



# Quick Reference Handout 9.1: Preparing Minutes of PC/PB and Committee Meetings—Do's and Don'ts

## Introduction

All Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) planning councils and planning bodies (PC/PBs) prepare minutes of their meetings. Most also prepare minutes of committee meetings. However, there is great variation in the content, format, and level of detail in these minutes. Preparing and revising minutes can become a serious burden for PC/PBs with limited resources and staff support. If a PC/PB has numerous standing committees and expects detailed minutes for all of them, a very high proportion of PC/PB support staff time may be spent on this task, leaving too little time for tasks related to legislative responsibilities—like assisting with needs assessment or analyzing data for the assessment of the administrative mechanism.

This tip sheet is designed to help PC/PBs meet RWHAP and state or local open meeting requirements, and follow sound practices with regard to minutes, while using available support funds efficiently.

## Legislative Requirements

Since the 2000 RWHAP Amendments, the legislation has required “public deliberations,” which include making sure meeting records and materials are available to the public while protecting confidentiality of information such as a member’s HIV status. Here are some of the requirements [Section 2602(b)(7)(b)(3)(i-iv)]:

- (i) *The meetings of the council shall be open to the public and shall be held only after adequate notice to the public.*
- (ii) *The records, reports, transcripts, minutes, agenda, or other documents which were made available to or prepared for or by the council shall be available for public inspection and copying at a single location.*
- (iii) *Detailed minutes of each meeting of the council shall be kept. The accuracy of all minutes shall be certified to by the chair of the council.*
- (iv) *This subparagraph does not apply to any disclosure of information of a personal nature that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, including any disclosure of medical information or personnel matters.*

## Open Meeting Laws

Many jurisdictions have open meeting laws that the PC/PB must follow. They typically address the right of the public to receive notice of, attend, and record public meetings. Some require written minutes, and many allow audio recordings.

- **California’s Brown Act** does not require minutes, including minutes of closed sessions.<sup>1</sup> It does specify that: “Governmental bodies may, but need not, make audio recordings of their meetings. If the body chooses to record its meetings, those recordings are public records, just like ordinary minutes,”<sup>2</sup> though they “may be erased or destroyed 30 days after the taping or recording.”<sup>3</sup> “The

public is entitled to copies of agendas, videotaped and/or audio-taped proceedings, and any other sorts of documentation produced by any public agency within California.”<sup>4</sup>

- **The Florida Sunshine Act** requires bodies to “record minutes of their meetings and to make them available to the public for inspection and copying.” Audio recordings are permitted but not required. However, as in California, if made, “the sound recording is a public record that you can access just like ordinary minutes.”<sup>5</sup>

## Parliamentary Procedure

Most PC/PBs use Robert’s *Rules of Order* to manage their full PC/PB meetings and specify this in their bylaws. However, the guidance on minutes in *Robert’s Rules of Order* does not meet fully RWHAP requirements. As numerous experts have noted, “The basic rule under *Robert’s Rules of Order* is that meeting minutes are a record of what was DONE at a meeting, not what was SAID.” As one expert put it, “Don’t put ‘he said, she said’ in your minutes.”<sup>6</sup> Under parliamentary procedure, minutes for a PC/PB include only the main motions and the name of the member who made the motion (not even the name of seconder is required), all points of order, the final wording of the motions, and the action on the motions. No summary of the discussion is required.

However, as HRSA/HAB guidance explains, for PC/PB meeting minutes, it is not sufficient to report decisions. “Minutes need to be able to show how the Council arrived at their funding decisions, especially if there is a grievance.”<sup>7</sup> The RWHAP Part A Manual explains that “Minutes should briefly summarize discussion and focus on reporting actions taken. Planning bodies...need formal minutes because they are decision-making bodies with legal status.”<sup>8</sup> Their minutes provide a public record that may be needed in the future.

