



Contents of Minutes–Include Motions not Seconded?

Question: Should a motion that failed due to lack of a second be included in the minutes?

Short Answer: This is a decision the body can make. While there seems to be no legal requirement that it should be taken up and Robert does not clearly address the matter, the body can include or not include such motions according to its preferences.

Note: Reference is to Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 11th ed.

Longer Answer: Although both Wisconsin Statutes and Robert do not directly address the question of whether motions that are not seconded should be included in the minutes, there are grounds for reasoning either way on the issue. Both Statutes and Robert say that minutes should record the actions of the body and it could be understood that a non-seconded motion is not an action of the body and is therefore not to be included. On the other hand, Robert, in addressing the content of minutes, states that minutes should include “all main motions...that were made or taken up...” (p. 469). Thus, it could be interpreted that motions made but not seconded should be included.

However, a local government body can develop its own rules that would supersede Robert provided such rules do not violate a statutory provision. Since it appears that there is no statutory provision preventing the inclusion of a non-seconded motion, the body may do so if it wishes. Conceivably, members of the body may wish to have it on record that they attempted to propose an action even though the motion to take the action was not seconded. It is probably a good idea for the body to have an expressed policy either way in order to be consistent. If it is the body's policy not to include such motions, it may suspend its rule to permit including such a motion on a case-by-case basis if the make of the motion so desires.

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