



# Oklahoma Conservation Commission

## District Directors' Responsibilities:

### A 10-Minute Guide Series

This is one in a continuing series of informational/discussion topics designed to help conservation district directors become more informed and knowledgeable about their responsibilities. It is suggested that board members review these guides before a board meeting and then have a ten-minute discussion on them at a meeting.

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## *Guide No. 28 - Minutes of District Board Meetings*

Conservation district boards are required to keep minutes of all board meetings. The minutes are one of the most important documents kept by the district. They provide an accurate summary of the business conducted during board meetings as well as provide a history of the district.

### **Recording the Minutes**

The Open Meeting Act requires that a public body record the proceedings of all meetings. Minutes of a district board meeting must contain enough information for anyone to look at them at a later date and determine what items were discussed in the meeting and what specific action was taken.

The task of recording the minutes of a district meeting usually is assigned to a staff member. The board of directors should determine the amount of detail they require in their minutes. This should be consistent throughout all of their meetings. It is the chair's responsibility to keep the "side discussions" to a minimum during meetings so that it is not necessary for staff to determine what is and what is not relevant.

The minutes of each meeting shall be open to public inspection and shall reflect the manner and time of notice required by the Open Meeting Act.

### **Attendance**

Minutes must list all board members present, as well as those absent. Under "Others Present" list the name and complete title of every other individual present, including associate directors. In the text of the minutes, the time board members enter or leave the meeting must be noted.

### **Recording Motions**

When a motion is recorded in the minutes, the name of the individual making the motion and the name of the person seconding it must be recorded. The motion must then be recorded in detail. A decision or action taken by the board cannot be recorded as merely "the same as last year". All actions and decisions are to be recorded completely

### **Votes**

Each vote of the district board members (including the Chair) must be publicly cast and recorded on all motions, whether on routine approval of claims or on a major decision. Each member must verbalize a yea, nay or

abstention vote. If the motion is passed by unanimous vote, it is recorded in the minutes that way. If there are votes against the motion, then minutes must reflect how members voted by name.

### **Titles**

The text of the minutes may refer to the directors by last name only, but do not use first names only. When a director is reporting by virtue of serving as the district's representative to another agency, board, or committee, or as chair of a district committee, that title should be recorded. Any other individual(s) referred to in the text of the minutes should be completely identified.

### **Reports**

Reports given by district personnel, other agency personnel or by district directors may either be summarized in the minutes or may be typed separately and attached as an exhibit.

### **Approval of Minutes**

District board minutes must be approved during a board meeting. If minutes are approved, the Chair must sign the original minutes and a Statement of Approval. The Statement of Approval will then be forwarded to the Conservation Commission with a copy being kept with the original signed minutes. If the board of directors amends the minutes at the next board meeting, the Chair must sign a Statement of Approval of Amended Minutes.

This Statement of Approval of Amended Minutes, along with the amended minutes, must be sent to the Commission within five business days of the meeting. A copy will be kept in the district office with the original signed amended minutes.

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### **Lack of Quorum to Hold Meeting**

In the event there are not enough directors to hold a board meeting, the meeting is either cancelled in advance or not conducted due to lack of quorum

In the past, OCC has required that districts submit minutes of the "lack of quorum" meetings indicating members present and those absent. From this point forward, those minutes are no longer required. A new form, OCC-4C, has been added to the OCC website for districts to report when a board does not have a quorum.

### **Distribution of Minutes**

The original board meeting minutes with agenda, financial statement and reports always remain in the district office except when being bound. The district must submit a "draft" of the minutes including the financial statement and all attachments and exhibits to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) within five business days of the meeting. Refer to the Conservation District Checklist available on the website when submitting minutes to the Commission.

A copy of the approved minutes should be sent to the Commission member who represents the district; the President, appropriate Vice-President and Area Director of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts; the Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist and Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations; State Senator and Representative(s); and anyone else who expresses an interest.

### **Storage of Minutes**

The original signed minutes with agenda, financial statement and reports must be retained in the district office as a permanent record. In order to maintain the district's original copies in the best form possible, they can be bound in a hardback cover when a large number of pages accumulate. Contact the Commission Office for assistance and instructions in getting minutes bound.

It is also recommended that a district save minutes electronically. At the end of the calendar year it would be beneficial to save minutes to a disc for safe keeping.

### **Executive Session Minutes**

The Open Meeting Act requires that the minutes be recorded for executive sessions as well as open sessions. Someone must be designated to take minutes if the board approves going into executive session.

Executive session minutes differ from regular meeting minutes in that are not normally open to the public. The exception to this is if the board violates the Open Meeting Act requirements for an executive session the minutes can be made available to the public immediately.

Executive session minutes are hand written. They should reflect who is in executive session and give a brief summary of the issues discussed in the executive session.

Prior to leaving an executive session the minutes should be placed in a sealed envelope and marked Executive Session of the \_\_\_\_\_ Conservation District Board and dated. It is also recommended that the chair or their designee sign across the seal of the envelope.

There is no formal approval process for executive session minutes. The minutes should be secured in a place accessible only the district board.

This publication is issued by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission as authorized by Mike Thralls, executive director. Copies have not been printed but are available through the agency website. Two printout copies have been deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.