

Recording Present History:
Guidelines for Local League Secretaries

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Responsibilities of the Secretary..... | 1 |
| All about Minutes | 1 |
| Checklist of Mailings | 3 |
| Filing | 4 |
| Expanded Responsibilities..... | 4 |
| Tools..... | 4 |
| Sample Minutes | 5 |
| League Lingo | 7 |
| Suggested Style Sheet | 11 |

RECORDING PRESENT HISTORY

Guidelines for Local League Secretaries

As a local League secretary, you are assuming an important position. In your hands is the recording of all plans, proposals, and decisions made by your board for carrying out the work of the League. If the minutes are accurate and concise, the whole organization will benefit.

You also have the privilege of knowing and understanding everything that is going on in your League. It can be a stimulating and rewarding experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECRETARY

As secretary, you are responsible for:

- taking minutes at all board meetings, at the annual meeting, and at any other general meeting when League business is conducted
- sending various materials and reports to the state and national Leagues and maintaining a file of local minutes
- polling the board, when asked by the president, or assisting in taking the poll. The results of the poll are read into the minutes at the next meeting
- participating as part of the management team at the board meetings and as a member at the annual meeting and other business meetings. You have the same rights as others to make motions, enter into discussions, vote, etc., although your participation may be limited somewhat by the need to record the proceedings.

ALL ABOUT THE MINUTES

Before the Meeting

At the beginning of the year, prepare a simple chart so that you can keep a record of attendance record at the board meetings.

Gather the supplies that you will need--minutes of last meeting, notebook, pencils, and any other materials listed under "Tools" (*see page 4*) that you think may be used. Remember that you are the basic source of information pertaining to past activities of your League.

If you cannot attend, **arrange for a substitute.**

During the meeting

Arrive **on time** with the necessary supplies.

Make sure a quorum (as defined by your local League bylaws) is present.

Record type of meeting, place, date, presiding officer, and the times the meeting begins and ends. At board meetings, check attendance sheet and record names of guests; at annual and other general business meetings, you need to record only the number of members and the number of guests present.

A reading of the previous minutes at a board meeting is not necessary if they were mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to the board members ahead of time ---**a highly recommended procedure.** The president asks for errors or omissions, and the minutes are then approved as corrected, with any changes carefully recorded in the minutes of the **current** board meeting. At the annual meeting or other general business meeting, the previous minutes are as a rule not read; rather the secretary makes a statement to the effect that the previous minutes have been approved by the board and are on file and available to anyone wishing to see them.

Minutes should provide a factual record of all motions and disposition, as well as action that is approved by general consent. Minutes should also reflect the pros and cons of any discussion whether it leads to a decision or not, and should include the summary of minority as well as majority views. Do not try to record comments verbatim, but summarize the discussion.

Be sure to record **exact** wording of **all** motions with the name of the mover and the act of seconding—**before the vote is taken.** (*There is no need to record the name of the person seconding the motion, or a motion, which has been withdrawn.*) **Do not hesitate to ask for clarification.**

Best practice calls for motions to be presented in writing, but usually this is required only if a motion is long or complicated. Particularly at annual meeting, it is good to have paper (or carbon packs) on hand for this purpose.

Be sure to record whether a motion passed or failed, or dies for the lack of a second. Do not record Aye or No votes separately unless requested to do so; then record numbers only (ie: 12 aye 4 no) unless individuals request a specific record of their vote.

Circle the word “moved” and the word “carried” in your notes, so that when asked for a rereading, it is easy to locate without delay.

Be sure that no motions are pending.

Usually an agenda is prepared prior to the meeting, the secretary should check off topics as they are discussed and remind the president of any that are overlooked.

Take a break at long meetings; ask someone to continue taking notes for you.

Any lengthy reports presented to the board or the membership should be given in writing by the appropriate chairman to the secretary. These do not need to be literary masterpieces, but should include the pertinent facts in readable form. File with **your copy** of the minutes.