## HRSA/HAB Guidance

HRSA/HAB expects PC/PBs to: meet legislative requirements for taking, preparing, and making available PC/PB minutes; keep appropriate records of committee meetings based on the nature of the meeting and whether votes are taken or decisions made; and implement these responsibilities in a fiscally responsible way. This means concise but informative PC/PB minutes, similar minutes for the Executive Committee, and either meeting minutes or notes for committees, depending on the committee and the work done in the meeting. Following are some Do’s and Don’ts reflecting sound practice.

# Do's and Don'ts

## DO

1. **DO be sure your PC/PB minutes meet RWHAP and state/local open meeting legislative requirements.** Prepare minutes with the understanding that they will be used if questions about PC/PB decisions arise in the future. In addition, these minutes need to include other information required by parliamentary procedure or by your policies and procedures. Usually that includes: location, date, and time of the meeting; who attended and chaired the meeting; adoption of the agenda; approval of minutes from the prior meeting; who made the motions or any points of order; what votes were taken, and with what results; and what time the meeting was adjourned. *Robert's Rules of Order* says to record whether the minutes were approved with revisions, but not to list the revisions; they should be included in the original minutes.
2. **DO make the minutes clear, concise, and informative.** Record the motions and decisions with a brief summary of the main points of discussion. Minutes should explain the main reasons for your decisions. For example, if the PC/PB adopts a directive calling for evening and weekend service hours for Oral Health providers, the minutes should summarize the reasons given. Here is a discussion summary with a good level of detail:
 

*“The PSRA Committee recommended this directive because over half of RWHAP Part A clients under age 60 in the EMA/TGA are working. A special analysis of service utilization data for last year indicates that employed clients are much less likely to access dental care than other clients. Questions were raised about the cost for implementing the directive. The committee Chair indicated that the additional cost per client can be covered through an increase of \$17,000 in the allocation for Oral Health Services. Dental services often already provide evening or weekend hours for other clients, and dental clinics associated with community health centers frequently have evening or weekend hours. This means that Oral Health need not cover the full cost for keeping a facility open, only the costs for Oral Health personnel.”*
3. **DO develop and use consistently a logical, easy-to-prepare, easy-to-read format.** PC/PB minutes are quicker to write and easier to read if they “look” the same every month. Some PC/PBs like a modified chart format, with the agenda item in the first column and the action taken and a summary of discussion in the second column. Whatever the format, motions made and actions taken should be easy to find. (See the sample formats at the end of this document.)
4. **DO be sure that draft PC/PB minutes are reviewed by the Chair, reviewed and adopted by the PC/PB at its next meeting, certified by the Chair, and made available to the public.** Minutes “should be available to the public within six weeks after the meeting date,”<sup>9</sup> and HRSA/HAB encourages posting them on the PC/PB website.<sup>10</sup> Many PC/PBs have the Chair sign the final version of the minutes before posting, to document they have been certified as complete and accurate.
5. **If you record PC/PB meetings, consider keeping the recordings and making them available to the public.** This makes the proceedings available to interested people who were unable to attend, and the recording can be used in the future to review discussion. RWHAP legislation requires that “transcripts” and other such documents be made available to the public but does not specifically mention recordings. Open meeting laws often allow anyone attending a meeting to audio- or video-tape it. If the body chooses to record its own meetings, those recordings

become public records. Some allow the body to delete the recording after 30 days, but require them to be available to the public until they are deleted. Follow both RWHAP requirements and the open meeting laws in your jurisdiction.

