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G-3.0107 Records

Each council shall keep a full and accurate record of its proceedings. Minutes and all other official records of councils are the property in perpetuity of said councils or their legal successors. When a council ceases to exist, its records shall become the property of the next higher council within whose bounds the lower council was prior to its cessation. The clerk of each council shall make recommendation to that body for the permanent safekeeping of the body's records with the Presbyterian Historical Society or in a temperature and humidity controlled environment of a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

 PJC ([2014, 221-08, 423, NYC Pby v. McGee et al.](#)): Upon dismissal of a congregation the minutes and registers of the session become the property and responsibility of the pby.

GA ([2010, 61, 330, Item 05-12](#)): Sessions are required to produce any amendments to articles of incorporation and bylaws adopted by the congregation as part of the annual review of session records and may be required to produce such documents as part of a special administrative review.

GA ([1990, 242, 21.158, Req. 90-8](#)): Pby minutes should reflect accurately what was done, and not be overly technical.

37. Request 90-8. CONCERNING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MINUTES OF A PRESBYTERY (*Minutes, 1990, Part I, p. 256*)

1990 21.158 [GA approved recommendation, see page 39.]

Request 90-8, from the stated clerk of the Presbytery of Great Rivers, asks for clarification with regard to the taking of minutes by a presbytery, pointing out that *Robert's Rules of Order*, Section 47, paragraphs 6, 7, and 8 provide for a separate paragraph for each subject matter along with a history of motions pertaining to it, and the stated clerk noted that neither the presbytery nor the General Assembly take minutes that meet these requirements. It asks for the proper form for taking minutes.

21.159

The advisory committee recommends to the 202nd General Assembly (1990) that it answer *Request 90-8* as follows:

Section 47 of *Robert's Rules of Order* provides that the minutes of a meeting in an ordinary society "unless the minutes are to be published, . . . should contain mainly a record of "what was done at the meeting. . . ." (emphasis in the original) The committee found, after study, that in the taking of minutes of any body, the requirements of Section 47 tempered by common sense should prevail. The provision in Section 47 pertaining to items 6, 7, and 8 reads: "The body of the minutes should contain a *separate paragraph for each subject matter*, and should show: . . ." (emphasis in the original). While the history of all motions pertaining to each subject matter could be included if the gravity of the subject suggests it and there is a motion to that effect duly made,

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seconded, and approved that they be included, what is important is that the minutes contain an accurate record of what was done. The minutes of the General Assembly do provide a full, accurate, and complete record of the actions taken by it. With respect to the minutes of a presbytery, they should follow the requirements of Section 47 and reflect an accurate record of what was done at the meeting, tempered by the common sense requirements that they not be overly technical.

§48. MINUTES AND REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Minutes

48:1 The official record of the proceedings of a deliberative assembly is usually called the *minutes*, or sometimes—particularly in legislative bodies—the *journal*. The minutes should be kept in a substantial book or binder.

48:2 **Content of the Minutes.** In an ordinary society, the minutes should contain mainly a record of what was *done* at the meeting, not what was *said* by the members. The minutes must never reflect the secretary's opinion, favorable or otherwise, on anything said or done.

48:3 To modify the rules governing what is regularly to be included in the minutes requires adoption of a special rule of order, although a

majority vote may direct the inclusion of specific additional information in the minutes of a particular meeting.

48:4 The *first paragraph* of the minutes should contain the following information (which need not, however, be divided into numbered or separated items directly corresponding to those below):

- 1) the kind of meeting: regular, special, adjourned regular, or adjourned special;
- 2) the name of the society or assembly;
- 3) the date and time of the meeting, and the place, if it is not always the same;
- 4) the fact that the regular chairman and secretary were present or, in their absence, the names of the persons who substituted for them; and
- 5) whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved—as read, or as corrected—and the date of that meeting if it was other than a regular business meeting. Any correction approved by the

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assembly is made in the text of the minutes being approved; the minutes of the meeting making the correction merely state that the minutes were approved “as corrected,” without specifying what the correction was (see first paragraph of form, 48:8).

