

Notice, Agenda and Minutes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to understand:

- ✍ The function of a notice.
- ✍ The use and structure of an agenda.
- ✍ The method of writing minutes of a meeting.

INTRODUCTION

Meetings are a way of facilitating organized group conversation for discussing issues and arriving at decisions. You may often be called to organize a meeting. To perform the task effectively, you need to know how to write notices, agenda and minutes of the meeting. These forms of communication have certain established form of conventions, which are important to know, only then would you be able to discharge your responsibility effectively.

NOTICE

The notice is a written medium for notifying the information. It is a legal document and hence, it must be written carefully, and a copy of the notice must be maintained in office records for future reference. It is usually stated in the rules of the organization when a meeting is to be called. For example, Annual General Body

meeting, Governing Council meeting, Board of Directors meeting, etc., all have a set schedule. Hence, the notice is circulated to members according to this schedule. Even if there is no predecided schedule, the notice must reach members within reasonable time so that they can prepare themselves.

The notice is sent to all those who have a right to attend the meeting, i.e. in a General Body meeting, all the shareholders will be invited to attend.

The notice must contain the following information:

- Date, place and time of the meeting.
- Business to be transacted or issues to be discussed (if they have been decided).
- Name and designation of the person calling the meeting or on whose behalf the meeting has been called.

If the issues to be discussed are a few in number, then they can be mentioned in the notice itself. Otherwise, a separate sheet of the agenda may be attached to the notice as an annexure.

AGENDA

Agenda is the official list of issues to be discussed during the meeting. It is prepared with the consultation of the Chairperson or the group members (e.g. Board of Directors) so that the meeting can be conducted effectively without wasting time and money. The agenda forms a part of the notice if it is small. When there are many items to be discussed in the meeting, the agenda is attached as an annexure to the notice. The agenda usually contains the following:

- Name of the organization/group calling the meeting and the date of circulation
- Date and place of the meeting
- Programme or list of issues to be discussed
- Background information, if any, e.g. annual reports, data
- Signature of the Secretary

In the agenda, the first item is usually "Confirmation of Minutes of the Previous Meeting" and the last item is "Any Other Matter with the Permission of the Chairperson." It is a practice in some organizations to show the time in the agenda when a particular issue would be taken up for discussion. This helps the group stick to the schedule and finish all the issues to be discussed in the meeting on time. For example, in an Annual or Semi-Annual Sales Meeting of a company, the timing of each item to be discussed from morning till evening each day (the meeting may last for 4-5 days or a week) is given.

MINUTES OF MEETING

The minutes of a meeting form the official record of the discussions held and decisions taken in a meeting. The Secretary of the organizational unit who convenes the meeting prepares the minutes. In the case of meetings held by Board of Directors,

Committees of Directors and General Body of a joint stock company, it is a legal requirement. In government departments, ministry and cabinet meetings (in cabinet meetings, the Cabinet Secretary and some other secretaries will be present besides the cabinet) and parliamentary sessions minutes are to be maintained. Other organizations also maintain minutes as this aids memory and provides a basis for action.

Structure of Minutes

The minutes usually contain the main points of discussions, conclusions, recommendations and assigning of tasks to individual members. The listing of each discussion and the subsequent action is done in the same order as it appears in the agenda, or in the order it was discussed in the meeting, in case the agenda was not followed. Emotions and feelings are generally not recorded.

A good minute is a clear, concise, and accurate recording of what happened during the meeting. It resembles a telegram rather than a letter and has only what is essential. Soon after the meeting is over, a rough draft should be prepared. If there is doubt over a statement, then it is better to check with the members who attended the meeting. Before giving a final shape to the minutes, show it to the Chairperson. To allow easy referencing, give a heading and number to each item. When a proposal is passed by the majority, mention the name of the proposer and the seconder and the number of votes cast for and against the proposal. In many organizations the practice differs and only a resolution or proposal that was approved is recorded, and the names of the proposer and the seconder are not mentioned. Since the minutes serve as an official record of what took place during the meeting, you must be very accurate. Here are some pointers to help you master this skill.

Before the meeting

Decide how you will take notes; the tools you will use, for example, pen and paper, laptop, or tape recorder. Make sure your tool of choice is in working order and have a backup, just in case. Use the agenda to formulate an outline of the meeting.

During the meeting

The following points should be observed for preparing minutes of a meeting:

1. Pass around the attendance register or sheet.
2. Get a list of committee members and make sure you know who is who.
3. Note the time the meeting begins.
4. Do not try to write down every single comment—just the main ideas.
5. Write down the motions, who made them, and the results of votes, if any; there is no need to write down who seconded the motion(s).
6. Make note of every motion to be voted on in future meetings.
7. Note the time when the meeting ends.

After the meeting

1. Type the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting, while everything is still fresh in your mind.

2. Include the name of the organization, the name of the committee, type of meeting (daily, weekly, monthly, annual, or special), and the purpose of the meeting.
3. Include the time the meeting began and ended.
4. Proofread the minutes before submitting them.

What to leave out

The minutes are a factual record of business. Therefore, the following points should not be included in the minutes:

1. *Opinions or judgments:* Leave out statements like "a well done report" or "a heated discussion."
2. *Criticism of the members unless it takes the form of an official motion:* Thanks or expressions of appreciations should only be included if there is a clear consensus among the participants.
3. If the organization has opted to include discussion summaries, do not personalize it by recording the views of individuals.
4. *Extended presentation of reports:* Just highlight the key facts, particularly if a written report is attached.

Sample of Format for Minutes

Name of Organization

(Name of Board, Committee, etc.)

