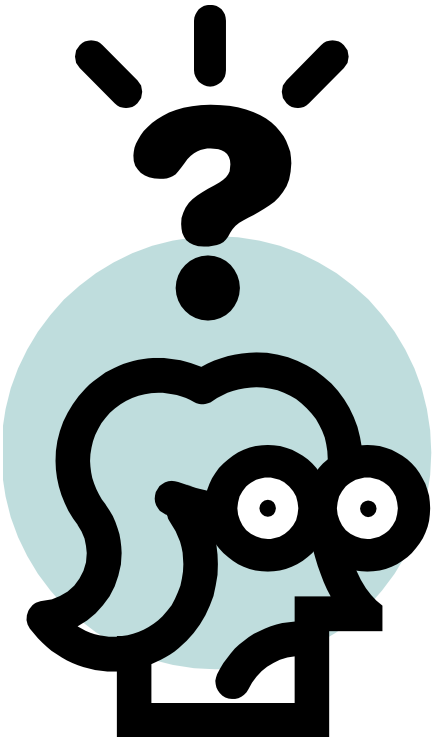
Secretary, You're Not Just a Note Taker

by Cindy Smith
NCPTA Board of Directors Secretary

What is a Secretary?

- Your thoughts……



According to Robert's Rules

- Official record keeper of the organization
- Far beyond keeping the minutes
  - Keeping:
    - Accurate list of members
    - Roll-call list
    - Governing documents
    - Delegate information
    - Committee membership
  - And so much more! (to come later)

Duties & Responsibilities

- **Before meetings:**
  - Work with the president to prepare agenda
  - Distribute to members the packet of materials needed for meeting (electronic or hard copy)
  - Send out the call to meeting notice – official notice of a meeting given to all members of organization
  - Before the annual meeting, prepare an annual report



Duties & Responsibilities

- **During the Meeting:**
  - In absence of president and VP/president-elect, calls the meeting to order and conducts election for pro tem chair (or according to bylaws)
  - Have access to minutes book (from previous mtgs)
  - Have access to all governing documents of org
  - Have list of current membership + current committees and committee members
  - Have ballots in case of a ballot vote
  - Maintain official list of members + official attendance list
  - Keep notes of what occurred at meeting
  - Sit near president & serve as resource to president
  - Keep a copy of Robert's Rules of Order on hand

Duties & Responsibilities

- **After the Meeting:**
  - If any governing documents were amended at the meeting, make changes and distribute new copies to appropriate parties.
  - Maintain the file of committee reports
  - Prepare minutes from the meeting
  - Distribute the minutes to members
  - Give each committee any info that has been referred to them
  - Notify officers, delegates, and committee members of their election or appointments

According to NC Uniform Bylaws

- Section 6.9: File of important documents (part of NC Non-profit Law)
  - Articles of incorporation
  - Current uniform bylaws adopted by PTA
  - Standing rules (if adopted)
  - Minutes of past meetings of the general membership & BOD
  - A copy of the official membership roster
  - A current roster of board members, all committee members & chairs
  - Legal documents, including insurance policies and contracts
  - Current and past tax returns
  - Current and past audit reports

Duties Expanded

- Records all business transacted at each meeting of the organization – including board and executive committee meetings.
  - A tape/digital recorder may be used during meetings to back up written notes.
- If there is no parliamentarian, that role becomes the secretary's.
- Requests written reports from committee chairs
- Prepares a summary of unfinished business for the president.
- Enters members into NCPTA database
- Forwards new officer information to NCPTA

Point of Information

- Some organizations choose to split the Secretary position into 2 positions:
  - Recording secretary
    - Usually takes and distributes the minutes
  - Corresponding secretary
    - Sends out notices of meetings and handles the general correspondence of the organization
- When this is done, bylaws and standing rules should specify the responsibilities of each position.

What is parliamentary procedure?

