



Getting ready for meeting minutes

A guide for councils and boards

Good minutes are a quiet strength. They show your members, your funders, and the generations who come after you what your council decided and why it had the authority to decide it. This guide explains how TRAC Alaska works with tribal councils, village councils, village corporation boards, and committees to prepare clear, accurate minutes, and what will help each meeting go smoothly.

Your council, your minutes

Your council or board owns its minutes. TRAC prepares a draft for you; your body reviews it, corrects it, and approves it under its own rules. Only the minutes your council approves are the official record.

Your constitution, bylaws, ordinances, and resolutions govern how you meet, vote, and keep records. We follow your way of doing business. This guide is practical help, not legal advice.

What TRAC provides

- **A recording secretary for your meeting**, joining by phone or video (or in person when arranged), so your members and staff can focus on the business in front of them.
- **Action minutes**, which record what your body did: attendance and quorum, approval of the agenda and prior minutes, each motion with who moved and seconded it, how the vote went, resolutions by number and title, short summaries of reports, action items, and adjournment.
- **A motion, vote, and resolution log** and an action-item list you can keep with grant, program, and audit files.
- **A draft in Word**, in your own format or template, usually within 5 business days (7 for a full-day meeting).
- **One round of revisions** and a clean final copy, ready for your council's approval and signature.
- **Respect for your practices**. Native language terms and names spelled the way you provide them. Prayers and ceremonies are not recorded unless you ask. Executive session is handled the way your governing documents direct.
- **Confidentiality**. Your meeting content is shared only with the people you name. We do not keep your official records; they are yours.

If you would like certain parts recorded word for word, such as public testimony or an elder's statement, just let us know ahead of time.

What we'll ask before your first meeting

A short setup conversation helps us get your minutes right from the start. We will ask for:

What we'll ask for	Why it helps
Governing documents: constitution, bylaws, and any ordinances or resolutions about meetings	So we follow your rules on meetings, quorum, voting, executive session, and records.
Two or three sets of prior approved minutes	So your new minutes match the format and style your council already uses.
Your roster, with titles and the correct spelling of each name	Names matter. We want every member, elder, and staff person recorded correctly.
Your quorum rules	So we can note, as your chair states it, whether a quorum was present.
Standing committees	So committee reports and referrals are recorded correctly.
How resolutions are numbered, and who assigns numbers	We record the numbers your clerk assigns; we never create them.
Your preferred format and template	We will use your template, or offer a simple one if you don't have one.
Who approves the minutes, and who should receive drafts	So drafts go only to the right people.
Your executive session practice	So we know whether to step out (our usual practice) and how you want it noted.
Native language terms, names, and place names, with spellings	We use your spellings exactly. We do not translate; an interpreter's summary can be included if you provide one.
Whether recording is allowed	We record only with your permission, use it only to check the draft, and delete it after your final is approved.

Before each meeting

- **Agenda and packet**, ideally **3 business days ahead**, so we can prepare names, agenda items, and resolution titles in advance.
- **The dial-in or video link, plus a phone backup**: a phone number for the meeting room or the clerk's mobile, in case the video or internet drops.
- **Any changes in members**: new members, resignations, new officers, or changes in titles.

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- **Anything special:** a request for word-for-word sections, a planned executive session, guests or presenters, or a Native language portion.

During the meeting

A few simple habits make minutes clearer and stronger as a record:

- **State motions clearly.** "I move to approve Resolution 2026-14, authorizing ..." works better than "So moved." The chair can restate the motion before the vote.
- **Name the mover and seconder.** The chair can say, for example, "Moved by Member [name], seconded by Member [name]."
- **Say roll call votes aloud.** Each member says yes, no, or abstain, and the chair announces the result: carried or failed.
- **Note recusals.** If a member steps aside because of a personal, family, or financial interest, saying so on the record protects the member and the council.
- **Announce executive session.** The chair states the time, the general purpose, and who remains, and later announces the return to open session and any action taken. We usually step out, and the minutes record only those basics.
- **Use resolution numbers.** Refer to resolutions by number and title, as your clerk assigns them.

We will not interrupt your business. If something is unclear, we may ask the chair to restate it at a natural pause, or we will mark it in the draft for your clerk to confirm.

After the meeting

1. **Review the draft.** We send the draft to the people you named. It is marked "Draft - subject to approval."
2. **Send corrections within the agreed window.** We suggest **5 business days** from the draft. One combined set of corrections from your designated contact works best.
3. **Receive the clean final.** We make the corrections and send a clean copy ready for approval.
4. **Approve at your next meeting.** Your council reviews and approves the minutes, with any further corrections made on the record.
5. **Keep the official copy.** Your secretary or clerk signs and keeps the approved minutes with your official records. They belong to your council.

Why good minutes matter for grants and audits

Minutes are often the first place a funder, auditor, or reviewing agency looks to see that your council acted properly. Clear minutes protect your council's decisions and make reporting easier. They show:

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- **Approvals:** that the council authorized a grant application, agreement, or contract, with a quorum present.
 - **Policy adoptions:** when financial, personnel, procurement, or other policies were adopted or updated.
 - **Budget approvals:** that budgets and budget changes were approved by the body with authority to approve them.
 - **Procurement decisions:** how a vendor or contractor was selected and approved.
 - **Conflicts of interest:** that members with an interest disclosed it and stepped aside from the vote.

None of this needs to be complicated. Plain, consistent minutes, approved on time and kept safely, go a long way toward showing the good stewardship your council already practices.

Rural realities: planning for weather and connectivity

We know that weather, power, and internet in rural Alaska don't always cooperate. A little planning keeps the record whole:

- **Have a phone backup.** Even if the meeting is on video, share a phone dial-in or a room phone number.
- **Consider a backup recording.** If your council allows it, a local recording lets us fill any gap accurately.
- **Gaps are marked, never guessed.** If we lose the connection, the draft notes the time and how that portion was prepared, for example from your clerk's notes.
- **Plans can change.** If weather or a community event means the meeting moves or a trip falls through, we can join remotely or reschedule with you.

Questions? We're glad to help.

If you have questions about this guide, or would like to talk about minutes for your council, board, or committee, please reach out.

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Meeting minutes checklist

A one-page reminder for your clerk, secretary, or administrator.

Before the first meeting

- ☐ Constitution, bylaws, and meeting ordinances or resolutions shared
- ☐ Two or three sets of prior approved minutes shared
- ☐ Roster with titles and correct spellings of names
- ☐ Quorum rules, standing committees, and resolution numbering explained
- ☐ Preferred format or template chosen
- ☐ Who approves minutes, and who receives drafts, named
- ☐ Executive session practice discussed
- ☐ Native language terms, names, and spellings provided
- ☐ Decision made on whether recording is allowed

Before each meeting

- ☐ Agenda and packet sent (ideally 3 business days ahead)
- ☐ Dial-in or video link sent, plus a phone backup number
- ☐ Changes in members, officers, or titles shared
- ☐ Any word-for-word, executive session, or Native language portions mentioned

During the meeting

- ☐ Motions stated clearly, with mover and seconder named
- ☐ Roll call votes said aloud; chair announces each result
- ☐ Recusals stated on the record
- ☐ Executive session announced: time in, purpose, who remains, time out, any action
- ☐ Resolutions referred to by number and title

After the meeting

- ☐ Draft reviewed by the designated contact
- ☐ One combined set of corrections sent within the agreed window
- ☐ Minutes approved at the next meeting
- ☐ Approved, signed official copy kept with council records

Our meeting details	
Council, board, or committee	
Designated contact for drafts	
Officer for confidential material	
Phone backup number	