

## **Appendix P**

### **A Suggestion for Session Minutes**

#### **General Reference**

*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 10th Edition* (referred to as *RRONR*), by Henry M. Robert (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2000); pages 451–63.

#### **General Advice**

- (1) Minutes should be kept in either of two basic formats: paragraph or outline.
- (2) Minutes are a record of what was done at a meeting, not what was said by members. (*RRONR*, p. 451)
- (3) Minutes should never reflect the clerk's or secretary's opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done. (*RRONR*, p. 451)

#### **Content of Minutes**

- (1) **First Paragraph**—should include the following information:
  - (a) Type of meeting: stated (monthly, quarterly), adjourned, or special.
  - (b) Full name of the session.
  - (c) Date, time, and place of meeting.
  - (d) Name of moderator. If someone other than the pastor or the presbytery appointed moderator presides, explanation of the circumstances, including the fact that the usual moderator knows of and agrees to the meeting with the substitute moderator.
  - (e) Presence of a quorum, and attendance; elders present, excused, absent; any visitors.
  - (f) Opening worship or prayer.
  - (g) Previous minutes: approved as read or amended/corrected.
- (2) **Body of the Minutes**—should contain a separate paragraph for each subject matter, including the name of the mover in the case of all important motions, and should show:
  - (a) All main motions (or, if applicable, other motions to bring a question before the session). The minutes should show
    - the wording in which each motion was adopted or otherwise disposed of (Note: It is acceptable to use such wording as “The session approved the motion, as amended, as follows: . . .”); and
    - the disposition of the motion (for example, approved; approved as amended; disapproved; referred to a committee for further study; etc.). If the session temporarily disposes of the motion (such as postponing action until the next meeting, or referring the motion to a committee), the minutes must include any primary and secondary amendments and any adhering secondary motions.An exception to this would be that any motions that are withdrawn normally need not be included.
  - (b) All notices of motions, if any (*RRONR*, pp. 116-18; seldom used).
  - (c) All points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, including reasons given by the moderator for his or her ruling.

- (d) Many entries in the body of the minutes will refer to communications or reports received as information, with no motions involved.

Examples of items to be included in the body of the minutes (not an exhaustive list):

- (a) Communications, from whom received, general content.
  - (b) Examination, reception of new members.
  - (c) Dismissal of members.
  - (d) Annual review of all church rolls; any action to place a name on a roll or remove a person from a roll.
  - (e) Report of pastor: baptisms, weddings, deaths.
  - (f) Commissioners to presbytery: election, hearing, and receiving reports.
  - (g) Committee reports, session's action on any recommendations.
  - (h) Calling congregational meetings, including annual meeting.
  - (i) Clerk's report:
    - Approval of annual statistical report,
    - Report on presbytery's review of session's records.
  - (j) Training, examination of persons elected by congregation as elders or deacons.
  - (k) Annual review of compensation of pastor and other staff.
  - (l) Approval of annual budget.
  - (m) Annual election of church treasurer; audit of treasurer's books.
  - (n) Receipt of regular reports from church treasurer; adoption of annual auditors' report.
  - (o) Reflect, annually, composition of session and comparison to congregation.
  - (p) Overture to presbytery.
  - (q) Unfinished business.
  - (r) New business.
- (3) **Last Paragraph**—should include the following:
- (a) Next meeting; date, time, place.
  - (b) Adjournment with prayer; indicate time.
  - (c)

#### **Additional Guidance**

- (1) The name of the seconder of a motion should not be entered in the minutes unless ordered by the session. (*RRONR*, p. 453)
- (2) The number of votes on each side is entered in the minutes when the vote is by ballot or when the session orders a count.
- (3) The name and subject of a guest speaker can be given, but no effort should be made to summarize her or his remarks
- (4) Session minutes should be signed by the clerk; and may also be signed by the moderator. The *Book of Order* requires that both the moderator and secretary sign minutes of a congregational meeting. (G-7.0307)
- (5) The words, "Respectfully submitted," represent an older practice that is not essential in signing the minutes.

With thanks to John R. Goodman, Presbytery of Coastal Carolina and Daniel S. Williams, Presbytery of Shenandoah