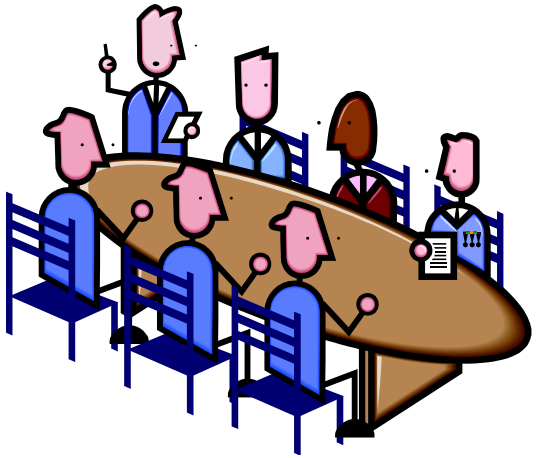
- Ever been to a meeting where there are no objectives, people interrupt each other, conversation is dominated by arguing, and decisions aren't made fairly or timely??



- Parliamentary procedure keeps this from happening.
  - It is simply a set of guidelines (rules) for conducting organized meetings.

Basic Principles of Parliamentary Procedure

- Consider one thing at a time
- Show courtesy to all and partiality to no one
- Decide matters by majority vote
- Allow the minority to be heard



When is parliamentary procedure used?

- All meetings of the PTA organization
- Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised is the parliamentary authority adopted by National PTA – it's adoption by local PTA units is required.
- Degree of formality in meetings depends on the size of the group and nature of the business.





Why use parliamentary procedure?

- Meetings can be conducted efficiently, productively, and fairly
- Allows a framework to stay on task
- Helps PTAs maintain order and guarantee justice and equity to all members
- Accomplish the groups goals
- Ensures the rights of the majority, the minority, individual members, and even absentee members.

Lawsuits

- Just as you can get into legal trouble for not following the rules of the road while driving, you can get into legal trouble for not following the governing documents of your PTA.
- Lawsuits over improper use of parliamentary procedures have involved:
  - Not giving proper notice
  - Improper calling of adjourned meetings
  - Violating member's right to speak or vote
  - Failing to establish or maintain a quorum
  - Using an improper method of nomination
  - And on and on and on!!

Meetings of the PTA

- Regular Meetings are held as specified in Bylaws
- Special meetings may be scheduled as needed
- Meetings are best utilized for in-depth discussions, brainstorming, or planning a PTA project.
- Be sure to consider people's schedules, languages, and physical needs.
- Use meetings constructively and sparingly if you want members to attend in the future.

Meetings – According to NC Bylaws

- A quorum **MUST** be present to conduct PTA business!!
- General Membership Meetings
  - Held at least 3 times per year
  - All PTA members invited to attend
  - Quorum: 20
- Special General Membership Meetings
  - Called for a specific purpose only
- Annual General Membership Meeting
  - Held at the end of the school year
  - A General Membership Meeting
  - Quorum: 20

Meetings – According to NC Bylaws

- PTA Meetings
  - A quorum **MUST** be present to conduct PTA business!!
    - A quorum for PTA meetings is a simple majority (half + 1 or more) – Quorum = Majority
  - Board of Director Meetings
    - Includes elected officers, principle, chairs of standing committees, 1 teacher, and up to 3 at-large members
    - Should be held each month
    - PTA members may attend, but only Board members may participate in business, make motions, and vote.

Meeting Agendas

- An agenda is a predetermined sequence of items of business to be covered at a specific meeting; also called order of business.
- A written agenda should be prepared for **every** meeting in order to stay on task and complete necessary business.
- Every member should receive a copy of the agenda at the meeting or in advance.
  - If sending meeting agenda electronically, be sure to have extra copies available at the meeting.

Order of the Agenda (sample)

- Call to Order
- Declare a Quorum to conduct business
- Reading and approval of minutes
- Financial Report
- Reports of Officers, Board & Standing Committees
- Special Committee Reports
- Principal's Report
- Teacher Report
- Unfinished Business
- New Business
- Announcements
- *Program
- Adjournment

*You may also hold your program, if one is scheduled, at the beginning of the meeting just after calling the meeting to order.

Consent Agenda

- An agenda category that includes a list of routine, uncontroversial items that are approved with one motion, no discussion, and one vote; also called consent calendar.
- If your organization uses this type of agenda, the procedure should be outlined in standing rules.
- The consent items should be forwarded to board members at least 7-10 days prior to meeting date to give time for review.