After the Meeting

Review your notes immediately, adding a word of explanation whenever necessary to improve clarity. Transcribe the minutes as soon as possible after a meeting while everything is fresh in your mind. You may collate all materials pertaining to a topic under that heading, even though it may have been discussed at different times during the meeting. Review the “Sample Minutes” for useful suggestions regarding both format and content.

To be useful, your minutes must be **specific, accurate, concise, clear, and prompt.**

Be sure the **name of your League** appears in the heading. Do **not** use first name; use either full name or last name only. Use abbreviations sparingly, if at all.

Don't sacrifice clarity for brevity. Ask yourself these questions:

- Will these minutes make any sense to someone who missed the meeting or state board member responsible for reading them?
- Will they be understandable to someone writing the history of our League twenty years from now?

If you have difficulty in preparing any part of the minutes, ask the appropriate board member for clarification, but do **not** delay in preparing the minutes; corrections **can** be handled at the next meeting.

Most presidents like to review the minutes before they are in final form. This can be accomplished by providing the president with a rough draft either by e-mail or fax. It is also helpful to remind the president of board decisions that might need to be included in the next review of the policy sheet.

Do not throw away your original notes until after the next board meeting, when the minutes are approved. Someone may need to refer to them for corrections, etc.

Make enough copies of the minutes for the president and the board, your files, and off-board chairmen as needed, as well as to meet state League requirements.

If you purchase postage stamps or other supplies, keep receipts and turn them in to the treasurer for reimbursement.

CHECKLIST OF MAILINGS

The local League secretary is responsible for various mailings to the state and national Leagues. The LWV-TX *Directory* published annually in July includes a section, titled “Essential Checklist,” outlining these requirements.

These mailings should be accomplished promptly to assist the state and national Leagues in providing timely help to local Leagues. When three copies are mailed as requested to the state League office, they are distributed to the state organization vice-president, the TLC Contact, and the state president; the president's copy is subsequently filed in the state office.

FILING

Your minutes represent the official historical record for your League. A permanent, single copy file should be maintained. Attach substantive reports (whether separate or part of the agenda) that supplement the minutes, such as detailed reports of consensus meetings, budget analyses, or president's reports. Agenda and reports that, in your judgment, contain nothing of value for permanent records need not be kept more than a short time.

EXPANDED RESPONSIBILITIES

The secretary is often asked to assist the president and the board by typing and mailing the agenda for board meetings and for the annual meeting. Ask the president for copies of pp 17-19 and p 23 of the *President's Counselor*, LWV-TX, July 1996. These pages provide sample agendas and ample guidance. It is not the responsibility of the secretary to determine the **content** of the agenda; the content is the responsibility of the president in conference with the vice presidents.

At least a week prior to a board meeting, mail the agenda, together with the minutes of the previous meeting, to all board members; this allows everyone the opportunity to be prepared for necessary decisions. Not all local Leagues mail either minutes or agenda to board members, but it is recommended that this procedure be implemented at the earliest time that financing will permit.

The annual meeting agenda is distributed only to those involved in the proceedings.

FINALLY

Both the Tender League Care (TLC) contact for your local League and the state League secretary are available if you need help. Please call on them.

TOOLS

You will need the following tools:

- Notebook, such as a spiral or steno pad
- Several sharpened pencils
- Tape recorder (some secretaries use a tape recorder, but it is not essential)
- Dictionary
- Essential Checklist for Local Leagues- from the *League Directory*, LWV-TX, published annually in June
- *In League* and other general materials provided all board members
- A typewriter or computer will make your job easier.

SAMPLE MINUTES

League of Women Voters - _____
Board Meeting
Date
Place

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the LWV-_____ was called to order by Jane Smith, president, at _____PM.

