



TOWN OF KENTVILLE POLICY STATEMENT G30 STANDARDS FOR RECORDED MINUTES

1.0 PURPOSE

To establish standards which will provide transparency and accountability of the Town's business, and will inform the council and committee members, stakeholders and the general public of the evolution of decisions that affect them.

2.0 SCOPE

For use by all Recording Secretaries who record, prepare and/or archive minutes for Town Council meetings or for its Committees, Commissions and Boards.

3.0 PROCEDURES

The Town of Kentville will establish a Policy and Standard Operating Procedures that will ensure that informative, accurate and concise records (both printed and audio) are prepared and archived for use by members of Town staff, council and committees, the general public or for litigators. (Authority – *Part 20 – Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy, Section 462, Municipal Government Act*). These standards are necessary to preserve the historical record of any officially convened meeting of a decision-making body of the Town.

Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order apply to all meetings of Council and its committees, commissions and boards, unless contrary to Town bylaws. (Authority- Policy G-11 – Parliamentary Procedure.)

EXEMPTED MEETINGS:

In Camera meetings can be held for the purpose of discussion on land acquisition and disposition, personnel issues, labour relations, contract negotiations, litigation, legal advice or matters of public security. These are closed to the public; decisions are not made, except as permitted by the *MGA s.22(3)*, nor are minutes kept. However, a record must be kept indicating the meeting time, date and the issue(s) discussed, in accordance with the *Municipal Government Act, Part 1 – The Municipality, Section 22*.

STANDARDS FOR RECORDED MINUTES

Meeting Preparation

1. Prior to the meeting, the recording secretary must:

- (a) become familiar with basic parliamentary procedure, the issues on the agenda, the mandate of the group, and the names of the meeting participants;
- (b) establish a working relationship with the chairperson:
 - (i) that allows for interaction during the meeting (i.e. Agree how this should be done- i.e. speaking up, passing a note, or showing a pre-made cue cards with such things as “repeat the motion,” “ take a vote,” etc.);
 - (ii) to determine if the committee wishes to have the mover and seconder identified when a motion is being recorded in the minutes;
 - (iii) to work together in the preparation of the agenda;
- (c) forward to the meeting participants, either electronically or in printed format, copies of the agenda, minutes to be approved, reports, correspondence, proposed motions, etc.
- (d) prepare an agenda-based template of the minutes for the meeting;
- (e) prepare an audio file for the meeting when possible;
- (f) prepare extra copies of the agenda for the public;
- (g) prepare electronic documents for presentation;
- (h) allow time to prepare the meeting room and to include last minute details or changes to the agenda;

2. Audio Recording

- (a) Audio recordings are used to prepare a printed copy of the minutes, and/or for verification of discussion and motions documented;
- (b) Audio documents are public records and can be made available for public scrutiny or for litigation;
- (c) The recording secretary should
 - (i) become familiar with the use of the recording equipment);
 - (ii) identify the name of the meeting and date on the audio record;
 - (iii) archive and code the audio record in an electronic file;

(iv) keep an audio record until the minutes have been officially approved;

3. Key Principles of Recording Information

The minutes of all meetings must

(a) **focus on the key points and decisions**, not on every word spoken, unless verbatim minutes are required for legal reasons;

(b) **focus on the business at hand** and exclude any extracurricular exchange of information or gossip;

(c) **focus on the group as a whole**, not on individual opinions. Comments should not be attributed to any individual. (Some committees may decide not to identify the mover or seconder of proposed motions);

(d) be **objective** and free of offensive or inappropriate language, subjective interpretations of mood or the tone in which comments were made;

(e) be written in **past tense** as this is an historical record;

(f) be **consistent throughout all departments**, sharing the same general look and style, and complying with content and format standards;

(g) reflect the **professionalism** of the Town, by being free of typographical, grammatical or technical errors;

(h) be **readable** - clearly laid out, visually appealing and easy to read, with concise, point-form summaries, when applicable.