The body of the minutes should contain a *separate paragraph for each subject matter*, and should show:

- 6) all main motions ([10](#)) or motions to bring a main question again before the assembly ([6:25-27](#); [34-37](#)) that were made or taken up—except, normally, any that were withdrawn³—stating:
 - a) the wording in which each motion was adopted or otherwise disposed of (with the facts as to whether the motion may have been debated or amended before disposition being mentioned only parenthetically); and
 - b) the disposition of the motion, including—if it was *temporarily* disposed of ([9:7-11](#), [38:8](#))—any primary and secondary amendments and all adhering

- secondary motions that were then pending;
- 7) secondary motions that were not lost or withdrawn, in cases where it is necessary to record them for completeness or clarity—for example, motions to *Recess* or to *Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn* (among the privileged motions), or motions to *Suspend the Rules* or grant a *Request to Be Excused from a Duty* (among the incidental motions), generally only alluding to the adoption of such motions, however, as “... the matter having been advanced in the agenda on motion of...” or “... a ballot vote having been ordered, the tellers...”;
- 8) the complete substance of oral committee reports that are permitted to be given in small assemblies in particular cases as provided in [51:60-62](#);
- 9) all notices of motions ([10:44-51](#));
 - 10) all points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, together with the reasons given by the chair for his or her ruling; and
 - 11) the declaration by the chair in “naming” an offending member as a part of disciplinary

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procedures, as well as any disorderly words that led to such naming and that the chair directed the secretary to take down (see [61:12-14](#)).

The *last paragraph* should state:

12) the hour of adjournment.

48:5 Additional rules and practices relating to the content of the minutes are the following:

- 1) The name of the maker of a main motion should be entered in the minutes, but the name of the seconder should not be entered unless ordered by the assembly.
- 2) a) When a count has been ordered, the number of votes on each side is entered, unless the vote was on a motion that would not otherwise be entered in the minutes.
- b) When the voting is by ballot, the full tellers' report ([45:37-40](#)) is entered.
- c) When the voting is by roll call, the names of those voting on each side and those answering "present," as well as the total number in each category, are entered. If members who are present fail to respond on a roll-

call vote, enough of their names must be recorded as present to reflect that a quorum was present at the time of the vote. If the chair voted, no special mention of this fact is made in the minutes.

- 3) The proceedings of a committee of the whole, or a quasi committee of the whole, are not entered in the minutes, but the fact that the assembly went into committee of the whole (or into quasi committee) and the committee report is recorded (see [52](#)).
- 4) When a question is considered informally, the same information is recorded as under the regular rules, since the only informality in the proceedings is in the debate.
- 5) When a committee report is of great importance or should be recorded to show the legislative history of a measure, the assembly can order it "to be entered in the minutes," in which case the secretary copies it in full in, or attaches a copy of it to, the minutes.
- 6) The name and subject of a guest speaker can be given, but no effort should be made to summarize his remarks.

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48:6 The use by the secretary of a recording device can be of great benefit in preparing the minutes, but a transcription from it should never be used as the minutes themselves.

48:7 **The Signature.** Minutes should be signed by the secretary and can also be signed, if the assembly wishes, by the president. The words *Respectfully submitted*—although occasionally used—represent an older practice that is not essential in signing the minutes.

48:8 **Form of the Minutes.** The principles stated above are illustrated in the following model form for minutes:

The regular monthly meeting of the L.M. Society was held on Thursday, January 4, 20__, at 8:30 P.M., at the Society's building, the President being in the chair and the Secretary being present. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved as corrected.

The Treasurer reported the receipt of a bill from the

Downs Construction Company in the amount of \$5,000 for the improvements recently made in the Society's building. The question put by the chair "that the bill be paid" was adopted.

Mr. Johnson, reporting on behalf of the Membership Committee, moved "that John R. Brown be admitted to membership in the Society." The motion was adopted after debate.

The report of the Program Committee was received and placed on file.

The special committee that was appointed to investigate and report on suitable parking facilities near the Society's building reported, through its chairman, Mrs. Smith, a resolution, which, after debate and amendment, was adopted as follows: "*Resolved*, That... [its exact words immediately before being acted upon, incorporating all amendments]."

The resolution relating to the use of the Society's library by nonmembers, which was postponed from the last meeting, was then taken up. This motion and a pending amendment were laid on the table after the chair

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announced that the guest speaker had received a phone message which would require his early departure.

