

## FAQs For Recording Secretaries

### FAQs on taking minutes and writing up minutes

#### **Can I type up my minutes on an electronic device at the meeting?**

Yes, if you are a good typist and are comfortable writing out full sentences very fast. Or you can take notes on your electronic device and then finish them at home. **Never send the minutes out directly after the meeting without reviewing them first.** Always have pen and paper with you as backup.

#### **Can I record the meeting to ensure I don't miss anything? What about just the motions?**

The short answer is no, you may not record a meeting or even just the motions. The explanation lies in the protection of privacy rights and the extremely cumbersome routine you might have to go through in order to gain permission to record. Everyone must give signed permission and could decide at any point to withdraw permission.

#### **Any suggestions for organizing my computer files and typing up my minutes?**

- Make an electronic folder for your school's PTA (e.g. HS PTSA).
- Within the electronic PTA folder, make an electronic sub-folder called Rec Sec and the year (e.g. HS rec sec 2013-14).
- Save each set of minutes in a separate file within the Rec Sec sub-folder. The file for each set of minutes should be clearly named (e.g. "HS min 23 Feb 2014" ).
- You can make a template for your minutes and save it as a file called "HS min template" or you can write the first set of minutes from scratch, and after that, open the last set of minutes, immediately save it with the new file name and then write the new set of minutes in the new file. This is especially useful if you take your minutes on a laptop. If you forget and don't rename, the older set of minutes should be there in the backup file!

#### **Can I email the minutes to our executive board? What about to our membership?**

You may email to your executive board members since they are all members of your PTA. It is less advisable to email the minutes to the membership (the email group would definitely have to be current members only) because it is less clear that members in general will understand not to share the minutes with just anyone and they are proprietary to your PTA.

#### **Can minutes be adopted at any meeting?**

Yes, if for any reason the minutes from a meeting were not presented for adoption, they can be presented at the next opportunity. This will mean two sets of minutes presented, corrections if any noted and then adopted. Your minutes will specify the earliest set of minutes with its specifics and then the same for the next set of minutes. For example: The minutes of September 13, 2013 were adopted as presented. The minutes of October 15, 2013 were presented and adopted with the following corrections: *[list of corrections would be spelled out]*.

#### **Can people really keep giving me corrections to the minutes at later meetings?**

Yes, the minutes can be corrected at any meeting. That is one reason why you date each correction on the original. The subsequent corrections need to be put in the minutes of the meeting in which the correction was submitted. For example, at the December meeting, a correction to the October minutes could be offered as well

as to the November minutes. You would put the fixes in red (and the date) on each set of minutes, and write up the two sets of fixes so that in January the December minutes would note the two sets of corrections. Since you would not have the original October minutes with you, you would mark the original when you got home following your notes from the December meeting.

## **An extra-special FAQ on changing the minutes—when you can, when you can't!**

Minutes record what happened at the meeting: the actions taken and information given out. When the minutes are presented for adoption, corrections, if needed, can be pointed out. If you *as recording secretary* made the mistake (typo, misspelling, forgot something, typed too many or too few zeroes), then you can insert the corrections using red ink including the date the correction was inserted. **But if someone wants to change incorrect information given at the meeting, that can't be done. Why? Because the minutes reflect what was actually said at the meeting even if what was said was wrong.**

For example, Georgia O'Keefe tells everyone that the Library Committee will be meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>. You write down: "The Library Committee will be meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>." At the next meeting, Georgia says that what you wrote is wrong because in fact the meeting was changed to be on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Can you correct or change the minutes? NO, because at the meeting she said April 7<sup>th</sup>.

Now, let's change the scenario slightly. Georgia O'Keefe tells everyone the Library Committee will be meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>. You write down: "The Library Committee will be meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup>." Later *in the same meeting*, someone points out that April 7<sup>th</sup> is on a Sunday and Georgia say "Oops, the meeting will be on the 9<sup>th</sup> because I can't make it on the 8<sup>th</sup>." You hear her but someone asks you something just then and you forget to write down the new date. So you write up the minutes just saying what Georgia said originally in the meeting. When Georgia tells you that there is a mistake in the minutes, you can correct it because you remember having heard the change once she reminds you, or someone else confirms that she said it at the meeting later on. You would insert a sentence in red (and date it) to reflect the proper date for the meeting.

