

RUNNING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS GUIDEBOOK



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INTRODUCTION

Making the most of your meetings

Oftentimes the difference between a successful organization and one that is challenged comes down to how organized the board and committee meetings are. This resource was developed to help you create meeting plans that will not only assist your organization but also help it to grow and prosper.

This resource has been specifically developed for commissions, committees, societies, and associations that require training and support. Created by the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies, with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, and Solicitor General and Public Security, the material is aimed at helping your organization perform oversight functions consistently, effectively, and transparently.

Guide Materials

There are eight sections in this guide. Each focuses on specific elements aimed at helping you organize and create more successful meetings.



The topics covered in each section include:

- 1. No Hidden Agenda** – Creating and establishing an agenda for your meetings
- 2. It Will Only Take a Few Minutes** – The importance of taking minutes at your meeting
- 3. Going Through the Motions** – How to engage members to create motions
- 4. Give Them Something to Talk About** – Developing guidelines for debate and discussion
- 5. The Deciding Vote** – How to effectively hold and tabulate voting results
- 6. Ain't Misbehaving** – Reviewing how your meetings should be conducted
- 7. And the Position Goes to** – Creating a platform for member voting
- 8. Looking for Commitment** – Setting ground rules for the future

SECTION 1: NO HIDDEN AGENDA



Agenda

An agenda is a motion developed by the members at a regular meeting. The agenda keeps the members, particularly the Chair, on track during the meeting. Because each member receives a copy of the agenda in advance of the meeting, it also serves to help members prepare and thus participate fully in the meeting.

It is the responsibility of the Chair with the assistance of the Secretary to set the agenda for the meeting. Once the members have approved the format for the agenda, it is important that it remain consistent at subsequent meetings.

The Secretary should attach all handouts, reports and other documents that support the agenda items at least four working days before the meeting so that the members may prepare for the upcoming meeting.

It is the member's responsibility to read the proposed agenda and assess whether it needs modifications.

The preferred time for making changes to the agenda is prior to the meeting. Members should submit changes to the agenda to the Chair or Secretary a minimum of two days prior to the meeting to allow for modifications to the agenda.

The Chair may call for changes to the agenda during the opening of the meeting, but prior to the meeting is preferred.

At the start of the meeting, the agenda is approved by motion with recording of the mover and seconder.

SAMPLE AGENDA

<u>Organization Name</u>	<u>(...) Meeting</u>
<u>Date</u>	<u>Full Location</u>
<u>Place, Alberta</u>	<u>Time</u>

Meeting called by: *Chair's Name*
Recording Secretary: *Name*
Meeting Type: *Business, formal, annual, other*

Attendees: *Attach list*
Reading List: *Attach necessary items*
Please bring: *Supply list*

1. Call to Order *Chair, (time)*
2. Welcome and introductions *Chair, (time)*
3. Approval of and additions to meeting agenda *Chair, (time)*
4. Possible amendments and approval of previous meeting minutes
Secretary and Chair, (time)
5. Executive and Committee Reports *see below, (time)*
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Vice-Chair
 - Chair
 - Committee Report
6. Unfinished Business *see below, (time)*
 - *previously discussed proposal/info*
7. New Business *see below, (time)*
 - *New business a member has contacted the Chair with*
8. Other Business *estimated time*
 - *Typically brought up during the meeting as a brief memo/FYI tidbit*
9. Next meeting date *Chair, (time)*
10. Adjourn *closing time*

SECTION 2: IT WILL ONLY TAKE A FEW MINUTES

Minutes

The minutes of a meeting act as the public record for all the interactions throughout the meeting. They are accurate records of the discussion and actions of the organization during regular meetings and committee meetings. The organization of minutes is important because attention must be given to all privacy laws that affect the organization.

This section describes the role of the Secretary in taking minutes as well as the difference between regular meetings and in-camera or closed sections of the meeting.

A good Secretary will assist the Chair in planning, conducting, and concluding a meeting. The Secretary can be indispensable to the Chair, allowing the Chair to spend his/her time more effectively and efficiently.

Secretaries often take on many tasks. Their responsibilities start before meetings and continue during and beyond the meeting. Preparation, administrative, clerical, and follow up work falls under the roles of the Secretary.