Present: List all present

Absent: List all absent

Minutes: Record that the minutes of the previous meeting (gave the date of the meeting) were approved as read or as corrected. (*Record all corrections in new minutes.*)

Treasurer's Report: Record the reported balance as of the date given and include here any additional details that the treasurer wishes recorded in the minutes. *The treasurer should give you a detailed report, such as a budget analysis, at least four times a year, which you should attach to the minutes.*

Announcements: Record announcements made and appointments. All appointments should be recorded, but you may or may not wish to record names suggested for various jobs. Information about community events, unless pertinent to League activities or interest, is best omitted from the minutes.

Committee Reports: Committee reports should be listed separately along with any action taken. Also include the name of the chair making the report and attach to the minutes any written report presented.

Membership: The membership report should include any increase in membership, names of those who renewed and those who have been dropped from the membership rolls. This type of report should be in the minutes of every board meeting. Information on events should include, where, when, and whom is being invited.

Unit Organization: If your League has units, reports on attendance and activities should be recorded in the minutes. It is most important that an accurate count of attendance be recorded for consensus meetings; it is often desirable at some future date to know how much member participation was involved.

Publications: A report on the activities of the committee should be in the minutes, this should include what the project is, who is working on it, and the project completion date.

Finance: Committee report should include the progress of the project and whether the goal has been met; the contributions to date; and how much of the contributions are from member contributions.

National Program: Record the report and include pertinent information on the progress of the study. If no report is given, record that.

State Program: Record the report and include pertinent information on the progress of the study. If no report is given, record that.

Local Program: Record the report and include pertinent information on the progress of the study. If no report is given, record that. When a consensus is approved at a board meeting, the resource chairman should provide a copy of it attached to, or included verbatim in, the minutes as a safeguard for the future should anyone question the consensus under which the action is taken. The discussion leading to the consensus should be reported as completely as possible; this is especially important on a local item. Accuracy here cannot be overemphasized. Be sure to include in the minutes the number of members that participated.

Legislative Action: The minutes should include any Action Alert that has been received and answered.

Voters Services: Record the report and include pertinent information on the progress of the any Voters Service projects. If no report is given, record that.

Observer Corps: Record the report and include pertinent information on the progress of the Observer Corps. If no report is given, record that.

Public Relations: Record the report.

VOTER: Record the deadline for giving *VOTER* articles in and the writing assignments.

Adjourned at _____p.m. Always indicated the time when the meeting at adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by

Secretary

Minutes need not be dull. They are the historical record of your League's decisions, action, participation, and performance. Strive for accuracy, but use your own style.

LEAGUE LINGO

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| Action | Expression of League positions to governmental officials by the president or his/her authorized representative. |
| Action Alert | Request from state or national League to take action at a specific time support of a League position. |
| Annual Meeting | Local convention at which members elect officers and directors, adopt program and a budget, and vote on proposed bylaws changes. |
| Associate Member | A League member who is a U.S. citizen under 18, U.S. citizen residing outside the country, U.S. territory, or associated commonwealth, or a non-citizen of the U.S. |
| Calendar | Plans by a board of directors for the League year for covering League program and other activities. |
| Candidate Forums | Nonpartisan public meetings where candidates are invited to speak and answer questions. |
| Concurrence | Agreement of League members with position reached by a small group or another League. |
| Consensus | Collective opinion of League members on a particular subject. |
| Convention | State and national League meetings held biennially in which delegates adopt program, elect officers, adopt a budget for the coming year, and act on proposed bylaws changes. |
| Council | National meeting held in the years between conventions in which limited delegate body adopts budget for the coming year and may discuss program (only state Leagues send delegates to national Council). |
| Current Focus | Publications containing updated information on a program study or selected topic of general interest—not consensus study. |
| DPM | Acronym for <i>Duplicate Presidents Mailings</i> ; a subscription which brings to any League member the same material contained in a mailing from LWVUS to local and state League presidents. |

