

18 meeting minutes tips with a detailed sample

What better to way to learn good minute-taking techniques than checking out some sample meeting minutes?

Here we have a set in which the meeting attendees and the topics they discuss are, shall we say, *unusual*—but the basics you need you know remain the same. We'll break the minutes up with guidance on what's going right and what *could* go wrong.

SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING, BOARD OF BENEVOLENT ALIEN OVERLORDS

April 18, 3046 at 2 p.m. EST

By teleconference

1-888-555-1456 login: 471

PRESENT:

Ploki Robotik, Chairperson

General Yorg, Vice Chairperson

Eyeless Zanzibar

Geephus, Lord of the Low Minions

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Grizzit Furnoggin, Chief Financial Officer

Mystic Metalmop, Administrative Assistant, Recording Secretary

DID NOT ATTEND:

Darkus Corruptus, Sr.

GUESTS:

Yon the Strange

Melon Man of Saturn

The meeting was convened at 2:05 p.m. in Room 404 of the Sagittarius Building, East 17th Street, Mars.

1. All the proper details are present: time, date, location, and the names of all attendees. If someone tells the group that they won't be coming, a notation of "sent regrets" could be made instead of "did not attend"; otherwise, it's just fine to mark someone as "absent" or "did not attend."

2. As soon as the participants are noted, try to get your mind out of "he said she said" mode.

Remember that this is a business document, and who will say what is not as important as the simple *content* of what will be said. If there's no real need to use names outside of noting who made or seconded a motion, keep their use sparse.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: That the Board accept the agenda for the meeting as presented.

MOVED: General Yorg

SECONDED: E. Zanzibar

CARRIED

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: That the Board accept the minutes of the meeting of March 1, 3046, as presented, with these exceptions: Under item 6, correct the term "death ray" to "termination wave"; under item 14, correct the term "prison planet" to "holding resort"; under item 19, rephrase a previous question to read "Should we or should we not decorate Jupiter's outer moons this year for Easter?"

MOVED: General Yorg

SECONDED: E. Zanzibar

CARRIED

3. To make motions really pop out visually, you need some sort of numbering format. This also helps the reader refer to them quickly. Add the single word CARRIED or DENIED according to the vote.

4. More advanced meeting minute-takers will make a note specifically of who voted "yea" and who voted "nay," which can be good information to have for the future. It can be a difficult detail to jot down quickly; what can help is to have a detailed seating chart before you when the meeting begins, so you can make swift, simple notations beside the names you see on it.

5. Anything that requires an agreement by the people in attendance is considered a motion. These are usually a product of more formal meetings.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Board's treasury was announced as holding steady at 1.85 million Imperial Zotz.
- A small memorial will be held for the sun on March 20 provided there is enough interest; baked goods are welcome. Construction on a new sun will begin when a budget is finalized.

4. RESCHEDULING OF FUTURE MEETING

It was noted that the next Board meeting falls on the same day as the Intergalactic Laserball Championship. The present Board members discussed possible alternatives.

ACTION

To plan the meeting as scheduled but take a sixteen-hour break in the middle to watch the game, with refreshments being brought in from Jang's Saturn-Style Pizza.

(M. Metalmop)

6. We start to see here how terms like *you*, *we*, *them* and *they* are avoided. That's because you should adopt as detached a tone as you can when taking meeting minutes. They are a straight reporting of what happened, so you should pretend you're a reporter on the scene, having no opinions and careful not to let your own biases of the discussion get into the notes. Use a passive voice, and leave out unsubstantiated or subjective information or opinions.

7. Make sure your tense stays consistent—this is a very common mistake.

8. What to leave out, and what to leave in? In general, according to expert minutes trainer Rhonda Scharf of On the Right Track Training and Consulting, you want to ask yourself, "Will it matter in two seconds, two minutes, two weeks, two months, two years?" If the answer is yes, find a way to work it in!

9. Note that after the last ACTION item, there is a name in parenthesis (M. Metalmop). This is a good technique to denote who now has responsibility to see an action item through.

5. NEW BUSINESS

All old business being finalized, the meeting was called into Executive Session.