Just as the agenda requires an approved format, so do the minutes. Generally, the minutes have three sections:

Section 1 – General Information

- Type of meeting
- Name of the organization
- Meeting date
- Time and place
- Names of the Chair and Secretary
- Name of individuals who moved and seconded the approval of the previous minutes

Section 2 – Motions

- Motions
- Nay votes (if so specified by the voter)
- Conflict of interest (specifics of the conflict including person, subject, action)
- Points of order or points of business (where there are mistakes)

Section 3 – Closing the Meeting

- Name of person who closed the meeting
- Time of adjournment
- Signature of Chair and Secretary to attest to the validity and accuracy of the meeting minutes

In-camera meetings

In-camera sessions of the meeting are the portions that are not open to the public due to the sensitive nature of the information shared.

Although in-camera discussions are held in private, decisions or motions are made publicly in the regular portion of the meeting. No minutes or notes are taken during in-camera portions of a meeting.



SAMPLE MINUTES

<u>Organization Name</u>	<u>Minutes of (...) Meeting</u>
<u>Date</u>	<u>Full Location</u>
<u>Place, Alberta</u>	<u>Time</u>

Attendance:

- list every individual who attended beginning with the executive members and their position followed by the rest of the attendees
- if either the Chair or Secretary aren't present, list who is replacing them for the day

Guests:

- list all guest speakers who joined in on the meeting – attendance for the public at large doesn't have to be taken

Regrets:

- list those (and their position if applicable) who couldn't attend the meeting

1. Call to order

- The meeting was called to order by the Chair at _____.

2. Approval of the agenda

- additions if necessary

3. Minutes of Meeting

- Amendments or changes from the previous meeting minutes if applicable
- Moved by:_____ Seconded by:_____ (Approval)

4. Officer Reports

5. Committee Report(s)

6. Delegation (if applicable)

7. New Business

- Item 1
- Moved by:_____ Seconded by:_____ (Approval)
- Major discussion points
- Motion Carried or Fail; Any no votes recorded with person's permission

8. Unfinished Business (if applicable)

9. Other Business (if applicable)

10. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at _____.

Signature: _____
Chair Secretary
(Organization Name)

SECTION 3: GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

Motion

Making decisions or taking action is done through motions, thus making them critical to an effective meeting. A motion is a proposal by a member that the group take certain action.

This section reviews the making, seconding, and passing of motions, as well as the types of motions and the protocol for making them. Recording motions and who made them is also important for the history of an organization.

Defining the key actions in the structure of a motion

Move

A mover makes a formal motion that requires a seconder.

Second

For a motion to move forward, it must have support. The seconder is one who agrees or is willing to support a motion. Following the 'second', the motion is open for debate and discussion.

State

The Chair reads out the motion that is now before the organization for discussion.

Discuss

The motion is open for discussion. The mover has the first opportunity to speak about the motion set for discussion.

Amend

As a result of discussion, a motion can be changed. This is done by using a motion to amend.

Call

The Chair calls for consensus as to whether a motion is ready for vote.

Restate

The Chair reads the motion with all agreed amendments.

Vote

The members vote upon the motion.

Declare

The motion declared as accepted or defeated and recorded as such.

In order for any motion to be valid, a quorum must be present as indicated in the bylaws. A quorum is the minimum number of members whose attendance is required to conduct business at the meeting. Quorum is often a minimum of 51 percent of the membership. Once quorum is established, the number of yea votes must exceed a certain number of nay votes as designated in the bylaws for the motion to pass. The Chair must determine if a quorum is present. The only business that is not null and void without quorum is the motion to adjourn the meeting in the absence of quorum.

There are various types of motions but those considered in this section are the type most commonly used and simplified here for ease of use. Motions generally fall into four categories:

Main Motion	is a question posed by a member to bring business before the group.
Subsidiary Motion	affects the Main Motion that is already on the table.
Privileged Motion	introduces matters dealing with immediate actions and may interrupt the motion currently on the table.
Incidental Motion	affects rules and procedures of the discussion not tied to a Main Motion.

NOTE: The Chair must also determine who of those present are actually eligible to vote, as it is a privilege of those with full membership in the organization.

Parliamentary Motions Guide

A parliamentary motions guide has been provided in this section (Page 11), giving you the details to create effective communication and motions throughout your meetings.