Consent Agenda (sample)

- Call to Order
- Declaration of Quorum to conduct business
- Consent Agenda:
  - Agenda Approval
  - Approval of Minutes
  - President's Report
  - Treasurer's Report
  - Committee Reports
  - Principal's & Teacher's Reports
- Unfinished Business
- New Business
- Announcements
- Adjournment



Meeting Minutes

- Meeting minutes serve as a permanent record of the organization
  - Should be entered in an official minute book
- Purpose of meeting minutes is to summarize the events of the meeting.
- Imperative that the information be complete, concise, and accurate.
- Determine a “style” for recording minutes so that every meeting is documented in the same manner (consistency).

Guidelines for Minutes

- Should be as brief as possible.
- Report action taken in chronological order.
- Record action taken by the group, including exact wording of every motion, whether adopted or defeated.
- Personal opinions and details of debate or discussion are not included. Only what is done by the group should be recorded, not what is said.
- Never erase or strike out words when correcting minutes; note corrections in margin.

Guidelines for Minutes

- The minutes can be used as legal documents in cases of litigation, so it is important that information be accurate.
- Minutes are signed by secretary.
- Minutes are usually approved or corrected by general consent, although it is in order to make a motion to approve or correct minutes.
- Minutes should be recorded so that a person reading them 10 days or 10 years after the meeting would know what business took place.

General Minutes Format

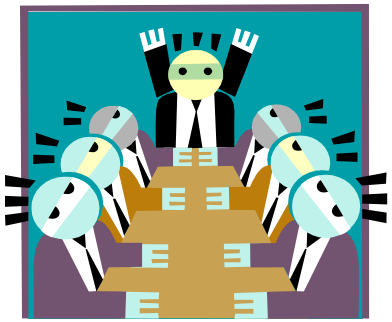
- **Heading** – name of organization, date, place of meeting, type of meeting
- **Attendance** – names and titles of those present listed in alphabetical order. A listing of those absent is optional. If a sign-in sheet is utilized, the original can be attached to minutes instead.
- **Quorum**
- **Body** – summary of topics discussed during meeting. It is helpful to follow the agenda when taking minutes. A copy of the agenda should be attached to the meeting minutes.
  - Minutes are written in third person.

General Minutes Format

- **Motions** – For routine motions, it is sufficient to record, "It was moved and seconded that…." When a motion is made where the exact wording is required, the names of those making and seconding the motion are recorded. If a motion is passed by the group, this should be noted in the paragraph pertaining to the motion.
- **Closing** – The time of adjournment should be noted. The complimentary closing for minutes is "Respectfully submitted." Allow 3 blank lines to allow for signature and then typed name of secretary.

Motions

- A motion is a formal proposal by a member that the PTA unit take a certain action.
- A motion that brings business before a PTA is called a “main motion.”
- Motions may be made by members or they may also come from committees.
- A motion is sometimes referred to as “the question.



7 Basics Points to Know

- The purpose of a motion is to introduce a proposal.
- A main motion requires a second.
- A main motion is debatable.
- A main motion is amendable.
- A main motion yields to all subsidiary, all privileged, and all applicable incidental motions.
- A main motion is adopted by majority vote.
- A main motion can be reconsidered.

Types of Motions

- Main Motions – bring business before the assembly. Subdivided into 2 categories:
  - Original Main Motion – bring before the assembly a new subject upon which action is desired.
  - Incidental Main Motion – incidental to, or related to, the business of the assembly.
- Secondary motions – don't relate to main motion or pending business but relate directly to members. They can be further divided into 3 categories.

Types of Motions

- Secondary Motions:
  - Privileged Motions – do not relate to the main motion or pending business but relate directly to the members and organization. They are matters of such urgency that, without debate, they can interrupt consideration of anything else.
  - Subsidiary Motions – aid the assembly in treating or disposing of a main motion.
  - Incidental Motions – relate to matters that are incidental to the conduct of the meeting rather than directly to the main motion.