The President introduced the guest speaker, Mr. James F. Mitchell, whose subject was _____.

At the conclusion of Mr. Mitchell's talk, the resolution relating to the use of the Society's library by nonmembers was taken from the table. After amendment and further debate, the resolution was adopted as follows: "*Resolved, That...* [its exact wording immediately before being finally voted on]."

Mr. Gordon moved "that the Society undertake the establishment of a summer camp for boys on its lakefront property." Mrs. Thomas moved to amend this motion by inserting the word "underprivileged" before "boys." On motion of Mr. Dorsey, the motion to establish the camp, with the pending amendment, was referred to a committee of three to be appointed by the chair with instructions to report at the next meeting. The chair appointed Messrs. Flynn, Dorsey, and Fine to the committee.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 P.M.

Margaret Duffy, Secretary

48:9 Approval of the Minutes. In an organization that holds regular meetings at frequent intervals, such as weekly, monthly, or quarterly, the minutes of each regular or special meeting are normally read and approved at the beginning of the next regular meeting, immediately after the call to order and any opening ceremonies. A special meeting does not approve minutes of a previous session unless the meeting was called for that purpose, which is not ordinarily the case. In a session lasting longer than one day, the minutes of meetings held the preceding day are read and approved at the beginning of each day's business after the first. In particular, an adjourned meeting of an ordinary society approves the minutes of the meeting that established the adjourned meeting; its own minutes are approved at the next adjourned or regular meeting, whichever occurs first.

48:10 Procedures for the reading, correction, and approval of minutes at a meeting are shown

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in [41:9–12](#).

48:11 If the assembly does not wish to carry out the reading and approval of the minutes at the regular time, it may, by majority vote without debate, “dispense with the reading of the minutes.” The minutes can then be taken up by majority vote without debate at any later time during the meeting while no business is pending, under the same rules as those governing *Take from the Table* ([34](#)). If the minutes are not thus taken up before adjournment, they are read and approved at the following meeting, before the later minutes are taken up. A motion to “dispense with the reading of the minutes” is not a request to omit their reading altogether; it can be made at any time while the minutes are actually pending for approval regardless of whether the minutes have already been read or corrected in some respect.

48:12 Exceptions to the rule that minutes are

approved at the next regular meeting (or at the next meeting within the session) arise when the next meeting will not be held within a quarterly time interval, when the term of a specified portion of the membership will expire before the start of the next meeting, or when, as at the final meeting of a convention, the assembly will be dissolved at the close of the present meeting. In any of these cases, minutes that have not been approved previously should be approved before final adjournment, or the assembly should authorize the executive board or a special committee to approve the minutes. The fact that the minutes are not read for approval at the next meeting does not prevent a member from having a relevant excerpt read for information; nor does it prevent the assembly in such a case from making additional corrections, treating the minutes as having been previously approved

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(see [48:15](#)).

- 48:13* Minutes of an executive session may be read and approved only in executive session, as described in [9:26–27](#). Common practices when approving minutes at a convention are discussed in [59:55\(9\)](#).
- 48:14* When the minutes are approved, the word *Approved*, with the secretary’s initials (or the signature of the chairman of the approving committee) and the date, should be written below them. If the minutes are approved with corrections, the secretary should prepare a fully corrected version and distribute copies to the members as well as placing it in the minute book. (As noted in [48:4\(5\)](#) all such corrections should be incorporated in the minutes to which they pertain, and not in the minutes of the meeting making the corrections.)
- 48:15* If the existence of an error or material omission in the minutes becomes reasonably

established after their approval—even many years later—the minutes can then be corrected by means of the motion to *Amend Something Previously Adopted* ([35](#)), which requires a two-thirds vote, or a majority vote with notice, or the vote of a majority of the entire membership, or unanimous consent. In such a case the content of the original minutes must not be altered, although it may be advisable for the secretary to make a marginal notation indicating the corrected text or referring to the minutes of the meeting at which the correction was adopted. The minutes of the latter meeting must include the full text of the motion to *Amend Something Previously Adopted*, which necessarily includes all information required to construct an accurate record of the actions taken at the earlier meeting.

48:16 **Publication of an Assembly’s**