

# Agendas and meeting minutes

## Agendas

An agenda is a tentative programme of a meeting, listing all major issues to be discussed. It is usually prepared by the organiser of the event and sent to all those invited along with the invitation. This should be done early enough to allow amendments to be proposed and an amended agenda to be circulated some days before the meeting. Depending on your national legislation and requirements of a possible funding authority, a certain period of time may be compulsory. If not, it is a good idea to send the first invitation and the agenda two weeks before the date of the meeting.

Here is a sample draft of an agenda, which could be sent via e-mail to meeting participants:

### **Agenda for the Sunshine Park Project meeting in Sep 12, 2011**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

**Time: 2-4 pm**

**Place: the conference room of the main building of the Natural Resources Council of Telendia**

- 1. Last meeting minutes**
- 2. Administrative issues**
  - a) Cost report**
  - b) Budget amendments**
- 3. Draft plan**
- 4. New trainees**
- 5. AOB**
- 6. Next meeting**

**If you have any other topics you wish to be added to the agenda or you have any questions or concerns, please contact the undersigned before the meeting.**

## Meeting minutes

Meeting minutes are an important means of documentation in collaborative planning processes. They can be used as a source of reference for the meeting participants and also to inform other interested parties. Meeting minutes increase commitment among participants, since all that was agreed upon is written down and can be referred to in a legally sound way.

There are three types of minutes: literal minutes, narrative minutes and decision minutes.

1. **Literal minutes** accurately record all details of proceedings with the speakers' statements reproduced literally but straightened out in terms of grammar. Except for very skilled stenotypists, the use of recording equipment and subsequent transcription is recommendable for that purpose. In collaborative planning situations, literal minutes are usually not necessary.
2. **Narrative minutes** provide a summary of main points of the discussion in a faithful and objective manner. These minutes should record the negotiation process as well as the solutions found and should therefore be quite detailed.
3. **Decision minutes** record the results of the meeting only. They are mainly recorded in group or professional meetings. Unlike narrative minutes, decision minutes do not record the process of negotiation.

### HOW TO WRITE MINUTES

Depending on the aim and further utilisation of minutes, one of the three types of minutes is chosen. On opening the meeting, one person is elected to act as a secretary. In many instances, the secretary has been appointed in advance and this 'choosing of secretary' is just a formality. It is a good idea to choose someone who is going to be less involved in the discussions, since it is difficult to speak, listen and take notes at the same time.

During the meeting, the proceedings can be recorded by any of the methods introduced in lesson 1. Usually notes are written to a notepad or typed on a laptop. The most obvious form of organisation of minutes follows the agenda. Sentences should be rather short, precise and to the point. All major arguments, agreements, decisions and assignments must be included.

After the meeting, the notes have to be post-processed to be legible and correct as stated in lesson 1. This should happen as soon as possible, while everything is still fresh in mind. The completed minutes should be sent to all the meeting participants. A note can be attached to them, informing that objections must, for example, be submitted within two weeks. In the next meeting, minutes of the previous meeting are usually discussed through and agreed upon.

## CONTENTS OF MEETING MINUTES

Meeting minutes are usually roughly organized as follows:

- Name of the event or institution/organiser,
- Subject or purpose of the meeting,
- Date,
- Time, e.g. 2-4 pm. Alternatively, you can state exactly when the meeting started and finished:
  - The meeting was opened at 2:35 pm,
  - The meeting was finished/adjourned at 4:15 pm.
- Venue,
- List of attendees (if you do not know everybody, you can pass around an attendance sheet),
- Name of the chairperson,
- Name of the person taking the minutes, usually called the secretary,
- Proceedings of the meeting in their actual order, even if different from that of the agenda. This will usually include a point called AOB (any other business) and the date and time of the next meeting at the end.

### Tips for taking minutes

- ☑ Be prepared. Usually you are appointed as a secretary well before the meeting and you will have time to write/type the meeting agenda to use it as an outline for your minutes.
- ☑ Be punctual and arrive to the meeting venue on time.
- ☑ Make sure you are familiar with the issues to be discussed in the meeting.
- ☑ Do not try to write down everything, only summarise the discussions and outcomes of the meeting.
- ☑ Make sure you write things down correctly. Try not to interrupt discussions but if you do not understand something or if something slips past your ears, you will have to ask for repetition.

## EXAMPLE OF DECISION MINUTES

### Natural Resources Council of Telendia

Sunshine Park Project Meeting minutes of September 12, 2011

2-4 pm, the conference room of the council's main building

Present: Jack Jones, Helen Hunter, Jill Jameson, Ted Tandy ...

Chair: Janet Peterson

Minutes taken by: Jill Jameson

1. Last meeting minutes
  - The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved as distributed.
2. Administrative issues
  - Cost report deadline is on Jan 31, 2012.
  - Compiling of the report was assigned to Helen Hunter > relevant information has to be sent to her by Jan 15, 2012.
  - All budget amendments applied for were agreed on unanimously.
3. Draft plan
  - The new draft plan was partly accepted, some issues were left unresolved (point 3 and 5).
  - The contractor for the bridge building has cancelled the agreement, a new contactor is needed > Ted Tandy will look into that.
4. New trainees
  - Two new trainees, Shandy Summers and Will Leatherman, will start in the project in April 2012.
  - Ted Tandy was assigned as their instructor.
5. AOB
  - There were no other issues discussed during the meeting.
6. Next meeting
  - The next meeting was decided to be held in late November 2011. The new plan should be ready by then and discussed through during the meeting.