

Unit Secretary Job Description

Responsible to the Unit Board/Committee

Key Relationships

- Unit board members and all unit volunteers
- Regional Manager and other regional staff

Purpose of the Position

The Secretary is responsible for record keeping and management of correspondence and administrative support to the Unit Board.

Responsibilities

1. In consultation with the Unit President prepare and circulate an agenda for meetings.
2. Keep a record of all meetings through the production of minutes which are circulated to Board members as soon as possible after the meeting.
3. Reply to correspondence in consultation with the President or Unit Board, and maintain a file of all correspondence.
4. Collate and publish the Annual Report.
5. Maintain files of legal documents such as the constitution, leases and titles.
6. Publish notification of the AGM, call for and receive nominations for the Board in accordance with the Constitution.
7. Maintain a register of members, office holders etc using the Coastguard database.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Ideally the Secretary is someone who

- Can communicate effectively and
- Is well organised and accurate in record keeping and minute taking
- Can maintain confidentiality on relevant matters
- Has or develops a good working knowledge of the Constitution
- Has good word processing skills

Supporting Information for Secretaries

Why Meeting Minutes Matter

Don't give up, meeting minutes are important. They capture the essential information of a meeting – decisions and assigned actions. They keep attendees on track by reminding them of their role in a project and clearly define what happened in a group session. How many times have your colleagues been confused or in disagreement about what happened in a meeting? With minutes to refer to, everyone is clear.

What most people don't know is that meeting minutes shouldn't be an exact recording of everything that happened during a session. Minutes are meant to record basic information such as the actions assigned and decisions made. Then, they can be saved and used for reference or background material for future meetings relating to the same topic.

The following instructions will help you take useful and concise meeting minutes.

Before the Meeting

If you are recording the minutes, make sure you aren't a major participant in the meeting. You can't perform both tasks well.

Create a template for recording your meeting minutes and make sure you leave some blank space to record your notes. Include the following information:

- » Date and time of the meeting
- » The purpose of the meeting
- » The meeting lead or chair's name
- » Assigned action items
- » Decisions made

Decide how you want to record your notes. If you aren't comfortable relying on your pen and notepad, try using a tape recorder or, if you're a fast typist, take a laptop to the meeting.

During the Meeting

As people enter the room; check off their names on your attendee list. Don't try to record notes verbatim – it's not necessary. Minutes are meant to give an outline of what happened in the meeting, not a record of who said what. Focus on understanding what's being discussed and on recording what's been assigned or decided on.

Record action items and decisions in your template as they happen – don't wait until after the meeting to pull them out of your notes or you could make a mistake. If you don't understand exactly what decision has been made or what action has been assigned, ask the meeting lead to clarify.

After the Meeting

Review the notes and add additional comments, or clarify what you didn't understand right after the meeting. Do this while the information is fresh in everyone's mind. Type your notes out in the template you created before the meeting – this will make the notes easier for everyone to read and use.

When you're writing out your notes, use some of the following tips

- » Number the pages as you go so you aren't confused later. Remember, though, that the minute-taker is responsible for providing good flow. Don't force yourself to write the minutes in the actual chronological order of the discussion - it may not work.
- » Focus on action items, not discussion. The purpose of minutes is to define decisions made and to record what actions are to be taken, by whom and when.
- » Be objective. Write in the same tense throughout and avoid using people's names except for motions or seconds. This is a business document, not about who said what.
- » Avoid inflammatory or personal observations. The fewer adjectives or adverbs you use, the better. Dull writing is the key to appropriate minutes.
- » If you need to refer to other documents, attach them in an appendix or indicate where they may be found. Don't rewrite their intent or try to summarize them.

When you finish typing the minutes, ask the President to review the document for errors. Send the final copy of the minutes to attendees right away. Keep a copy of the notes (and the template) for yourself in case someone wants to review them later.

Recording meeting minutes ensures that the decisions and actions resulting from a meeting aren't lost or forgotten. By taking the time to record proper meeting notes you'll make sure the time and effort that goes into a meeting isn't wasted.