The motions below are listed in order of precedence. Any motion can be introduced if it is higher on the chart than the pending motion.

You Want to:	You Say:	Interrupt?	2nd?	Debate?	Amend?	Vote?
Close meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Take Break	I move to recess for	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
Lay aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Close debate	I move the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to committee	The move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify wording of motion	I move to amend the motion by...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that (or "to")...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

SECTION 4: GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Debating a motion

Decisions regarding motions are often just as important as the motions themselves. All members of an organization like to have their opinions heard. However, it is important that all discussion and debate remain focused. Discussions need to be as professional and impersonal as possible. Speakers never attack or question the motives of another member.

This section describes a discussion model called CARE, reviews the process by which a Chair calls for debate and provides some basic discussion etiquette.

How the debate should work

The Chair asks the group whether they are ready to begin the debate or discussion of a motion once it has received a seconder. The Chair restates the motion, providing clarification and ensuring members are focused. Members need adequate time to discuss the pending motion and a representative number of individuals must participate. Discussions cannot be cut short for an immediate vote.

It is also important to note that the member who made the motion has the opportunity to speak first. The Chair must acknowledge a member in order to speak; this can be as simple as eye contact and a nod from the Chair, to stating the member's name. Time limits for one person's discussion vary from group to group. Parliamentary procedure indicates that a member may only speak twice during the ensuing discussion.

Speakers, including the Chair, are not addressed by first names during the discussion. As an alternate to a formal title, the member might refer to the "previous speaker." Parliamentary procedure calls for more formality recommending the use of the person's title (for example Councillor), Mr., or Ms., and the last name of the person.

It is rare that the Chair participates in a discussion. If the Chair wishes to participate in the discussion, the duties of the Chair in running the meeting may be assigned to another member, usually the Vice-Chair. Without the views of the Chair, the organization can be missing valuable experience as the Chair often has a long history with the organization and its business.

CARE

The CARE model calls on participants in discussion to be clear, concise, adaptable, respectful, and exact. As a participant, you can adhere to the following:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| C lear and Concise | During any discussion, carefully formulate your ideas before you speak so that you are clear and concise. |
| A daptable | Be flexible and willing to adapt your view to the views of others. |
| R espectful | Always be respectful to others that are participating in a discussion. |
| E xact | When participating in a discussion, make comments that are exact and on topic. |



SECTION 5: THE DECIDING VOTE

How to pass a vote

When deciding the fate of an issue, it is not always as easy as a show of hands; the vote determines the direction that the members wish to take the organization. The close of the vote commits members to that decision. This section outlines what determines a majority, how to identify a conflict of interest, and what to do in the situation of a tie.

How it works

Once a motion is made, seconded, and sufficient debate has taken place, the Chair calls for a vote.

In order for any motion to be valid:

- A quorum must be present as indicated in the bylaws.
- The number of yea votes must exceed a certain number of nay votes as designated in the bylaws for the motion to pass.
- The only business that is not null and void without quorum is the motion to adjourn the meeting in the absence of quorum.

The Chair must also determine who of those present are actually eligible to vote, as it is a privilege of those with full membership in the organization. The Chair is generally to be a neutral party regarding organizational business; therefore, the Chair does not usually vote and guests are not eligible to vote.



There are a variety of methods used for voting, including:

Email	Can be used if permissible by bylaws.
Mail	Can be used but is not used as often today as in the past.
Voice or Viva Voce	The term given when the group says yea/nay simultaneously.
Roll Call	Calling a member's name as he or she votes.
General Consent	The Chair asks if anyone objects. If there are no objections, the motion is accepted by general consent.
Division	A person stands or raises a hand to be counted.
Ballot	Members anonymously place their vote on paper. Note that because a ballot method preserves anonymity, the Chair could participate, as it respects the neutrality of the Chair's position.

Proxy voting means that if one member (the principal) will be absent during a vote, he or she can give another member (the proxy) the authorization to vote on his or her behalf. The proxy then has two votes. The bylaws must indicate if the organization allows voting by proxy. Voting by proxy would not be considered a best practice for most volunteer organizations.

Organizational bylaws indicate if the Chair can routinely vote. The other exception to a Chair voting is in the case of a tie. In the case of a tie, the Chair must vote.

