Accurate minutes and records are important. Current members will refer to meeting minutes as a reminder of finished and unfinished business, what actions were taken, and what needs follow-up. They will also be kept for future members to read and gain an understanding of where the organization has been and why.

Most organizations will expect their secretary to be responsible for objective record keeping. The role of the secretary is more than just “making minutes.” He or she, is in effect, the organization’s historian. Consequently, the job is not to be taken lightly. Think about these responsibilities when you are considering who will fulfill this role:

- Is this person reliable? Does s/he keep appointments?
- Is this person organized? Does s/he complete tasks in a timely fashion?
- Is this person on top of what is going on?
- Is s/he able to appropriately weed out the trivial information and record only the important facts?

Many organizations make it the secretary’s responsibility to notify the membership about upcoming meetings -- time, date, location -- as well as any important items to be discussed. It is critical that the secretary attends all meetings. If your organization has a structure that includes committees -- be they temporary or standing -- there always needs to be a secretary present to accurately record what has transpired.

It is not necessary to take down everything unless members request that their remarks be entered for the record. If is necessary, however, to take complete notes. Motions and resolutions do need to be taken verbatim and should be read back during the meeting to make sure they have been accurately recorded.

It is the secretary’s responsibility to signal the chair and ask questions regarding the subject being discussed for purposes of clarification. A secretary should not wait until the meeting has been adjourned to clear up any confusion; individuals can lose their perspective, issues can become less important, and one’s memory can alter what actually occurred. Immediately after the meeting, the secretary must go over his/her notes while everything is still fresh for the following information:

- Type of meeting (executive, standing committee, etc.) date, time and place
- Time of call to order
- Approval and/or amendments to previous meeting minutes
- List of those in attendance and those absent
- Record of reports from standing and special committees
- General matters
- Record of proposals, resolutions, motions, seconding and final disposition, a summary of the discussion, and a record of vote.
- Time of adjournment