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| Education Fund | The tax-deductible arm of the League of Women Voters in which education funds may be established at all three levels of League, but are discouraged at the local League level because of the legal requirements involved (education monies may not be used for position support activities). |
| F&I | Acronym for <i>Facts and Issues</i> ; publications containing information on field service program consensus studies (see also <i>Resource Materials</i>) |
| General Meetings | Meetings held by the local League for the entire membership. The bylaws state the minimum number of meetings to be held. Time, place, and subject matter are decided by the local board. |
| League Leader Subscriptions Service (LLSS) | A subscription available either by e-mail or hard copy from LWV-TX that includes much of the same materials sent to local League presidents. |
| Household Member | Refers to households in which there are two or more members. The PMP for each additional household member is assessed at half the PMP rate at state and national levels. Local dues may or may not follow this pattern, based on decisions at the local level. |
| Lifetime Member | There are two categories of lifetime members: Paid lifetime members are those who have paid a life membership fee (currently \$1000) Honorary lifetime members are those who have been members of the League for 50 years or more and are exempt from paying dues. |
| MAL | Acronym for member at large, a League member residing outside local League areas. |
| MAL Unit | A group of MALs in an area which functions under the direction of the state board. State units have a membership too small to meet requirements for provisional or local League status. |
| NRM | Acronym for nationally recruited member; a member who joins at the national level. These members referred by the national League to the appropriate state League which assigns them to the local League where they reside or if there is not a League in the area, retains them as state member at large. |
| Nonpartisanship | League policy of never supporting or opposing any candidate or political party. |

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| Orientation | Basic background material provided in writing or at meetings to help members understand League purposes, policies, and procedures. |
| PMP | Acronym for Per Member Payment: the amount of money paid to state and national on behalf of each member. The amount of the PMP is determined by delegates to state and national conventions and is assessed based on the membership count as of January 1 st of each year. |
| Portfolio | The particular job assigned to a board member or off-board chair (i.e. membership, finance, secretary) |
| Position | League's point of view, arrived at through member study and consensus (or concurrence). |
| President's Letter | Letter from the state president highlighting state activities, important local League deadlines, and reporting changes in state and local leadership. |
| Principles | Governmental standards and policies supported by the League by which all proposed or adopted local, state, and national issues are measured. |
| Program | Selected governmental issues chosen by the membership at local, state, and national levels for study and action. |
| Programs | Plans for speakers, discussions, or other activities for League meetings. |
| Recognition | Requirements to be fulfilled by Leagues in order to receive or maintain recognition. These were established by delegates to National Convention in 1986. |
| Resource Materials | Program information and publications gathered and/or prepared by League committees as background for discussion. |
| Statewide Conference | Purpose is determined by the interests and needs of the members, local Leagues, MAL units and the state board and is held one year after the state convention. |
| Tender League Care | Training, advice, or other assistance to local Leagues boards to help them carry out their responsibilities; usually given by Tender League Care contacts (TLC) members of the state board assigned to act as liaisons to local Leagues. |

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| Unit | Division of the membership into groups of a size that will provide maximum participation by members in discussion of League program and activities. Units can be time-oriented (day, evening, lunch hour) or geographically oriented (east, west, downtown), or both. Most larger Leagues have units. |
| <i>VOTER</i> | Newsletter for members or other subscribers; published by local, state, and national Leagues. |
| <i>Voters Guide</i> | Nonpartisan publication including candidates' qualifications and positions on selected issues or pro/con information on proposition or amendments. |
| Voters Service | Year-round activity to help citizens to be politically effective and to encourage their participation in the political process. Registering voters and distribution of <i>Voters Guides</i> are the two most basic Voters Service activities. |

LWV-TX SUGGESTED STYLE SHEET

Designed for VOTER editors, board members, office staff, and all other League members who deal with the written word.

Proofreading

The League has a reputation for publishing thoroughly researched, carefully written documents. This image can be clouded, however, if a League publication contains typographical errors, for readers are likely to suspect that carelessness in presentation reflects inaccuracy of content. Accurate proofreading is critical.

