

Best Practices For Minute Taking

Q. What is the policy of IIMC on the best practice for taking minutes at City Council meetings? Does it recommend verbatim minutes or summary minutes with a record of actions taken, including who made the motion, who made the second, and who voted and how?

A. I think it really depends on Council's desire. I do a little more than action, but not verbatim in order to clearly define the issue.

A. Our City Council has a Rules of Procedure which states, in part, "An account of all proceedings of the Council and minutes of each meeting shall be prepared and kept by the Clerk. A voice recording of each meeting shall be made and kept by the Clerk for six months. The Clerk shall also prepare a summary form of the minutes which shall be published in the local newspaper and placed on the City's website as soon as practicable following each meeting. ..."

Unless a Councilmember states "I want to go on record as saying", our Council minutes never reflect specific comments such as "Councilmember Smith stated ..." That's when I hear, "that may be what I said but what I meant was ...".

The bones of the minutes should include date, location of meeting, roll call/attendance, time meeting began and adjourned, agenda topics and action taken (including motion and support). If the vote is unanimous, our minutes state "carried by unanimous vote". If it is not unanimous, we take a verbal roll call vote (yes or no) from each Council Member and the minutes reflect their vote. We do find it helpful for the minutes to include a little background on each agenda item. I may know the circumstances happening now, but 20 years from now someone researching the minutes may find it beneficial to see a little more than the topic and action taken. .

Our City Charter also addresses "Record of Meetings" which basically states a printed journal of each meeting is kept and availability of minutes shall comply with the Open Meetings Act.

I've only taken verbatim minutes once (as directed by the Mayor/Council) regarding a hot topic at the time. My view on verbatim minutes - they can be both helpful and harmful and should be done only when absolutely necessary.

A. Our Board requires a summary of every item discussed, as well as, motions, 1st and 2nd to the motion and an account of those in favor or against.