Sometimes a person will request that the correct information be reflected in the minutes of the meeting at which the error at the prior meeting was noted. For example, Samuel Barber reports on the recent Book Fair. You include his entire report. At the next meeting, Sam wants you to change the information because he forgot to include some revenue. You can't change the minutes from the prior meeting, but Sam can make a follow-up report with the most recent and correct information and he can ask you to make sure it says that the report in the prior meeting was not complete.

## **FAQs on things I have to have in my 3-ring binder or bring to meetings**

### **More about sign-in sheets please.**

At a minimum, your sign-in sheet should ask for the name, email, and telephone contacts for each attendee. Sometimes the sign-in sheet also has a column for volunteer hours that the historian collects. If that is what your PTA does, you should keep the originals for the permanent record and make a copy for the historian to use. Whoever maintains email lists for PTA communications will want a copy of the list as well to increase your PTA's contact with attendees; your membership person might also want to check to see who is a member already and who could be contacted to join.

### **Speaking of membership lists. I see I'm supposed to have a current one in my binder. Why?**

Current membership lists are critical to have on hand in case there is concern that someone is actively participating in the meeting who is not a member. If the membership person happens to be absent, you as recording secretary also have the current list to check. The membership person should give you a spreadsheet to print out with the following data in alphabetical order by last name of the member: the first and last name of

each member, the date joined, and one more item to identify that person in case of similar names (this could be the street address, email, the name of the child, or the telephone number). Each month, as the memberships increase, the membership person should send you a new alphabetized list.

### **Why do I need to have ballots in my bag?**

You need to be ready in case there is a ballot vote instead of a voice vote on an issue. Have enough of the same size/color for the usual number attending association meetings. If you know that your annual election will have nominations from the floor, then you will need lots of sets of ballots—ideally of different colors and all identical. You will also need Teller Report forms (available on the CAPTA website). And just in case you wondered, although you might think it is the job of the parliamentarian to provide blank ballots, in fact it is the job of the recording secretary to provide them!

### **Do I really need copies of minutes for everyone?**

No you don't. At a minimum, there need to be a reasonable number available to share. For example, one per table if your meeting is in the library or cafeteria. But you never need one per person unless your PTA members request it especially and are willing to have that cost in the budget.

## **FAQs on the Permanent Record**

### **What do I need to save for the "permanent record"? Does it matter what order they are in?**

The order of the materials in the permanent record for the Executive Board meetings and for the Association meetings should be the same, with consistency being the critical element for finding things later. The agenda is like a table of contents for the meeting, so following agenda order is a good rule of thumb. And if the agenda was amended, follow the amended order. Here is what you need to save from each meeting if presented.

- Agenda
- Minutes (there may be more than one set)
- Treasurer's report
- Written reports from committees including the Nominating Committee, Bylaws Committee, etc.
- Letters of resignation
- Auditor's Reports
- Contracts
- Old bylaws (when revised bylaws are adopted, the old bylaws get bound into the minutes of the meeting at which they were superseded)
- Anything else you have been asked to save permanently
- Sign-in sheet

The permanent record doesn't usually contain flyers and photos. Those the historian might save for that year's memory book.

### **Why is PTA so particular about how the permanent record is bound? Why can't I use a 3-ring notebook or some of the cheaper forms of binding?**

The permanent record should not be easy to alter. Loose-leaf paper in a 3-ring binder can be removed and something else substituted without anyone knowing. Similarly, comb and spiral binding can have pages torn out without showing the loss. Bound books would show where pages were cut out whether you paste in to a purchased bound blank book or bind loose papers properly at the end of each term.

