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1. DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY

The secretary shall take minutes and record all business at each meeting of the local PTA, including meetings of the membership, the board of directors, and the executive committee, making sure all minutes are complete. The secretary must prepare the minutes for approval at the next meeting.

Together with the president, the secretary should plan the meeting agenda and inform the president of any unfinished business from previous meetings. The secretary also issues all “calls” or notices of meetings and conducts such correspondence as the board of directors or executive committee designates.

At meetings, the secretary takes attendance to determine if a quorum is present. In the event both the president and the vice president are absent, the secretary calls the meeting to order and asks for nominations for a chair pro-temp.

The secretary should work with the treasurer and the membership chair to keep an up-to-date roster of members and to keep an up-to-date record of all committees. The secretary is responsible to help ensure that all members’ names, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers are current, and to serve in other ways as directed by the PTA’s standing rules or by the president.

At the end of the fiscal year (June 30), the secretary should be sure all copies of the legal documents notebooks and permanent record files are in order and ready to transfer to new officers. It is important that the secretary attend a NJPTA secretary’s workshop to learn in greater detail how to perform this job.

2. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Documents and Minutes

To assist the president and to be prepared to answer questions, the secretary should have the following materials available at every meeting:

**Document notebook** (3-ring binder, tabbed as follows)
- Blank motion forms
- Local PTA Official Bylaws
- Standing rules
- Budget
- Board of directors roster (current and previous year)
- Membership list (current and previous year)
- Parliamentary procedure information
- Voting delegate information (for councils)

**Minutes notebook** (3-ring binder, tabbed as follows)
This notebook should contain minutes from the past two years. Minutes older than two years may be kept in a separate binder.
- Membership meeting minutes
Board of directors meeting minutes
Executive committee meeting minutes

Note: Minutes are a permanent record and are never discarded. They must be kept in a safe location as long as the local PTA exists.

2.2 Correspondence
The handling of incoming and outgoing correspondence varies from organization to organization. The secretary will usually help compose and type outgoing correspondence at the president’s request. The secretary should read important correspondence received by the local PTA to the members at the president’s request.

2.3 Membership
The secretary should enter newly elected officers into the New Jersey PTA membership database, maintain a current roster of all officers and board of directors members, and have a current membership list available for membership meetings. Prior to June 30, a final membership roster must be printed and filed with the organization’s permanent records.

2.4 Filing
The secretary should maintain hard copies of all minutes, correspondence, committee reports, newsletters, meeting notices, and other such documents in the official files of the local PTA.

2.5 Newsletters
The secretary should provide meeting highlights and other important information to the local PTA newsletter editor for inclusion in the newsletter.

2.6 Agendas
The secretary must attend and keep minutes at all membership meetings, all board of directors meetings, and all executive committee meetings. The secretary should also attend council meetings (if the local PTA is a member of a council) and the programs, activities, and events of the local PTA.

The secretary, together with the president, should plan the meeting agenda. This includes reminding the president of any unfinished business to be considered. Once the agenda is set, the secretary should issue the “call” or notice of the meeting. In developing the meeting agenda, the following items need to be considered.

- **Do not have a meeting just to have a meeting.** If one is scheduled, but no business must be done, **cancel** it. In that case, the secretary would issue cancellation notices. Likewise, if something critical arises and needs to be addressed by the membership, **call** a meeting. (Be aware of the required notice for calling special meetings.)
• **Identify** why the meeting is being held. Possible reasons include: meet legal requirements, budget approval, elect officers, decide on a fundraiser, decide on levy support, or provide information to members on a community issue.

• The agenda should be:
  
  **Relevant:** The agenda should be coordinated with the purpose of the meeting and the meeting items should be related to one another.

  **Organized:** The agenda should be prepared in advance thoughtfully and organized by members’ interest and/or importance.

  **Flexible:** If time limits are set for individual agenda items, additional time should be allowed if the discussion is helpful.

  **Published:** The agenda should be distributed *in advance* if possible, and additional copies should be available at the meeting.

• Put *action items (items that require a decision by the members)* at the beginning of the meeting when interest and participation are high. Action items are usually important, and the meeting should be organized with the important items first.

• Do *not* read anything aloud that members have had an opportunity to read ahead of time, including minutes. Minutes should be distributed in advance.

• **Start at the appointed time.** If someone is late, do *not* start late.

• **The meeting notice should contain the planned adjournment time.** Action items should be finished by the planned adjournment time. Discussion can continue after the planned adjournment time only if the members agree.

2.7 **Transition**

The outgoing and incoming secretaries should meet prior to July 1 in order to transfer all records, discuss the recordkeeping system, and pass on information about the secretary’s role and responsibilities. The term of office is one or two years (July 1-June 30).

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of a PTA meeting are a permanent record of what occurred at the meeting, and they provide an account of the meeting for members who could not attend. PTA meeting minutes are more than a convenient record. Minutes are a necessary legal document. A local PTA is a nonprofit corporation, the law requires that minutes be kept of executive committee, board of directors, membership, and other meetings. In the past, courts and agencies have carefully studied the texts of meeting minutes when the association’s policies, programs, or actions were challenged for tax or other legal reasons.

Secretaries should draft minutes with the understanding and intention that the minutes might one day be examined in an audit or investigation of the PTA or used in litigation involving the local PTA. It is essential that the minutes accurately reflect what occurred at a meeting. Minutes should be a record of what was considered and accomplished at a meeting, not a record of each statement made by those attending. Minutes should never include personal opinions, interpretations, or comments. Minutes should be written in the third person. Descriptive phrases do not belong in a factual report of the business conducted.
Minutes should reflect best practices, including: consideration and review of goals and objectives, election of nominating committee, election of officers, and approval of the budget. The best practices checklist offers important insight about business that should be included in your minutes.