6. **Think separately about committee minutes—use minutes or summaries appropriate to the committee and the work being reported.** Be sure your approach is consistent with your PC/PB’s policies and applicable open meeting laws. RWHAP legislation is silent on committee minutes, and some meetings of some committees may not require full minutes. Follow sound practices that use committee and support staff time efficiently. For example:
  - Each committee Chair should “be sure clear policies are set regarding the needs for notes versus formal minutes of committee meetings.”<sup>11</sup>
  - The Executive Committee should have minutes similar to those of the full PC/PB if its role includes reviewing recommendations from other committees and approving their presentation to the full PC/PB.
  - Other standing committees should prepare full minutes for meetings when votes are being taken. For example, if priority setting and resource allocation recommendations are made in a committee, then all votes or consensus decisions should be recorded, with a summary of the discussion that informed those decisions.
  - PC/PB standing committees should typically record attendance, have agendas, and hold discussions, and that information should be summarized in a clear and concise format.
  - *Ad hoc* committees or caucuses should document their work, but their primary record may be a requested report or recommendation to the PC/PB, and full minutes may not be needed. Expectations should be made clear when such a committee or caucus is established.
  - When a committee meeting is spent discussing a topic but not reaching any decisions— not taking votes or making consensus decisions that complete a task or document—an abbreviated meeting summary can provide a brief record without requiring a lot of staff time or a recording or transcript of the meeting. That summary can be prepared either by the Chair or Vice Chair, another member of the committee, or support staff. (See the sample format at the end of this document.)
  - When a committee asks for public input, it should consider preparing a separate summary of that input and discussion, not as part of the minutes but as a product of committee work. For example, if your Care Strategies Committee is exploring expanded use of community health workers in Medical Case Management, it might invite input from consumers at a meeting, then prepare a report summarizing what was said.
  - Once the committee completes a product or report (for example, revised service standards for a particular service category, recommended revisions in grievance procedures, proposed directives), that document is the primary record of the committee’s work. There should also be a meeting summary that records the decisions made and summarizes the reasons for them—and this information can also be summarized in the report.
7. **Find ways for members to ease the staff’s burden in preparing minutes.** For example:
  - The Chair can make sure each motion or amendment is clearly stated and restated during the meeting.
  - Staff can be asked to type and project onto a large screen each motion that is made during a PC/PB meeting—starting with the written motion from a committee where there is one. This

helps staff get the wording correct during the meeting and saves a lot of time afterwards.

- The Chair can summarize discussion and decisions at the end of a major topic and at the end of the meeting. This helps staff identify what to include in the discussion summary for that topic.
- Committees can have Co-Chairs or a Chair and Vice-Chair, and ask the one not presiding to summarize discussion and provide bullet points to staff to use for minutes or meeting summaries.
- The PC/PB officers can include an elected Secretary who assists staff with taking minutes, suggests efficient formats, and reviews minutes.
- Your PC/PB can train members to prepare committee summaries or minutes.

## **DON'T:**

1. **DON'T make your minutes into a transcript**, going into great detail about each point of discussion.
2. **DON'T include direct quotations from members.** Summarize the main points of discussion, not individual comments.
3. **DON'T record the names of members who speak to an issue.** Identify the main speaker (for example, the committee Chair presenting a report), but not the members who ask questions or make comments. This avoids having members want to revise the comments attributed to them—which could make the minutes inaccurate. Not using names also avoids having individuals become the focus if the minutes are reviewed in the future. The decisions of a PC/PB are the responsibility of the entire membership, and the minutes should reflect this.
4. **DON'T assume that very detailed minutes will prevent efforts to revisit decisions at future meetings.** In fact, they may encourage further discussion to restate or further argue the issue. Rely on meeting rules instead. Parliamentary procedure provides clear guidance on reopening debate on a decision after it has been made.<sup>12</sup>
5. **DON'T include information unrelated to PC/PB business in PC/PB minutes.** Keep track of “next steps” for preparing the next meeting agenda, but don’t include them in the minutes unless they were specified in a motion. Similarly, individual announcements that do not relate to PC/PB business need not be included. By the time the minutes are made public, the announcements will generally be old news. If specific public comments are important, record them separately and be sure they are referred to the recipient or the appropriate committee and followed up.
6. **DON'T make the process of preparing minutes more time-consuming than necessary**, for staff or members. Very detailed minutes take a long time to prepare and keep your support staff from other important tasks. Don’t keep using an old, very detailed format just because that’s the way the PC/PB “has always done it.” Your PC/PB may have more demands on members and support staff or fewer resources now than in the past. Rethink policies and procedures that require staff to audio-record PC/PB and committee meetings, and fully or partially transcribe them in preparing minutes. Recordings provide a valuable back-up for meeting notes, but listening to the recording of a two-hour meeting is far less efficient for many staff than taking careful notes during the meeting of motions, votes, and main points of discussion—and using the recording only as back-up.
7. **DON'T assume that putting information in the minutes ensures follow up.** A vote or decision usually requires communication or other action—for example, an official communication to the

