



## **Board meeting basics**

In addition to good communication, clarity of roles and responsibilities, there are a few basic things you'll want to come prepared for come your first meeting.

In order to help you dive in and participate, we've compiled a few tips on agendas and minute taking.

### **What is the point of this meeting anyway?**

Good question! Before each meeting an agenda or "ordre du jour" will be prepared. That way you will all know ahead of time, what the items will be discussed in the meeting. Agendas lay the groundwork for minutes, which document decisions, resolutions and next steps. The minutes are a kind of written organizational memory.

### **Tips for good agenda-making**

- Include the approximate time you think each item will take, that way you'll be sure not to over pack your meetings with an impossible list of things to discuss.
- Some organizations have a board member prepare the agenda as part of their tasks. Others will have a staff member prepare it. Be clear after each meeting who will create the agenda for the next.
- Be sure to carefully file your minutes after each meeting. It can be very useful to use them to remind yourself about commitments and tasks you've taken on.
- Traditionally, minute taking has been the role of the secretary, but many organizations decide to rotate minute takers.
- It can be satisfying to put the easy and most important items first. That way if you don't get through all your discussions, you won't be forced to rush through an important resolution as board members are walking out the door.

### **Common items found on board meeting agendas**

- Organization name
- Board meeting date, including the year
- Who was there, or whether quorum was met. Quorum is the minimum number of members that need to be present for the decisions taken at a meeting to be legally binding. See your bylaws for your organizations definition of quorum.
- Approve or modify minutes from the last meeting
- Propose and approve the agenda

- Something about who will facilitate or chair the meeting
- Items to talk about and decide
- Other important organization-wide issues that require decision making
  - Resolutions. (Include date of meeting, location, decision and usually start with ‘Be it resolved...’)
  - Approving budgets and other financial information
- Prepare for the next meeting. (Indicate time, place and date as well as who will prepare the agenda and take notes if you rotate this task, and any agenda items you didn’t get through)
- Varia (blank space for board members to add items that were not included in the agenda. They should be added before you formally approve the agenda)

### Taking effective minutes

Some of us have a harder time than others documenting organizational memory. When it’s your turn to take minutes think, “If I need to come back to next month to follow up, or in 6 months to remember how we came to this decision, what will I be looking for?”

An example of good minute taking:

#### **Lease renewal (Agenda item)**

Our lease is up at the end of June. We need to decide whether to move down the street to Jimmy’s basement or pay the extra \$200 that the city is asking for. Full consensus\* (adopté à unanimité) on the issue of staying where we are and paying the extra \$200 (decision and how you came to it). Charlotte will follow-up with the landlord before the end of the week. (next step)

Also good:

#### **Lease renewal**

Our lease is up at the end of June. We need to decide whether to move down the street to Jimmy’s basement or pay the extra \$200 that the city is asking for. Stephanie proposes we stay where we are and pay the extra \$200. Ahmed seconds the proposal.

*Or*

After discussion on Stephanie’s proposal, a vote was held. Proposal passed with a vote of 6 to 1. Next steps: Charlotte will call the landlord to renew the lease.

Not so good:

#### **Lease renewal**

The staff is very upset that the landlord is trying to hike up the rent and get us out of here. Jimmy says we can move to his basement. Stephanie has some reservations about that and says that Jimmy doesn’t clean his house very often. Claire said she didn’t appreciate that comment about Jimmy’s house. Charlotte will try to call the landlord sometime before next week. Jimmy went out to have a cigarette and said he didn’t want to talk about it anymore.

This is not to say that Jimmy's feelings are not important. It is simply that writing them into the minutes of the organization are not the most appropriate way to deal with them. Notice that in the first three examples, next steps are clearly stated. If we forget what we decided or who was going to take action, we can flip through our notes and find out in an instant. If we have nothing but the last example to go on, we have no idea what will happen next. No decision has been recorded, only Charlotte's intention to 'try' something. Most of the time COCo is a big supporter of creativity, collaboration and experimentation, but when it comes to minutes, it seems the most effective way to proceed is to stick to the facts!

\*see <http://www.coco-net.org/node/398> for more on consensus, and [www.coco-net.org](http://www.coco-net.org) for other resources on different decision making processes.

## BOARD MEETING AGENDA SAMPLE

Date and time of meeting

Location

Chair

Subject Outcome	Presented by	Time allotted	Desired
1. Approval of agenda and minutes	Rob	7:00-7:10	Decision
2. Program update	Erica	7:10-7:30	Information
3. Budget review	Mohammad	7:30-8:00	Information/discussion
4. Staffing challenge	Erica	8:00-8:40	Discussion
5. Retreat planning	Rob	8:40-8:55	Discussion
6. Varia		8:55-9:00	Discussion

## BOARD MEETING MINUTES SAMPLE

### General Information

- Date
- Place
- Time
- Who was present
- Recording secretary

### Content

- Decisions made
- Follow-up actions that are required- who, what, by when (bolded)
- Information and discussion points (provided only if absolutely needed as future reference. The notes should be brief with no quotes or names referenced).