HOW TO BE A RECORDING SECRETARY
GFWC / CFWC Club Officer Guide

Purpose of the Position

The Recording Secretary is the **official keeper of the organization's meeting records.**

The most important distinction is:

Recording Secretary = records what the organization did.

Corresponding Secretary = handles official communications.

The Recording Secretary's minutes become part of the organization's permanent historical and legal record.

1. Know Your Governing Documents

Before beginning the position, obtain and read the club's:

- Bylaws
- Standing Rules
- Policies and Procedures
- Current yearbook/directory
- Previous meeting minutes
- Current officer and committee list
- Current budget, when needed to identify motions involving expenditures
- Applicable CFWC and GFWC governing materials

The club's own bylaws determine the Recording Secretary's specific responsibilities.

2. Before Every Meeting

The Recording Secretary should come prepared.

Before the meeting:

- Obtain the agenda from the President.
- Have the previous meeting's minutes available.
- Know whether there are corrections or unfinished matters from the previous meeting.
- Have the official membership/delegate information available when required.
- Bring the minute book or electronic record.
- Have paper or another method available for taking notes even when using a computer.
- Obtain copies of reports or resolutions that may need to be incorporated into the record.

A good practice is to sit close enough to the President to hear motions and quietly clarify wording when necessary.

3. What Goes in the Minutes?

Minutes are a record of **what was done—not what was said.**

Minutes generally should contain:

- Name of the organization
- Type of meeting—regular, special, board, annual/convention, etc.
- Date, time and location
- Name of the presiding officer
- Whether a quorum was present

- Approval or correction of previous minutes
- Reports when appropriate
- Motions made and their disposition
- Points of order and appeals when applicable
- Elections and voting results when required
- Notices given
- Time of adjournment
- Recording Secretary's signature

4. Record Motions Carefully

The exact wording of important motions matters.

Record:

Who made the motion, followed by the exact or substantially exact wording of the motion and whether it was adopted, lost, postponed, referred, amended or otherwise disposed of.

Example:

Jane Smith moved that the club donate $500 to the local food pantry. The motion was adopted.

Generally, **do not record who seconded the motion.**

If the motion is amended, the minutes should ultimately make clear **what the assembly actually adopted**.

For a complicated motion, ask the maker to provide the motion in writing.

5. What NOT to Put in Minutes

This is one of the most important lessons for a new Recording Secretary.

Do **not** turn minutes into a transcript.

Normally, minutes should not include:

- Who argued for or against a motion
- Personal opinions
- Detailed debate
- Gossip
- Editorial comments
- The secretary's interpretation of events
- Statements such as "a heated discussion followed"
- Criticism of members
- Personal observations

Instead of:

"Several members became angry and argued with the President about the expenditure."

The minutes should simply document the resulting parliamentary action.

Neutrality is essential.

6. Reports Are Usually Not Copied Into the Minutes

Do not automatically reproduce an officer's or committee chair's entire report.

The minutes can state:

"The Treasurer's report was presented."
or
"The Membership Chairman reported."
If a written report is submitted for the organization's records, it can be maintained with the meeting records according to club policy.
A motion arising from a report **does belong in the minutes**.

7. Treasurer's Report — Important Distinction
Normally, the Treasurer's report is **received/filed**, rather than "approved."
The minutes might state:
"The Treasurer's report was presented and filed."
An **auditor's or financial review report**, however, may be formally adopted or accepted according to the organization's procedures.
This distinction is particularly useful for clubs because approving a Treasurer's monthly report can inadvertently imply that the assembly has verified every transaction.

8. Corrections to Minutes
Minutes belong to the organization—not the Recording Secretary.
If a correction is necessary, the membership can correct the minutes.
The President might ask:
"Are there any corrections to the minutes?"
If there are none, the President declares:
"The minutes are approved as presented."
If corrections are made:
"The minutes are approved as corrected."
The Recording Secretary should make the authorized correction in the official record.

9. Do Not Erase History
Once minutes have become an official record, don't secretly rewrite, delete or alter them.
If the organization later discovers an error, it should correct the minutes through the proper parliamentary process.
The permanent record should make clear what was originally recorded and what was subsequently corrected when necessary.

10. Executive Board and Executive Committee Minutes
Board and committee minutes should be maintained separately from general membership minutes when appropriate.
Remember:

A Board meeting is not the same meeting as a general membership meeting.
Do not combine the records merely because the same officers attended both.
Also maintain confidentiality for executive-session minutes and other confidential records.

11. Executive Session

When the organization enters executive session, proceedings are confidential.

The Recording Secretary still records the official actions taken, but those minutes should be maintained according to the organization's confidentiality requirements.

They should **not simply be included in materials distributed to the general membership.**

12. Roll-Call Votes

If a roll-call vote is ordered, record the vote as required by the parliamentary authority and governing documents.

For ordinary voice votes, it is generally sufficient to record:

"The motion was adopted."

or

"The motion was lost."

Do not guess vote totals.

13. Elections

Record election results clearly.