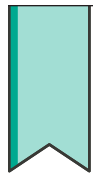
recipient about approved reallocations, action by a committee, or a change in policies or procedures. Someone needs to review the minutes and ensure that needed actions are taken. Some PC/PBs maintain lists of action items from every PC/PB meeting and from every committee meeting. The Chair or committee Chair and support staff are responsible for reviewing action items after each meeting, agreeing on follow up, reviewing progress when the agenda for the next meeting is being developed, and reporting progress at the next meeting.

8. **DON'T ask the full PC/PB to review all committee minutes—only their own.** The full PC/PB may want committee minutes as a source of information, but any committee information that needs to go to the full body should come in the form of a committee report or recommendation, not through its minutes.

---

## References

- 1 "Open & Public V: A Guide to the Ralph M. Brown Act," League of California Cities, revised April 2016, p 43. A planning council is considered a "legislative body" under the Brown Act, since it covers "Appointed bodies—whether permanent or temporary, decision-making or advisory—including planning commissions, civil service commissions and other subsidiary committees, boards, and bodies." It also covers their standing committees.  
See <https://www.cacities.org/Resources-Documents/Resources-Section/Open-Government/Open-Public-2016.aspx>.
- 2 Open Meetings Laws in California, Digital Media Law Project.  
See <http://www.dmlp.org/legal-guide/california/open-meetings-laws-california>.
- 3 Open & Public V, p 37.
- 4 "The Brown Act, Rules of the Game for Public Meetings," February 4, 2011.  
See <https://www.eastcountymagazine.org/brown-act-rules-game-public-meetings>.
- 5 Open Meeting Laws in Florida, Digital Media Law Project. See <http://www.dmlp.org/legal-guide/florida/open-meetings-laws-florida>.
- 6 "Meeting minutes record what is DONE, not what is said," Ann Macfarlane, Jurassic Parliament, July 2, 2018.  
See <https://jurassicparliament.com/meeting-minutes-content/>.
- 7 *RWHAP Part A Manual*, p 102.
- 8 Training Guide, 2003. Module X, p 244.  
See <https://targethiv.org/library/training-guide-resource-orienting-and-training-planning-council-and-consortium-members>.
- 9 *RWHAP Part A Manual*, pp 100-101.
- 10 *RWHAP Part A Manual*, p 102.
- 11 *Training Guide*, 2003, Effective Meetings, Hints for the Chair, p 244, previously cited.
- 12 These rules are complicated, and the Chair or a parliamentarian needs to understand the requirements for motions to reconsider and motions to rescind prior decisions. A quick summary: Under Robert's Rules of Order, a motion to reconsider may be made only on the same day as the meeting or the following day and only by a member who voted on the winning side of the motion; the motion requires a majority vote. Action at a later meeting to rescind (reverse) a decision can be done with prior notice of intent to present such a motion, a second, debate, and a majority vote. Without pre-meeting notice, adoption of such a motion requires a two-thirds majority of those present and voting or a majority of the membership (not just those present). See *Robert's Rules of Order*, Newly Revised, 11th Edition, pp 305-310 and p 315.



