Meeting Minutes Writing Style Tips

**Collapsing Notes into Minutes**

Meeting minutes are not a record of everything that is said in a meeting. For that, it would be necessary to record the meeting and hire a transcriptionist. Minutes are a record of motions, decisions, votes, and follow-up responsibilities. Recording the substance of discussions is at the discretion of the meeting chair.

*Notes*: Chair presents new system for communicating grades to students. JK: “It doesn’t seem comprehensive enough for our needs.” Lots of people agree. Major concern from PF is the security of the system. IT says that they are sure that FERPA reqs. are met. Questions about how much training is needed to implement and where funding for that will come from. Chair agrees this is a problem. BT argues that current system is not working and we need a change. Chair asks for a vote. Vote fails by 3-5. Chair says that she will seek funding commitment and bring it back to the next meeting.

*Minutes*: The chair motioned for the approval of the new system to communicate grades to students. Members discussed applicability, security, FERPA, training and funding. The motion failed by a vote of 3-5. The chair will follow up on funding availability at the next meeting.

**Active Voice & Past Tense**

One of the purposes of meeting minutes is to clarify responsibility. Active voice shows who is responsible for an action. Additionally, meeting minutes should be written in the past tense because they are written and read after the meeting.

*Passive Voice:* A motion **was made** to update the registration.

*Active Voice:* A committee member **made** a motion to update the registration.

*Present Tense:* The committee **agrees** to amend the process to include more candidates.

*Past Tense:* The committee **agreed** to amend the process to include more candidates.

**Neutral Emotion**

Since minutes are the official record of a meeting, it is not appropriate to include emotions, reactions, and responses that are often temporary and situational. If it is necessary to indicate mood, use synonyms (see Word Bank). Try to keep a neutral-to-positive tone throughout.

*Too much emotion:* The committee members then **got into a heated argument** about the issue.

*Neutral emotion*: The committee **energetically debated** the issue.

**Formality**

The formality of the minutes should align with the formality of the meeting. Formality tends to appear mostly in the naming of the participants and the level of detail regarding motions, decisions, and votes.

*Informal*: Jena and Hugo discussed several ways to distribute the new email templates and decided that Hugo would do it via the new course management system.

*Mid-formal*: Committee members agreed that Hugo Jendez will distribute the new email templates via the new course management system.

*Formal*: Ms. Cunningham made a motion to distribute the new email templates via the new course management system. Mr. Jendez seconded the motion. The committee discussed the motion. The motion passed 5-3. Mr. Jendez will be responsible for implementing this change.

**Synonyms for “said”**

Using more precise language will convey the meaning of the minutes more specifically and will aid in readability.

“*Said”:* The chair said that the new communication process would be more effective. JW and TJ said it was overly complicated and would be more confusing than it was worth. The chair said that the current system was not working. RF said it was true and said that the motion should pass. TJ said that there was something in-between that would work better.

*Synonyms:* The chair **explained** that the new communication process would be more effective. Some **suggested** that it was too complicated. The chair **reiterated** that the current system did not work and was supported by some. Some **argued** that a compromise would be a better approach.

**Transitions**

Tie sentences together with transition words and phrases to show the flow of the meeting.

*No Transitions*: The chair made a motion to approve the new communication process. The committee discussed the motion. Some felt it was too clunky. Others really liked it. The committee voted and it was defeated by a vote of 5 to 3.

*Transitions:* The chair made a motion to approve the new communication process. **Next**, the committee discussed the motion. **During the discussion,** some felt it was too clunky, while others really liked it. **At the end**, the committee voted and it was defeated by a vote of 3 “yes” to 5 “no” votes.