TIPS FOR WRITING MINUTES

The Agenda

* Get a copy of the agenda prior to the meeting.
* Create an outline based on the Agenda. This makes it easy to jot down decisions, motions or assignments as the meeting progresses. Leave space below each item for hand-written notes.

Taking Notes

* Do not participate in the discussion. You cannot participate and take notes, too.
* Write the exact wording of motions, movers and seconders names (controversial but, for now [5-2014], most chapters record these names), any amendments and whether the motion carried or failed. If needed, ask to have the motion written. Do not record the number of yes and no votes; just say the motion ‘carried’ or ‘failed’.
* Don’t try to write every detail of the meeting. Do write motions and votes, decisions, assignments, action steps, committee recommendations, etc.
* If there is no obvious decision or conclusion (discussion jumps around), ask for clarification.
* Some secretaries find it helpful to record the meeting. If you record the meeting, be sure to tell attendees they are being recorded. Use the recording for clarification; do not write a word-for-word transcript.
* Note any documents handed out at the meeting. Copies of handouts are stored with the minutes of the meeting. They may be passed, along with the minutes, to women who were unable to attend. If handouts are not passed to non-attendees, they should be summarized in the minutes.

Wording the Writing

* Be concise. Record motions, votes and key actions or assignments.
* Use headings. Follow the order of business set in the Agenda.
* Avoid first person pronouns like ‘we’ or ‘our’.
* Use the past tense.
* Record personal names for motion-makers and seconds, to identify who gave a report, and for tasks to be completed by one or more of the meeting attendees. For tasks, include what needs to be done and when it will be done.
* Do not record personal names of women involved in discussion, corrections or questions. Just say: “After discussion, it was decided…”, or “During discussion, ‘so and so’ was explained.”
* Use objective wording. Avoid opinion words like the following: we **need/must/should**; **warm** welcome; **enthusiastic** discussion, **unanimous** vote. Avoid using adjectives and adverbs.
* Use verbs like these: announced, explained, informed, pointed out, presented, read, recognized, recommended, referred, reported, reviewed, stated, or welcomed.
* Don’t say: “Treasurer Tessa gave her report” or “President Patty approved the minutes as written.” These reports and documents belong to the chapter and not to an individual person. Rather, say: “… presented the treasurer’s report” or “The minutes were approved as written.”
* Questions should not appear in minutes. Change them to statements.