3.1 Essential Components of Minutes
- Minutes should indicate the place, date, and time of the meeting.
- Minutes should contain the statement that proper notice of the meeting was given to those entitled to receive notice.
- Minutes should state whether the required quorum was present.
- Minutes should contain a statement that the minutes of the previous meeting were distributed (or read aloud) and were approved either as written or as amended. All changes to the minutes of the previous meeting should be noted.
- Minutes should contain the names of those attending the meeting. If a sign-in sheet is used, this may be attached to the minutes instead of listing attendees.
- Minutes should follow a standard format.
- Minutes should describe each motion, report, or communication made at the meeting, and should name the person making the motion, report, or communication.
- Minutes should note any action taken in response to each motion, report, or communication.
- Minutes should state the number of votes “for” and “against” a motion when a counted vote is taken.
- Minutes should record election results.
- Minutes should include the following attachments, as appropriate: copies of written contracts, leases, insurance policies, and other legal agreements approved at a meeting; sign-in sheets, when the list of attendees is too long to list in the body of the minutes; and any additional reports that the voting body elects to include in the minutes. The secretary does not have the authority to attach reports to the minutes; this action should be taken by the board or membership only for particularly important reports.

3.2 Procedure for Taking Minutes
The first paragraph should report:
- Kind of meeting—membership, board of directors, executive committee.
- Name of the association.
- Date, time, and location of meeting.
- Proper notice was given to all members.
- List of those in attendance. (A sign-in sheet may be attached to the minutes instead.)
- The presence of a quorum.

3.3 Pledge of Allegiance
Record a statement about this activity and who led it.
3.4 Inspiration
Record a statement about this activity and who presented it.

3.5 Approval of Minutes
Minutes of the previous meeting must be approved. They can be distributed and approved as printed or they can be read and approved as read. A formal motion for approval is not necessary.

3.6 Correction of Minutes
Corrections to the minutes should be placed in the margin of the minutes with a line drawn carefully around the portion corrected. The corrections should be dated and initialed. It is permissible, but not required, to prepare a final version of the minutes incorporating the changes, but the original draft with the annotations should be retained as well.

3.7 Treasurer’s Report
The Local PTA Bylaws require the treasurer to present a written financial report for each month, but these reports are not voted on or approved. The treasurer’s report should be acknowledged in the minutes and kept on file by the secretary with other written committee reports, but it does not need to be attached to the minutes. If no report is submitted for a particular month, the treasurer’s explanation should be recorded in the minutes. At the end of each fiscal year an Internal Audit should be conducted, which the board of directors shall approve the financial review and approval should be reflected in the minutes.

3.8 Reports
Record all reports (whether from an individual or a committee) and who made them. A brief summary may be included, but minutes should primarily reflect resolutions, decisions, and actions taken as a result of the committee report. Important reports, if written, may be attached to the minutes if there is a vote to do so.

3.9 Communication
Note any correspondence that is read.

3.10 Motions
- The person who made the motion should fill out a motion form stating the exact wording of her or his motion, sign and date it. This is how the motion should be recorded in the minutes. This form is then attached to the minutes and becomes part of the permanent record.
- Record all main motions (adopted or defeated) — except those that are withdrawn — stating the wording of the main motion as it was adopted or defeated.
- Record the name of the maker of the motion, and note that the motion was seconded but do not record the name of the person who seconded the motion.
- Record all action on each motion, in the order it took place.
- If a counted vote is taken, record the votes “for” and “against” the motion.
3.11 Election Results
If an election is conducted at the meeting, the secretary should record the results of the election in the minutes, including the names of each candidate and the number of votes each received as reflected in the tellers’ report. (See the Nominating Committee and Elections Handbook in the leadership resources section of the NJPTA website for more information on elections and recording minutes for elections.) The secretary should preserve the ballots cast for each office so that if the election is questioned, the vote may be verified by a recount, after which the ballots may be destroyed.

3.12 Discussion
Discussion is generally not included in the minutes unless a summary is essential to understand the action taken. Any summary should be in general terms, as brief as possible, and should not include names.

3.13 Program
Record the names or participants, the topic, and the method of presentation. Do not include details.

3.14 Adjournment
Record the time of adjournment and the date of the next meeting.

3.15 Signing the Minutes
The secretary signs the minutes. While not incorrect, the words, “Respectfully submitted,” in the closing of the minutes represent an older practice that is not essential in signing the minutes.

3.16 Storing the Minutes
Minutes should be maintained in a separate notebook and retained permanently. They are the legal record of your PTA. They are not subject to public inspection, but they are subject to inspection by PTA members on request, so they should be readily available for this purpose.

3.17 Posting the Minutes
Approved minutes of membership meetings may be posted to a website or other electronic platform. Your PTA should thoughtfully consider potential issues involved with making membership meeting minutes available online, because it makes these documents fully public. Minutes are not public documents, but they are subject to inspection by PTA members on request. Because minutes are not meant to be a substitute for a newsletter, or to be a full summary of what was said and done in the meeting, they may lack context for the reader. They may also be viewed by persons who do not have the best interests of your association in mind.

Approved minutes of board meetings should not be posted to a website or other electronic platform, as it is common for these minutes to include sensitive information. The secretary may instead prepare a brief summary of the board meeting that is suitable for public posting.