Ideally, every publication should be proofread at least twice by two separate people, and one of the proofreading should involve someone's reading aloud from the original copy while another person scans the printer's proofs, copy for reproduction, etc. No one is infallible, and sometimes omissions can be detected only by painstaking comparison of the text with the original manuscript.

In a perfect world, the proofreading of a League publication would never be done only by its author/editor or typist. The author's/editor's mind tends to stray from what is literally before him/her into what is being said (the content); the typist's eyes are glazed from having traveled this route before. In order to produce error-free work, a second proofing is necessary by a careful person who has never seen the copy before.

But IF you are the only warm body around, and the *VOTER* (or other publication) must be printed, collated, folded, stapled, and mailed out within hours, THEN steel yourself, for accurate proofreading requires careful word-by-word reading.

Initially, read the copy *aloud* for continuity, content, and context. Secondly, scan each line for odd spacing and errors in punctuation. Scan left to right on the first line and right to left on the next, continuing down the page. Next, read the document backwards proofing each word. Transposition errors are easily found using this method. Finally read it again from the beginning to end.

Remember the League's reputation, and *focus!*

RULES OF USAGE

(Note: Italics in the following sections are utilized to call attention to the examples.)

Abbreviations

In an abbreviation with internal periods, do not include spaces after the internal periods.

Examples: 10 *a.m.*; *U.S.* policy; Washington, *D.C.*; *i.e.*; *Ph.D.* However, when typing initials in personal names include spaces after the periods. **Example:** *M. E. Harris.*

Apostrophes

These have two main uses: possessives and contractions. Because contractions are to be avoided in formal writing, be concerned with possessives. Possessives are formed by adding an apostrophe and the letter *s* to a singular noun. **Examples:** *proofreader's pen*; *Burns's poems.*

If the noun is plural ending in *s*, add only a final apostrophe. **Example:** *all local Leagues' responsibility*

For plural nouns not ending in *s*, add *'s*. **Example:** *women's*

A common error is to write *it's* for *its*. The first is a contraction, meaning *it is*. The second is a possessive. **Example:** *It's a wise child that knows its own parents.*

Do not use an apostrophe in the following terms commonly used by the League:

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>candidates meeting</i> | <i>county commissioners court</i> | Voters Guide |
| <i>candidates questionnaires</i> | <i>presidents mailing</i> | Voters Service |
| <i>citizens committee</i> | <i>Speakers Bureau</i> | |

Commas

In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma between each term and before the connective word.

Examples: *She opened the letter, read it, and made a note of its contents.*
red, white, and blue

Use a comma to set off quotations. **Example:** *Then she said, "How about the budget?"*

When writing dates, use commas to set off the day, month, and year.

Example: *Tuesday, November 3, 1992.*

Dashes

A hyphen is not a dash--and vice versa. The dash is made with two hyphens (on a typewriter) without a space before or after. Use a dash to set off an abrupt break or interruption, and to announce a long summary.

MATTERS OF FORM

Hyphens

When two or more words are combined to form a compound adjective, a hyphen is usually required. Do not use a hyphen between words that can better be written as one word:

waterfowl, not *water-fowl*. Your common sense will guide you, but a dictionary is more reliable. Most words beginning with these prefixes are not hyphenated: *anti, bi, co, extra, hyper, inter, intra, mid, mis, multi, non, out, over, post, pre, pseudo, re, semi, sub, super, trans, ultra, un, and under*.

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Examples: | <i>misgovern</i> | <i>semiannual</i> |
| <i>antitrust</i> | <i>multilateral</i> | <i>subcommittee</i> |
| <i>bipartisan</i> | <i>nonvoting</i> | <i>superhighway</i> |
| <i>cosponsor</i> | <i>outdated</i> | <i>transcontinental</i> |
| <i>extralegal</i> | <i>oversimplify</i> | <i>ultramodern</i> |
| <i>hyperconscious</i> | <i>postwar</i> | <i>unconfirmed</i> |
| <i>interracial</i> | <i>preexisting</i> | <i>underdeveloped</i> |
| <i>intrastate</i> | <i>pseudoscientific</i> | |
| <i>midsummer</i> | <i>reenact</i> | |

However, prefixes are hyphenated before a capitalized word (*inter-League, non-League*), a figure (*post-1990*), or an element of more than one word (*anti-constitutional-revision forces*). Prefixes that are usually hyphenated include *all-*, *quasi-*, *self-*, and *vice-*.

