

Getting Started as Secretary

The page nobody hands you. Read it once before your first meeting.

Nobody expects a transcript. Minutes are a record of what was **decided**, not what was said. That one sentence makes this job far smaller than it looks, and it is the thing most new secretaries are never told.

BEFORE — A FEW DAYS AHEAD

- ☐ Ask the chair what is on the agenda, then send it out with the date, time and place.
- ☐ Bring last meeting's minutes. Approving them is usually the first item.
If nobody sent them to you, ask. They exist.
- ☐ Print the pages you need, or open the sheet.

DURING — THE MEETING ITSELF

- ☐ Note the start time and who is present. That is your attendance and your quorum.
- ☐ Write **decisions**, not discussion.
You are not recording who argued what.
- ☐ For every motion, capture the five things in the box below.
- ☐ Write down who agreed to do what, and by when.

AFTER — WITHIN A WEEK

- ☐ Write it up while it is still fresh in your head.
- ☐ Send the draft to the chair first, then to the board.
- ☐ It is not official until the board approves it at the next meeting.
Which is exactly why a mistake is fixable.

When someone makes a motion

It takes about fifteen seconds. Catch these five, in this order.

- 1. The wording.** "I move that we..." Write it as said, not tidied up.
- 2. Who moved it.**
- 3. Who seconded it.** No second means it dies and no vote happens.
- 4. The count.** Yes / No / Abstain.
- 5. Passed or failed.** A tie fails.

If you missed something

You will. Every secretary does. Here is the whole recovery.

Ask, right then. "Sorry, who seconded that?" Every board has heard it. Nobody minds.

Ask afterwards. The chair will remember.

Fix it at the next meeting. Minutes are a draft until approved. Corrections are a normal agenda item, not a failure.

The only real mistake is guessing, and writing the guess down as fact.

WORDS PEOPLE WILL SAY

Motion A formal proposal to do something.	Second Someone agrees it is worth voting on.	Abstain Present, choosing not to vote.	Quorum The minimum present for a vote to count.
Table it Postpone to a later meeting.	Amend Change the wording before voting.	Point of order Someone thinks a rule was broken.	Adjourn End the meeting. Note the time.

Want the rest?

This page is free to keep. The agenda and minutes pages, the motion and vote log, and the attendance sheet that counts quorum are the **Secretary Kit** — getmarinette.com/secretary-kit

Written by someone who did the job. I was the secretary and the treasurer for a volunteer board, and nobody handed me any of this. If something in the kit does not make sense, message me on Etsy. I am one person, not a storefront, and I answer.