For example:

"Jane Smith was elected President for the 2027–2028 administration."

If the bylaws require ballot voting or vote totals to be reported, record the necessary information.

Do not record unnecessary details of election discussions.

14. Unfinished Business

The Recording Secretary can be extremely helpful to the President by maintaining a list of matters that were:

- Postponed
- Referred to committee
- Left pending
- Scheduled for a future meeting
- Subject to a required report
- Subject to a deadline

Before the next meeting, give the President a brief reminder of outstanding business.

15. Maintain the Permanent Records

The Recording Secretary should maintain an organized record containing:

Meeting Minutes → Executive Board → Executive Committee → General Membership/Council → Special Meetings → Convention/Annual Meeting

Depending upon the club's structure, some of these categories may not apply.

Keep supporting documents associated with important actions when appropriate, particularly:

- Adopted resolutions
- Amendments
- Written motions

- Election reports
- Committee reports
- Financial review/audit reports
- Bylaw amendments
- Notices required by the bylaws

16. Work Closely With the President

The President and Recording Secretary should function as a team during meetings.
The Secretary can quietly alert the President when:

- a motion's wording is unclear;
- the maker needs to put a complicated motion in writing;
- a previous motion is still pending;
- a required notice was recorded;
- the exact wording of an amendment needs clarification.

But the Recording Secretary **does not become the parliamentarian** and should not interrupt the meeting to give parliamentary opinions unless the duties of the office specifically require it.

17. Monthly Recording Secretary Checklist

1. Obtain the President's agenda.
2. Review previous minutes.
3. Identify pending business.
4. Attend the meeting and record official actions.
5. Obtain written copies of complicated motions and reports.
6. Prepare draft minutes promptly after the meeting.
7. Provide minutes according to club procedures.
8. Make corrections authorized by the organization.
9. Maintain the official minute book.
10. File supporting documents with the appropriate meeting.
11. Maintain confidential records separately.
12. Back up electronic records.
13. Remind the President of unresolved business before the next meeting.

18. End-of-Term Responsibilities

The Recording Secretary's files are **property of the organization.**
At the end of the term, turn over:

- Official minute books
- Electronic minutes
- Board minutes
- Executive Committee minutes
- Convention/annual meeting records
- Written motions
- Resolutions

- Supporting reports
- Election records
- Pending-business list
- Templates
- Records-retention information
- Other official records assigned to the office

The incoming Secretary should receive an organized office—not a box of unidentified papers.

The Golden Rule for Minutes

Record what was DONE—not what was SAID.

If a new Recording Secretary remembers only one principle, it should be that one.

For CFWC, the current Recording Secretary description specifically states that the officer keeps the minutes of the Executive Board, Executive Committee and Convention and provides copies as required.

CFWC Recording Secretary

CFWC also maintains its current bylaws, standing rules, leadership materials and other officer resources here: CFWC Resources

For the GFWC level, governance and club resources are available through the GFWC Member Portal:

GFWC Member Portal

RECORDING SECRETARY - JOYCE OPJORDEN

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The Recording Secretary's primary responsibility is to keep the minutes of the meetings of the organization. It is important that a true and correct record of all minutes is kept on file, as these records are the history and legal information of the organization.

The Recording Secretary:

- Records and keeps the minutes of all meetings.
- Ensures that the minutes – a permanent record of the club's activities and decisions – are preserved in an organized and readable form.
- Provides a copy of the minutes to the President, Parliamentarian and any other members specified in the bylaws, within a timely manner (unless specified within the bylaws).
- Calls the meeting to order and presides over the meeting when both the President and Vice President are absent until a temporary chairman is elected.
- Signs legal documents as required.
- Has motion forms and ballot materials available, if needed.
- Performs all other duties as specified in the organization's bylaws.

Minutes:

Minutes should be brief, omitting inference or descriptions (no personal comments, complimentary or otherwise). Record what was done, not said, listing all business in the order which it was presented.

The form for standard minutes is divided into four parts:

- The first paragraph includes: the kind of meeting (regular or special); name of the organization; date, time and place (if not always the same); presence of President and Secretary or their substitutes; whether minutes of previous meeting were approved as read or corrected.
- The body should have a separate paragraph for each subject matter.
- The last paragraph has the time of adjournment.
- The signature should be that of the Secretary; do not use "Respectfully Submitted."

When writing motions into the minutes, specify the following:

- Only the name of the maker of motions, do not include who seconds the motion.
- The final wording of all main motions (with any amendments incorporated) and any motion to reconsider; also whether each was adopted, lost, or temporarily disposed of.
- Generally, motions withdrawn are not recorded.
- All points of order and appeals, noting whether sustained or lost, and giving the chair's reasons for the ruling should be included.
- Note amendments or revisions to the bylaws accurately with dates of the adoption noted. If a ballot election takes place, include full report of all votes cast as shown by teller's report.
- When approved, record date of approval with the Secretary's initials written below the minutes.

Minutes should be typed. Wide margins are helpful if you must make a correction.