1. Request for destruction of Clavius-8

A request has been submitted by Queen Phantasma Rex that the Board consider the immediate destruction of the planet Clavius-9, as its populace has become too "uppity" in its resistance to being harvested for food. Her submission meets current guidelines and has been forwarded to Epic Demolition Solutions for formal review.

Concerns/Comments from the Board:

- This could set a precedent that would reduce food production by up to 5%; further research was deemed necessary. (D. Corruptus, Sr.)
- The Board has been flooded with similar requests to destroy Clavius-9; it is believed that many want it gone just to get a better view of Colonius Pi at sunset.

Ms. Zanibar made a motion to begin to charge an administrative fee of 15 Zotz for each destruction request submitted. Seconded by General Yorg.

CARRIED

2. Year 3047 Funding

- Overall funding is 27 million Imperial Zotz.
- Bonuses have been approved for all Board members in the form of Starbucks gift cards.
- There will be no further investments made in planets that do not seem to have a valid email address.

Concerns/Comments from the Board:

- If the Board had control of just 10 million more Zotz, it would be listed as a Fortune 500 company. This was deemed something to shoot for in order to elevate its stature.

- The ultimate fate of the Board's secret Doomsday Machine may be in jeopardy if funding is not increased; at the very least, if funding is not increased by a minimum of 12%, the Doomsday Machine will only ever be available in one color, goldenrod.

Mr. Furnoggin made a motion to invest more heavily in Apple stock prior to its release of the iPhone 113, and accepted the duty of making all transactions. Mr. Robotik objected to the motion. Motion seconded by Ms. Zanzibar.

CARRIED

3. Negative perceptions of the board on social media

It was brought to the attention of the Board by Mr. Robotik that the Dark Overlords are consistently being portrayed as "evil" by many on Facebook and Twitter, possibly due to the Board's policy of destroying anyone and anything that stands between it and its sinister plan to control the galaxy. Each present member offered a possible solution.

Mr. Geephus made a motion to post more pictures of cute animals on social media in order to sway public opinion. Seconded by Ms. Zanzibar.

CARRIED

10. There are a lot of details and unusual terminology in this discussion. If ever you don't feel right about interrupting someone to ask for clarification, the proper spelling of a word, or a repeat of a sentence you couldn't quite make out, make a quick note to yourself to follow up with someone later. In general, you'll need to be a bit bold when taking meeting minutes and comfortable enough to stop the proceedings briefly for such clarifications.

11. Note the use of bullets and sub-headings. It's important to make your minutes attractive visually where you can. You might even consider inserting supporting imagery in your meeting minutes. For example, if someone demonstrates a point using a helpful pie chart that's available for reprinting, consider putting it into an appendix, or even directly into the notes themselves.

12. Above all, make sure that any actual decisions made during the meeting are easy to scan for visually.

13. If someone had to leave the meeting permanently at this junction, or if they had to pop out during an important vote and they missed it, note it.

6. OPEN DISCUSSION

- The inadequate size of the conference table was discussed, with complaints made that since the board consists of only eight members, it doesn't need to be 400 feet long. No decision was made on its future.
- Official congratulations were expressed to Yon the Strange on his 252nd birthday.

14. This discussion segment may well have included a lot of back and forth, perhaps even a short presentation by some or some brainstorming. Make sure to get all the ideas down that you can; it's usually not important to list who said what specifically, as it's considered a unified discussion. In the case of a single presentation, include plenty of details.

15. In the rare case that there's an argument or an extended back and forth in which nothing is actually resolved and no action suggested, it's best to let it play out and then note that "there was discussion" or "discussion ensued."

16. If an unrelated matter comes up, one that wasn't supposed to be on the agenda, give it its own subheading under the one currently being discussed.

7. BUSINESS FROM GUESTS

Nothing at this time.

8. ADJOURN

Adjournment was at 2:47 p.m.

MINUTES APPROVED BY:

P. Robotik, Chairperson

17. 24 hours is usually a good goal to shoot for when it comes to submitting your minutes for approval. You want to make sure everyone's memories are still fresh!

18. Was it all just too much? Don't forget that if you have a smartphone, you've got a terrific and mostly unnoticed tool for recording meeting minutes to review them on your own later, no bulky equipment required. Any number of free apps (you probably already have one on your phone) will do a good job of recording.