



Instructions for County Secretary

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Document owner: State OHC Secretary

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BEING SECRETARY ACCORDING TO ROBERT'S RULES - An article by C. Alan Jennings, PRP

Robert's Rules make it obvious that the secretary is one of the two officers your organization absolutely can't do without. It needs a presiding officer and a recording clerk to conduct a meeting and have a proper record of it, and the secretary is the recording clerk for the assembly.

Dependability, organization, and the ability to refrain from editorializing are the key attributes of a successful secretary.

Under Robert's Rules of Order, a secretary's job description includes the following duties:

- **Take minutes at all meetings and submit them for approval to the membership at the following meeting.** Minutes are the record of the proceedings in your meetings and become official when approved. Any errors can be corrected when your next regular meeting occurs.
- **Serve as custodian of your organization's records (except records specifically assigned to other officers), including minutes; reports of officers, boards, and committees; and official correspondence.**
- **Have the official bylaws, special rules of order, standing rules (of both your chapter, if applicable, and the state OHC*), and current minutes book available for reference at all meetings.**
**OHC Bylaws and Standing Rules are published at www.ohconline.com*
- **Make the organization's records available to members, at reasonable times, in accordance with your rules.** But the members' right to inspect the records doesn't include the right to abuse or annoy the secretary. A sincere respect for each other's time and effort benefits all concerned.
- **Keep the official membership roll.** Sometimes this duty is specifically assigned to the Treasurer or Membership Chair because the roll may be updated frequently based on dues payments or lapses.
- **Notify officers, committee members, and delegates when elected or appointed, and provide any necessary papers.**
- **Issue the notice (or call) of meetings, and serve as a correspondence secretary unless a separate position is established for that function.**
- **Prepare the order of business for the presiding officer, showing everything known to be up for consideration at the meeting. (unless the chapter president prefers to prepare the agenda.)**
- **Preside over the election of a temporary chairman for a meeting if the president and vice president are absent.**

If you're the secretary, don't wear yourself out trying to write (into the minutes) everything everybody says in meetings.

In fact, it's actually improper to do that. It boils down to this:

Minutes are the record of what is done in the meeting, not what is said.

For example, write the accurate wording of a motion, and record the outcome, but not the discussion.

Keeper of the records and aide to the president. These words describe the duties of that all-important officer, the secretary.

Duties of the secretary. Special duties of a secretary should be specified in an organization's bylaws. General duties, as described in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, include:

Recording minutes and keeping record books in order and up-to-date.

Keeping committee reports on file.

Keeping the official membership roll (unless this responsibility is assigned to someone else).

Notifying officers, committee members, and delegates of their election or appointment.

Furnishing delegates with credentials.

Sending out notices of meetings and conducting the general correspondence of the organization - unless this duty is assigned to another officer.

Having available at each meeting: an up-to-date copy of the bylaws and all other rules of the organization; a list of all existing committees and their members; an accurate record of membership; a copy of the organiza-

tion's adopted order of business and an outline of that particular meeting's planned order of business.

Recording minutes. It is highly recommended that minutes be recorded in an official minute book with numbered pages. They should be typed or written legibly in permanent ink and signed by the secretary.

Minutes should be as brief as possible and should be reported in the order in which the business was presented in the meeting. They should record action taken by the group, including:

a. The exact wording of motions as stated by the chair.

(The presiding officer can require any main motion or amendment to be in writing before it will be stated by the chair. The secretary can request the presiding officer to insist that this be done.)

b. Usually the name of the member who moved the adoption of an important motion but not the name of the seconder unless the assembly orders that it also be included.

c. The action taken on the motion.

Personal opinions and details of debate or discussion are not included. What is done by the assembly, not what is said by the members, should be recorded.

Outline of minutes. In writing minutes, the following outline is generally used:

1. Kind of meeting, --regular, special, adjourned regular, or adjourned special.

2. Name of the organization or assembly.

3. Date, place (when it is not always the same), and time of meeting.

4. The presence and names of the president and secretary or, in the absence of the regular officers, the names of their substitutes.

5. Whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved or whether the reading was dispensed with, for later approval.

(All of the above information should be given in the first paragraph of the minutes.)

6. A separate paragraph for each subject covered, including, as appropriate:

a. Hearing of reports and action taken.

b. All main motions and motions to bring a main motion again before the assembly, except any which were withdrawn, and the wording in which each was adopted, defeated, or otherwise disposed of. (The secretary records the motions in exactly the same words as used by the chair when stating them to the assembly.)

c. The disposition of main motions and motions to bring a question again before the assembly which were neither adopted nor defeated. All adhering secondary motions such as amendments, etc. are also recorded.

d. Announcements of previous notice of motions to be made at a later meeting.

e. Points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, including the reasons given by the presiding officer for his ruling.

7. Hour of adjournment.

8. Signature of secretary.

Sample minutes. Minutes written within this outline could take the form illustrated here. Numbers in parentheses refer to sections of the outline.

(1) (2) The regular meeting of the ABC PTA was held
(3) on September 17, 19 , in the gymnasium of the ABC Middle School. The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. by the president, Mrs . P.T.

(4) Ayer, the secretary being present. Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as read.

(5) The treasurer reported receipts of \$32.00 from dues, current disbursements of \$17.50, and a balance on hand, September 17, of \$627.83. The report was filed.

(6a) Mr. Ralph Cameron, safety chairman, reported a new pedestrian traffic light at the school crossing on **Main** Street.

(6a) The budget for 19 was presented by the budget committee and referred back to that committee for further consideration.

(6a,c) The special committee appointed to investigate the question of a preschool vision-screening project offered a motion which, after debate and amendment, was adopted as follows:

(6a,b) " This PTA shall initiate and sponsor a vision-screening project for preschool children in cooperation with the health department and the school administration, with Mrs. I. C. Well serving as PTA chairman."

(6c) Mr. B. A. Stewart moved that \$150 be contributed to the Hanes PTA Memorial Scholarship Fund. The motion was referred to the budget committee.

(6b) Mrs. Major Scale moved that this PTA sponsor an elementary school marching band. The motion was lost.

(6c) Mr. Marcus Wright moved that the parent-education chairman attend the annual university workshop for parent leaders. The question was postponed to the October meeting.

(7) The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

(8) (signature) Mary Ryder
Mrs. Abe. L. Ryder

Preparing the agenda. To be well run, a meeting must be well planned. The secretary, as keeper of the official records of the organization, can be of much help to the presiden