SECTION 6: AIN'T MISBEHAVING

Proper conduct at a meeting

In a meeting it is important for members to keep on track and stay focused. Ground rules for common courtesy should be laid out beforehand at any meeting. If any difficulties arise, the Chair should use parliamentary procedure to ensure cooperation from all members and to resolve any conflict.

All members play an important role in the organization ensuring a positive working environment and ensuring the organization accomplishes its goals. Each member needs to approach the organization in a professional manner and display respect for all other members, those they represent and the public who interacts with the organization. However, it falls to the Chair to demand a professional, respectful, equitable and orderly environment during a meeting.

Trust and respect is the base for effective meetings and the basis for ground rules.

If rights and regulations of anyone are violated, the Chair may need to resort to disciplinary procedures to rectify the situation. The Chair has these options:

- Address the member during the meeting
- Apply monetary fines
- Suspend the member
- Expel the member

Fines, suspension, and expulsion occur following the guidelines of the bylaws.

What are the keys to a great meeting?

Remember to have fun. Be prepared, be early and bring the needed documentation. It is best to have only one person talking at a time. When you participate, sit up straight and pay attention to your body language. A good rule of thumb is to turn off all electrical devices. Keep your ego in check, don't interrupt or start a side meeting. And remember to challenge the idea, not the person.

SECTION 7: AND THE POSITION GOES TO

Electing your members

Successful elections provide a positive light on a sometimes complicated but necessary process. The better organized your society or group, the more likely the members will consider candidacy. This section reviews the positions of an organization, how to choose the appropriate voting method, and the installation of executive officers.

There are two different approaches to holding elections for the positions in an organization: elections from the floor, and slating.

Elections from the floor are just that. If you don't have a Nomination committee, members are nominated from the floor during a meeting.

Slating is to have a written list of candidates to be considered for election or nomination.

The frequency of elections is determined in the bylaws. The bylaws indicate who is eligible for an executive position in the organization. Where there is a large membership or if the organization is concerned about bias in the nominating process, a Nomination committee is formed to assist in generating nominations.

If ballots are used, Election committee members are critical in making, distributing, sorting, validating, and counting the ballots. While *viva voce*, voting vocally by *yea/nay* can be used, in larger settings or with multiple candidates, ballots tend to be more reliable. The duty of the committee, and indeed all members making nominations, is to assess the weaknesses of the organization and recommend a slate, potential list of candidates, whose skills would strengthen the organization.

Nomination committee members should be representative of the overall membership in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, etc.

In larger organizations, the coordination of the elections may require the formation of an Election committee and the designation of a particular day and meeting just for elections. Election committee members respond to questions and concerns of the membership as the election process and day unfolds.

Once the new executive has been announced, executive members need to formally accept their positions. If a member does not accept the position, a by-election needs to be called for that particular position. In some organizations, an oath of office, as indicated in the bylaws, is taken upon acceptance of the position.

It is essential that a plan be in place for the training of the new executive. Training can be formal, such as a review of duties and responsibilities led by a former Chair, or informal, such as a recommended reading list.

SECTION 8: LOOKING FOR COMMITMENT

Organizing a committee

Sometimes having an entire organization work on a project is not always efficient or effective. A smaller group of the organization, perhaps in the hands of public experts, is more effective at accomplishing the task. This section describes two types of committees to determine terms of reference and how to report a committee's activities.

Ad hoc or temporary committees

They are set up for completing a specific task such as a conference or seminar and then they disband. The duties or terms of reference of an Ad hoc committee are outlined when the committee is formed. This includes determining who makes the final report.

Standing committees

The duties of a Standing committee are often outlined in the bylaws and standing rules of the organization because of its permanent nature. The term of a member on a Standing committee is similar to that of an Executive Office. In general, the Standing committee reports during regular meetings. The frequency and content of those reports is outlined in the bylaws.

Striking a committee identifies resource people who are able to dedicate the time and effort needed to complete the project. The committee can look outside of the organization for assistance thus broadening the time and skill available for the project.

As is the normal process with motions, the subsidiary motion to refer to a committee is seconded, discussed and voted upon. If passed, elections can be held to determine who of the members will head the committee.

Sometimes bylaws dictate ex-officio members of committees. For example, the bylaws might indicate that the person elected Treasurer must be a member of the Finance Committee. By virtue of his or her position, the Treasurer is ex-officio to the Finance Committee.

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