Effective Meeting Essentials – Before the Meeting

- LEADER:
  - Define objectives
  - Select participants
  - Confirm availability
  - Schedule meeting room, arrange for equipment and refreshments
  - Prepare agenda
  - Distribute agenda
- PARTICIPANTS:
  - Block time on schedule
  - Confirm attendance
  - Define your role
  - Determine leader's needs from you
  - Suggest other participants
  - Know the objectives
  - Know when & where
  - Do any required prep

Effective Meeting Essentials – During the Meeting

- LEADER:
  - Start promptly
  - Follow the agenda
  - Manage the use of time
  - Limit/control discussion
  - Elicit participation
  - Help resolve conflicts
  - Clarify action to be taken
  - Summarize results
- PARTICIPANTS:
  - Listen & participate
  - Be open-minded, receptive
  - Stay on agenda and subject
  - Limit or avoid side conversations and distractions
  - Ask questions to assure understanding
  - Take notes on your action items

Effective Meeting Essentials – After the Meeting

- LEADER:
  - Restore room and return equipment
  - Evaluate effectiveness as meeting leader
  - Send out meeting evaluations
  - Distribute memo of discussion
  - Take any action you agreed to
  - Follow-up on action items
- PARTICIPANTS:
  - Evaluate meeting
  - Review memo of discussion
  - Brief others as appropriate
  - Take any action agreed to
  - Follow-up on action items
  - Do not discuss confidential information outside of meeting

Conflict Management

- ESTABLISH GROUND RULES for Meetings:
  - Discuss the issue in good faith.
  - Agree to be civilized.
  - Do not interrupt each other.
  - Keep the disagreement confidential.
  - Do not criticize each other.
  - Look fairly and equally at the pros and cons of all ideas.
  - Be willing to examine your own values and prejudices AND do not automatically apply them to others.
  - Provide solutions for solving the problem.

The 4 D's

Dialogue and Discussion before Debate and Decision

- Dialogue – to understand the perspectives within the group; takes time, practice, humility, mutual respect, critical thinking
- Discussion – to find the areas of commonality; requires listening, not just speaking
- Debate – to evaluate and decide
- Decision

Meeting Tips for PTA Members

- Send the agenda to members ahead of time for input before finalizing.
- Make sure materials and arrangements are complete for each agenda item.
- Clarify the question on which members are voting.
- When taking a vote, indicate the method for voting (voice, hand, rising). Be as courteous to opponents of a motion as to those favoring it. Announce outcome all votes.

Meeting Tips for PTA Members

- HOLD MEETINGS WHEN AND WHERE PEOPLE NATURALLY CONGREGATE!!
- Know your audience and their needs.
- Assign ambassadors to greet new members and explain the proceedings.
- Bring a gavel, Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, the bylaws, and copies of the agenda
- START ON TIME! & END ON TIME!
- Assign a timekeeper to keep off-topic discussions short.

Meeting Tips for PTA Members

- Keep a sense of humor and cheerful, friendly attitude.
- Occasionally summarize points as the discussion progresses.
- Give everyone a chance to participate.
- At the end of the meeting, restate decisions reached and assignments made.
- Keep a Procedure Book on hand for reference

Procedure Book Contents

- The procedure book, which can be a 3-ring binder, should contain a record of work done and other helpful material that has been collected.
- Include the following:
  - A copy of bylaws
  - Standing Rules
  - National PTA Handbook
  - Program for the year
  - List of Officers' and Chairs' addresses, telephone number, and email addresses
  - List of room representatives' contact information

Procedure Book Contents

- Special information relating to offices or chairs including current work plans
- Job descriptions that updated
- A list of other files and resources kept by your PTA including contents and location
- Correspondence and files for the past 2 years so that each administration can look back on its predecessor's work as needed.
  - Check on legal requirements for other files. For example, minutes must be kept permanently and most financial records kept for seven years.

Procedure Book

- Agenda, minutes, and reports
- A list of resource people and organizations, including phone numbers, email addresses, and addresses
- A file or scrapbook of newsletters, communications, etc.



QUESTIONS



For PowerPoint & Handouts or Further Questions

- Contact Information:

Cindy Smith

email: cindysmithpta@aol.com