



## What Should Your Minutes Contain?

At their most basic, minutes are a legal written record of what occurred during a meeting — an official record of board action. But here's where all similarities end. Some boards go to great lengths to create a sprawling verbatim minutes document. Others subsist on hastily scrawled notes on a legal pad. Who's right and who's wrong?

Well, ultimately, your board should determine how much detail is desirable without cluttering the document with irrelevant data. But do keep this in mind: Whatever format, your minutes should tell the story of, "Here's what we talked about in *general* and here's what we decided *specifically*."

The basic elements of good minutes include:

- Date and time of meeting
- Board members in attendance, excused and absent
- Existence of a quorum
- Voting results
- Names of abstainers and dissenters
- Reports and documents introduced
- Future action steps
- Time meeting ends
- Signature of secretary and chair

Some boards also include motions made and by whom and a brief account of any debate.

### **Who's Taking Notes?**

Some boards are opting to have a staff member take over many of the responsibilities traditionally assigned to a board secretary — especially as they relate to minutes and recordkeeping. In turn, this allows each board member to engage fully in discussion. In many cases, it also makes sense for the staff to compile and store the organizational documents, minutes of each meeting, policy manuals, etc.