibility of hiring new fundraisers
- Possible archiving of the Michigan State University cassette collection

IX. Business from Guests

None at this time.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

The errors:

1. "I noted that requests for membership..."

Always keep things in the third person.

2. "Mr. Garrett made a motion to approve the minutes of January 28 with the above change. Seconded by Ms. Tucker."

There was voting, but where is the notation as to whether the motion was carried out or not? A simple notation of MOTION CARRIED or MOTION DENIED is necessary both here and after "Ms. Clayton made a motion to move 50% of the proceeds from December's L.A. fundraising dinner to the effort, totaling \$30,000."

3. "Praise was given to Ms. Tummelson for her efforts. Ms. Tummelson asked Ms. Tucker..."

Ah, we bet you didn't spot this one. Ms. Tummelson is mentioned as being at the meeting, but she doesn't appear on the attendance list!

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