(i) **flow logically** (relate to the approved agenda) even if the meeting itself had been fragmented and confusing;

(j) be easy **to archive and retrieve**. Logical code names must be given to each set of Minutes, along with a reference code to each report or document forming part of that meeting.;

(k) be **backed up** electronically in a safe and secure environment;

(l) be **transcribed** from the audio record (or written notes) as soon after the meeting as possible, with a draft copy sent to the meeting participants at least one week previous to the next meeting;

(m) be **archived** (in printed format with original supporting documents) in the Town's vault, in a binder specifically for that purpose and filed chronologically, following approval;

(n) be posted on the Town's **webpage**;

4. Specific Content of Minutes

The minutes of each Town meeting must contain:

- (a) a header on each page with the meeting name, date, and status of the minutes (i.e. draft or approved);
- (b) a footer on each page with the page number and other notations, as applicable;
- (c) in addition to new business, the name of the meeting and of those members present (include late arrival or early departure times), the date and time of the meeting, the presiding chairperson, any changes to the agenda, any changes to the previous minutes, public comments and the time of adjournment;
- (d) the name of the recording secretary, and if different, also the name of the transcribing secretary;
- (e) a supplementary list of names of those members present in the audience (if required);
- (f) a brief introduction (where applicable) to each agenda item, to provide background information and/or to outline the key points;
- (g) (where applicable) *Points from Discussion*, to support the full scope of debate and to capture the thought process that led to decisions. (Varying points should be included, with repetition avoided);
- (h) declarations noting any conflict of interest of any participant, along with the time that member left and later returned to the meeting. (To indicate no discussion nor vote on the issue in conflict);
- (i) any direction given or action to be taken;
- (j) motions, resolutions and decisions with unanimous consent, as per the following standards;
- (k) the following information for nominations and elections - names of nominees, method of vote (i.e. secret ballot, show of hands, etc.), results of

the count, and a declaration of the elected individual. (A motion to destroy the ballots would be in order if voting took place by secret ballot;

5. Recording Motions

- (a) Urge meeting participants to prepare and distribute lengthy or complex motions in advance. (for correct wording and to allow for prepared discussion and possible amendments);
- (b) Write motions clearly, highlight them by using word processing features, and include enough content to allow them to “stand alone” from the minutes;
- (c) Record the fate of motions (i.e. approved, amended, defeated, tabled, etc.);
- (d) Record the number voting in favour and against, if the vote is close;
- (e) Make sure the motion is comprehensible, is worded properly and is not a negative motion; Ask the chairperson to restate the motion if it is ambiguous;
- (f) Do not record housekeeping or friendly (non-controversial) amendments separately, as the final wording of the motion is all that is necessary;
- (g) Record substantive (contentious) amendments separately; record both the fate of the amendment and the main motion;
- (h) Formal resolutions should be clearly written, with the “resolved clause” having enough content to “stand alone,” without the inclusion of all the “whereas clauses”;
- (i) Clearly write and highlight decisions having unanimous consent, as these have the same validity as motions;
- (j) Record individual votes in the minutes, when requested. (Authority - Policy G7-Recorded Votes);

6. Approval of the Minutes

- (a) Send an electronic draft copy of the minutes to the meeting participants, prior to the meeting, to allow for editing of housekeeping errors (i.e. name misspellings or technical terminology, typos, etc.). Make only minor amendments;
- (b) The meeting participants should collectively discuss and amend substantive errors at the next meeting. (These errors would include incorrectly recorded decisions, motions, discussion summaries, etc.)

- (c) Meeting participants can ask to review the audio record, or reach an agreement through their collective memories, if accuracy is debatable;
- (d) In most cases, minutes will not be read at the meeting;
- (e) “Approval” of the minutes relates to the accuracy of their content, not the approval of the decisions previously made;
- (f) Record any amendments to the previous minutes in the minutes of the current meeting, along with the motion to approve based on those amendments;
- (g) Make the approved amendments in the applicable minutes;
- (h) Indicate the date of approval in the header of every page;
- (i) Destroy all draft copies of the minutes;
- (j) Note in the current minutes if the previous minutes are not available or are not approved;
- (k) Signing the minutes is not necessary;

7. Archiving Meeting Information

In accordance with Part 2 – Administration, Section 34(2) of the Municipal Government Act, minutes (and supporting documentation) of all Town meetings must be archived indefinitely and carefully preserved in a secure and safe environment (i.e. Town vault).

- (a) Printed copies of the agenda, minutes and supporting documents for the meeting, must be stored in the Town’s vault, in a binder specifically for that purpose and filed chronologically, following approval of the minutes;
- (b) Electronic copies of the agenda, minutes and supporting documents for the meeting must also be coded with logical code names and saved in appropriate folders;
- (c) Electronic copies of the agenda and minutes must be posted on the Town’s webpage;
- (d) The audio recording of the meeting must be coded and archived in an electronic file until the minutes have been officially approved;

4.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

None

5.0 POLICY REVISION HISTORY

Date Created: July 10, 2003
Revisions: September 10, 2008
April 29, 2013