# Sample Format for PC/PB Meeting Minutes

## MetroCounty TGA Planning Council Monthly Meeting Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 20, 2019, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

MetroCounty Health Department, 5201 4th Street, 3rd Floor, MetroCity, BigState, 33333

Attendance		
<b>MEMBERS</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
[List]		<i>A or E*</i>
<b>PC SUPPORT STAFF</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
[List]		<i>A or E*</i>
Name of Meeting Chair:		
<b>RECIPIENT REPRESENTATIVES</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
[List]		<i>A or E*</i>
<b>GUEST SPEAKERS/ PRESENTERS</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
[List]		<i>A or E*</i>

## Agenda

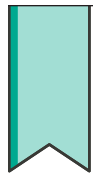
ITEM**	DISCUSSION, MOTIONS, AND ACTIONS
Call to Order	
Review and Approval of Agenda	
Review and Approval of Minutes from Prior Meeting	
Chair’s Report	
Recipient’s Report/ Expenditure Report	
Primary Presentation/Action Item #1	Presenter and Purpose of Presentation: Motion/Amendments: Summary of Discussion: Action Taken:
Primary Presentation/Action Item #2	Presenter and Purpose of Presentation: Motion/Amendments: Summary of Discussion: Action Taken:
Other Action Items [add]	Presenter and Purpose of Presentation: Motion/Amendments: Summary of Discussion: Action Taken:

ITEM**	DISCUSSION, MOTIONS, AND ACTIONS
Standing Committee Reports	
Other Old Business	
Other New Business	
Time of Adjournment	
List of Handouts	

\* A = Unexcused Absence; E = Excused Absence

\*\* *Robert's Rules of Order* calls for committee reports to come near at the beginning of the meeting, but many PC/PBs move committee reports without action items to the end of the agenda, so items with action required are dealt with early in the agenda. Similarly, the Chair's Report and the Recipient Report (including Expenditure Report) may be moved later if major presentations or action items must be completed at this meeting.





# Example of a Committee Meeting Summary

(For use when no decisions were made)

**Committee Name:** Needs Assessment and PSRA

**Meeting Date and Time:** Tuesday, September 10, 2019, 5:00 – 7:00 pm  
Meeting called to order at 5:07 pm, adjourned 7:00 pm

**Location:** Health Department Conference Room A, address/zip code

**Attendance:** [Identify Chair/Co-Chairs/Vice Chair, members, PC/PB support staff, recipient staff, and members of the public] Names: Chair [presiding], Vice Chair, 4 of 5 members, 1 PCS staff member, 1 recipient staff member, 3 members of the public

**Brief Summary of Agenda Items Discussed** [Use bullets and attach copy of Agenda]

**Topic:** Planning for Needs Assessment for 2019-2020

**Summary of Discussion:** Initial Discussion of Plans for PLWH Survey

- **Focus:** Current three-year needs assessment plan calls for a PLWH survey of individuals who are receiving care through RWHAP Part A
- **Timing:** Begin as soon as possible and complete by early March of 2020, so data can be analyzed and used as input to PSRA
- **Sample:** Representative sample of RWHAP clients, overall and by county/municipality within the EMA/TGA
- **Approach:** Survey for a tablet or computer, using online technology, but also available in hard copy; translate into Spanish; arrange for interviews in Amharic and French for African immigrants —enter all surveys into computer for aggregation and analysis
- **Content:** Survey from 3 years ago as starting point, plus 3 PLWH surveys obtained from similar EMAs/TGAs
- **Target Populations:** Identify about 5 target groups and be sure at least 30 of each are included in the survey instead of doing focus groups this year
- **Votes/Formal Actions:** None
- **Issues/Next Steps:**
  - Determine resources for technical support—PC support staff; consultant
  - Arrange for incentives—explore whether contributed gift cards might be possible (obtained last time by a provider)
  - Work on draft survey with input from Consumer Committee
- **No other topics discussed**

**Public Input:** Committee urged to include Transgender PLWH and recently incarcerated as targeted subpopulations for the survey