Examples: *all-inclusive quasi-legislative self-determination vice-chair*

The treatment of words ending in the suffix *-wide* varies. **Examples:**

| <u>Hyphenate</u> | <u>Do not hyphenate</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>city-wide</i> | <i>statewide</i> |
| <i>county-wide</i> | <i>nationwide</i> |
| <i>area-wide</i> | <i>worldwide</i> |

More examples:

| <u>Hyphenate</u> | <u>Do not hyphenate</u> | <u>Write as separate words</u> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| <i>clear-cut goals*</i> | <i>nonpartisan</i> | <i>member at large</i> (when referring to a specific person) |
| <i>four-year term*</i> | <i>bylaws</i> | <i>under way</i> |
| <i>program-making functions*</i> | <i>cannot</i> | <i>Vice President</i> (of the U.S.) |
| <i>in-kind</i> | <i>percent</i> | |

* A compound modifier (e.g., adjective + past participle, cardinal number + unit of measurement, phrase used as adjective, an object + present participle) is hyphenated when preceding the noun. But an adverb ending in *-ly* + participle or adjective is always open before the noun. **Example:** *richly deserved praise*.

Numerals

Use figures to express dates, hours, street numbers, decimals, measures, percentages, volume, chapter, and page numbers. **Examples:** *July 28, 1992; Vol. II; 12:05 p.m.; Chapter V; 21 Baker Street; page 83; .3715; 73% or 73 percent; 80 degrees.*

Use figures to record uneven sums of money, and numbers over one hundred except when the numbers can be written as two words. **Examples:** *\$4.19; 122; five thousand.*

Be consistent in your use of numbers within a document; do not, for example, spell out a number which can be expressed in two words (*fifteen thousand*) and later use figures for the same kind of number (*20,000*).

Spell out ordinal numbers within copy. **Examples:** *twenty-first century, Tenth Street, second term*

Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence. **Example:** *Twenty-six local Leagues responded.*

Quotations

American authorities are agreed on the following relationships between quotation marks and other punctuation:

Always place commas and periods inside quotation marks. **Example:** *She said "four," not "five."*

Always place semicolons and colons outside quotation marks. **Example:** *The following men figured in Roosevelt's "kitchen cabinet": Adolph Berle, Harry Hopkins, and Raymond Moley.*

Question marks, exclamation points, and dashes are placed inside or outside final quotation marks, depending on the situation. They are placed inside when they apply only to the quotation. They are placed outside the final quotation marks when they apply to the entire statement. **Examples:** *Why did he say, "Your position has been made abundantly clear"?*; *The senator asked, "What did you intend to do with the funds?"*

Titles

When typing League publications, italicize or underline the word *VOTER* all in caps (the *National VOTER*, the *Texas VOTER*, this *VOTER*). Italicize or underline other League titles:

We Support; President's Counselor.

General rules: Italicize or underline titles of publications (books, newspapers, magazines, brochures, reports, etc.). Use quotation marks around the titles of articles in periodicals and newspapers, titles of essays and individual selections in books, and the titles of unpublished works (dissertations and theses, lectures, papers read at meetings, etc.).

Ellipsis

Ellipsis marks (. . .) indicate that part of a quoted passage has been omitted. If the omission occurs at the beginning or in the middle of a sentence, use three spaced periods (i.e., a space before each period and after the last). If the last part of the sentence is omitted, or if whole sentences are omitted, place a terminal period after the last word quoted, with three spaced periods following.

Example: *Fourscore and seven-years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation . . . dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged We are met on a great battlefield of that war.*