Minutes of Meeting: Month, Day, Year, Time and Location

Present: Names of the members in attendance

Absent: Names of the members who are absent. You may want to subdivide this category into people with and without proxies.

Others Present: List organizational staff and guests and their affiliations.

Proceedings:

- Meeting called to order at (time) by (person, usually the Chair)
- Minutes from (prior meeting date), amended and approved.
- Subcommittee Reports (highlights of information presented and discussions)
- Any action taken, for instance, MOTION to (do action); seconded and passed.
- Meeting adjourned at (time)

Future Business:

Here is a place to remind people of:

- Conversation that was tabled but would be dealt until next time.
- Possible agenda for upcoming meetings.
- Assignments that board members have taken on.

Minutes Submitted By (Name)

A Sample of Minutes of Meeting

Name of Organization

(Board Meeting Minutes: Month, Day, Year)
(Time and location)

Members:

Present: Bhata Bhattacharia, Lalit Baweja, Shitij Dewan, Soonam Kapoor, Shalini

Ahuja, Degambar Jain

Absent: Mahinal Sikar

Quorum Present? Yes

Others Present:

Registrar: Sheila Sharma

Placement Officer: Sudhir Thakur

Proceedings:

Meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by the Chair, Amit Rao at Conference Hall, XYZ Institute, (City Name) on Date DD/MM/YYYY.

(Last month's) meeting minutes were amended and approved.

Director's Report:

1. Recommends that if we are not able to find a new location by the end of this month, the institute should stay where it is over the winter. After a brief discussion, the Governing Board agreed to the recommendation.
2. Staff member, Zenath Ansari, and Dewan attended the Education Fair in Delhi last month and gave a brief extemporaneous presentation. Both are invited to give next year a longer presentation about our organization. After brief discussion, the Board congratulated Dewan and asked him to pass on their congratulations to Ansari as well.
3. Sheila mentioned that the staff member, Julie Disusa's husband is ill and is hospitalized. MOTION to send gifts to Disusa's husband, expressing the organization's sympathy and support; seconded and passed.

Finance Department report provided by the Chair, Amit Rao:

1. Sharma explained that the consultant, Sudhir Thakur, reviewed the Institute's bookkeeping procedures and found them to be satisfactory, in preparation for the upcoming yearly financial audit.
2. Sharma reviewed highlights, trends and issues from the balance sheet, income statement and cash flow statement. Issues include that high accounts' receivables require Chartered Accountants' attention to policies and procedures to ensure our institute files return on time. After a brief discussion on the issues, and suggestions about how to ensure this on time, MOTION to accept financial statements; seconded and passed.

Governing Council's report provided by the Chair, Bhata:

1. Bhata reminded the Board of the scheduled Annual Function coming up in three months, and provided a drafted Annual Function schedule for the board review. MOTION to accept the Annual Function agenda; seconded and passed.
2. Bhata presented the members with a draft of the reworded leave rules paragraph that would not allow misuse of leave by employees. Bhata suggested review and a resolution to change the leave rules accordingly.

Other Business:

1. Baweja noted that he was working with staff member, Rajat Malhotra, to help develop a new IBM Lab plan, and that two weeks ago, he (Baweja) had mailed members three resume from consultants to help with the plan.
2. Baweja asked members for their opinions to help select a consultant. (Note: Sudhir noted that he was also a computer consultant and was concerned about conflict of interest in his Board role regarding this selection, and asked to be abstained from this selection. Members agreed.)
3. The majority of members agreed on Lease-or-Buy Consultants. MOTION to use Lease-or-Buy Consultants; seconded and passed.

Assessment of the Meeting:

Kapoor noted that the past three meetings have run over the intended two-hour time slot by half an hour. She asked members to be more mindful and focused during discussions, and suggested that the Chair take an action to identify solutions to this issue. The Chair, Bhata, agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by the Secretary, Bhata Bhattacharia.

SUMMARY

- Meetings are a way of facilitating organized group conversation for discussing issues and arriving at decisions.
- Notice is a written medium for notifying the information. It is a legal document and hence, it must be written carefully and a copy of the notice must be maintained in office records for future reference.
- Agenda is the official list of issues to be discussed during the meeting.
- In the agenda, the first item is usually confirmation of minutes of the previous meeting and the last item is any other matter with the permission of the Chairperson.
- Minutes of a meeting are the official record of the discussions held and decisions taken in a meeting.

- The minutes usually contain the main points of discussions, conclusions, recommendations and assigning of tasks to individual members.
- Minutes should be clear, concise and accurate recording of what happened during the meeting, devoid of verbosity, emotions and feelings.

EXERCISES

1. Attempt the following questions filling in the necessary details.
 - (a) Imagine that you are the Secretary of the Annual Student Festival held at your college. Write a notice, giving the agenda of the first meeting being held to elect the new coordination committee. The notice should contain the dates of nomination, withdrawals, time, date, place, and positions for which election will be held.
 - (b) Write minutes of the above meeting.
2. Imagine you were the Secretary in attendance at the fourth meeting of the management of a local super market called VPS held on XX Month 2010. Write the minutes of the meeting assuming the agenda to be as follows:
 - (a) Minutes of the last meeting
 - (b) Chairperson's report
 - (c) Appointment of sales staff in the new apparel section for kids
 - (d) Green grocery department report
 - (e) Proposed outsourcing of delivery system
 - (f) Setting up 24 × 7 toll free helpline
 - (g) Handling of customer complaints
 - (h) Any other point with the permission of the Chairperson
3. At a meeting held in XYZ College, Delhi, the following business was transacted: Minutes of the last meeting, introduction of the tutorial system, special classes for weak students, better sport facilities, organization of community lunch and entertainment, and any other matter. Write minutes of the meeting. Fill in the necessary details.