Business Management Daily

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Minute-taking Q&A: 3 expert answers

By Patricia Robb

What is a consent agenda?

A consent agenda is a place on the meeting agenda to put routine items that need approval, such as the agenda and previous minutes, as well as other information type items. The purpose of the consent agenda is to save time so more time can be spent on other items that need discussion. It is important to note that if any meeting participant wants to discuss an item, it can be removed from the consent agenda and dealt with on the regular agenda.

The consent agenda is usually placed first on the agenda after the meeting is convened and after the opening remarks. A motion is then called for approval of the consent agenda.

Once the consent agenda is approved, the motion could then be written in the minutes as follows. A listing of the motions included in the consent agenda is advisable, but not necessary. The information items do not need to be listed.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA	
The consent agenda included the following motions: - *To approve the agenda of November 19, 2015* - *To approve the previous minutes of June 9, 2015.*	
MOTION #01-11-15 To approve the Consent Agenda of November 19, 2015, as presented.	
	Made:
	Seconded:
	CARRIED

2. Do you record questions and answers in the minutes?

Minutes should not be a he said/she said recording. If a question is asked and answered in the meeting, you need to determine if it is even necessary to put it in the minutes. It may not need to be recorded if it is not relevant to the outcome of the discussion. If it is relevant to the discussion, then the parties should not be singled out in the minutes by recording their names, but rather I would suggest the following as an example.

In this scenario, when the meeting participants were discussing another agenda item, someone asked if Business Arising could be added to the agenda and went on to say why they thought it was important. Another person in the meeting said they were part of another meeting and found it very helpful to have a Business Arising item. The group agreed to add it. I would therefore record it as follows:

There was discussion on the format of the agenda. It was agreed that Business Arising should be added to the agenda as a standing item and will be dealt with after the Approval of the Consent Agenda.

Even though you don't want to record he said/she said type information, at times what the Chair says should be recorded. For example, in a senior leadership team meeting, the Chair wanted the meeting participants to make sure, when they submit briefing notes for their individual agenda items, they include recommendations and advise whether it is for information or approval. I would record this as follows:

1. **ABC Company Matter**

The Director of Human Resources provided an update on the merger with ABC Company and the implications to the current staff. Discussion ensued. An email is to be drafted to provide staff with information on the merger.

The Chair reminded the team that when a briefing note is presented at the meeting, it should have clear recommendations and identify whether it is for information or approval.

3. Do you record anything in the minutes when there is a presentation?

If there is a presentation at a meeting, you do not need to record items from the presentation in the minutes, but if there is any discussion that resulted in a decision or action, that will need to be recorded. Also, if a copy of the presentation was not included in the meeting package, it should be attached to the minutes. You could record something like this in the minutes:

R. Jones
R. Jones presented on … A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes. There was discussion following the presentation and it was agreed this topic should be added to the agenda of the next staff meeting.

If there are no decisions or actions following a presentation, you can simply record it as:

R. Jones
R. Jones presented on this item. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes . There was a brief discussion following the presentation.

Editor's Note: Patricia will be one of the speakers at **Admin Pro Forum 2016**, June 15-17. To learn more great minute-taking strategies from Patricia, please join us for this exciting event. For further information on Admin Pro Forum and to register for the conference, please visit **www.AdminProForum.com**.

Patricia Robb has been in the administrative field for over 30 years. Currently she serves as a Senior Administrative Assistant to the Psychiatrist-in-Chief and Chief of Staff of a mental health hospital. She has also worked for a not-for-profit organization, several law firms and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Patricia has held leadership positions with the Ottawa Chapter of the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP), and also presents minute-taking and travel-planning webinars for Business Management Daily. She was a hairdresser for 5 years, which she credits in helping her enhance her people skills.

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