- **I'm going to use a blank book for my permanent record; how exactly do I do this?**

You will unstaple each document if need be, you will put glue on the back of each page and press it onto the next blank page. You took two copies of two-sided documents so you could show both pages! If you have only one copy of a two-sided document, glue just the left margin on the second side so both sides can be read. For

superseded bylaws, you'll glue only the back page and the others will remain stapled together and readable. You can number the pages consecutively with blue or black ink. If you move to a second blank book, you start over from one in the second book. You can continue with the same blank book until it is filled even if it runs into the next year.

- **I'm going to bind my permanent record at the end of the term; how exactly does this work?**

You will save the materials from each meeting clipped together or in a separate section of a multi-pocket accordion file. At the end of your term, you will go to a place like Kinko's or Office Depot and have the minutes bound in order (earliest to latest). You can't use comb or spiral binding; you have to have the "pinched" binding. You don't need a fancy cover but you can create a cover sheet to go in at the front which would include the name of your PTA, the dates of the term (2013-14) and perhaps the president's name.

**Where exactly do I put the minutes of a meeting in the permanent record? They are adopted a month after they were taken so do I put them with that set of material? Or do I put them with the material for the meeting they represent?**

The "easiest" place to put the minutes being adopted is "behind" the agenda of the meeting in which the minutes were adopted. That is because the printed minutes being adopted are part of the business of the meeting at which they were adopted. Some prefer, however, to put the printed minutes with the material from the meeting the minutes recorded. Either is correct as long as you are consistent. Remember that the printed minutes are dated, that any corrections to them are dated in red on the corrected minutes, and that the corrections are also recorded in the minutes of the meeting when the corrections were pointed out. Ultimately, if someone is looking for minutes of a particular meeting they can find them, but they might have to look ahead several meetings. Let's say that in November, the Executive Board meeting minutes from August, September, and October were all presented at once. Should all three sets of minutes be "behind" the November agenda or should they be distributed out to the materials for each month? Each set will note when they were adopted and will have dated corrections on them, and the November minutes (to be adopted at the next meeting in December) will reflect three sets of corrections. If you are pasting in as you go along, you would have had to wait three months because you wouldn't know how much space to leave for the minutes; if you are binding at the end of the year, it wouldn't be an issue.

**OMG! My PTA seems to have just used a three-ring binder to store minutes. Do I need to go back and fix everything?**

First of all, calm down. Going forward you will choose one of the two methods outlined above (paste or bind). You will definitely take care of the minutes from the prior term since they were handed to you. If your PTA has the budget, it would be a good thing to bind the minutes of prior terms. No one would expect you to sit and paste years' worth of minutes, but taking existing batches to be bound would make good sense and take up less room than three-ring binders do.

## **FAQs on PTA and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century!**

**Can I stop killing trees and go totally electronic?**

The short answer is no, you may not go totally electronic. You must have hardcopy permanent records and they must be kept securely and indefinitely. You may also store records electronically in the Cloud for example, but the storage must be secure since the minutes, bylaws, and treasurer's reports may not be posted on a website or in the Cloud in an unsecured fashion.

**Can PTA meetings be streamed?**

The short answer is no because the meetings are considered private and for members only. Streaming makes them public where anyone could view them. It is OK to live stream or record keynote speeches or presentations if ***the speakers/presenters give written consent noted in the minutes*** but the business of the organization is for members only and cannot be streamed or recorded.

**Can you tell me more about storing our records in the Cloud?**

Your minutes must be signed so you will have to print out and sign them, enter corrections (and date of corrections) as needed and then scan before storing in the Cloud. Your PTA will need to have a system whereby only the current members of the executive board have access to the Cloud, and this system must not be so high tech that a subsequent less tech savvy board can't manage.

**Can our PTA use Googledocs to share minutes with the executive board?**

Unless you can share the minutes in an UNALTERABLE FORM on Googledocs, you cannot use it. Only you as recording secretary should be making corrections in red pen on the original set of minutes. As a visual, imagine you wrote the minutes by hand (as they did in the beginning of PTA) or on a manual typewriter. Once written, they could only be corrected with a red pen. That is why you are asked to print out a copy of the minutes so that they are "frozen" and cannot be altered "silently."