

ADVISOR



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Make your association bigger and better.

MEANINGFUL MEETING MINUTES

By Carl Smith

Every association needs to have meeting minutes, right? What methods should you employ to make sure they're accurate, informational and most likely historical? Maybe you're thinking you don't have a very big group, so do you really need to keep track of what you talked about? The answer is yes! If you're relying on anyone's memory in your association as your sole archive, you're going to regret it. Accurate records can really "save your bacon" down the line. So, let's break it down.

1. Have someone elected or assigned to this duty that loves it or is at least passionate about accuracy. Our association has an elected board position of recording secretary. We have had people in this position that were pretty blasé and the inconsistency of their "records" reflect that attitude. If they don't care, it will be evident pretty quickly.

2. Always capture the basics. Who, why, what, when, where and how (if applicable) have always been the format for record-keeping. Record who or what issue was discussed, why it's important, where and when it is going to happen, and how to make it happen, etc.

3. Be accurate. More detail is always better than less. When you look back on this information in a week, a month or a year from now, you should be able to recreate what actually happened at that meeting, and what action, if any, developed from it. With that said, be as brief as possible based on the amount of content that was discussed. More than a couple pages devoted to each meeting and you'll "lose" your audience.

4. Be consistent. Use a consistent format to record your meeting minutes. Create a form if you need

to for reference. You want to make sure your minutes are similar from meeting to meeting, so the reviewers/readers don't have to start over again each time.

5. Be timely. Complete your minutes as quickly as possible, accurately, and post them to the appropriate place. If you have a website that's accessible to the members, post it there. If it's minutes from a board meeting and it's not public knowledge due to the content, email it to the board members for their review and feedback.

SEE "MINUTES" P. 8

NOW YOU KNOW ...

By Tim Sloan

"Trust but verify." This is a lofty tenet, often heard and most commonly associated with nuclear arms treaties and other such things. It rolls off the tongue so much better than, "Trust (these individuals as far as you can throw them) but verify (exactly how they're trying to put one over on you)." When our country's president

is standing eye-to-eye with theirs, we hope someone's verifying every jot and tittle; we also keep some extra provisions under the basement stairs just in case our side isn't as smart as we think it is.

We don't always follow the same mantra in our officials association, probably because there isn't as much at stake. Hence, there are all sorts of stories of how various groups have lost their shirts — literally, in some cases —

by treating members and officers as beyond reproach when left in charge of the missile codes.

I know of a football officials association that not once, but twice, lost all the money it entrusted to one of its own. In those days, the group assigned officials to a high school league each week, but the school board only paid one big check at the end of the year for all of it. The treasurer then divvied it up and handed out checks at the year-end banquet. One year, he didn't show up for the banquet. They called; he didn't answer. They called, again, later and his number was disconnected. They decreed that it would thereafter take two signatures to endorse all checks.

Several years later, they thought they'd raise some extra money for the association by hosting the national conference. They put one of their favorite members in charge and he did a bang-up job; it was only later they realized he'd done a bank job, too. He had secretly

invested the profits from the event in a personal business venture that turned sour, never to be seen again. Well, he wasn't the treasurer, so the banking rules they made up the first time didn't apply: \$70,000, \$7,000, \$700 – hey, \$70 is a lot of money, especially when you don't have it. Even if your own mother is doing the banking for your group, hold that person to sensible fiduciary rules, for everyone's sake.

Then there's the one about a soccer officials association and their legendary member, "Tony." Tony showed up to meetings more than once with a black eye or loosened teeth, but he had never been assaulted. When the group finally withdrew services from a league known for being rough on officials, he covered their games anyway. It did nothing for his dental bills. And there were other stories: He once blew his whistle from the AR position to "correct" the referee who had overruled his offside call. Word also was he would personally inspect both teams' shin guards before any women's game he worked ... get the picture?

Nobody ever found him holding the smoking gun or actually drinking straight from the milk bottle; they fiddled while Rome burned, so it seems. I guess they didn't consider the ramifications of controlling him as much as they would now: If some of this happened today, well ... I hate to imagine. So, it wasn't the best outcome when they finally expelled him from the association; in a health care analogy, that was more like an autopsy than an annual physical. It would never have reached that point if their leadership had only held him to their principles. Oh, wait; they didn't have their principles written down anywhere; now, they do.

So, many officials groups (believe they) find themselves in an ethical bind with the Tonys in their midst. They set rules to protect

themselves from harm but worry that applying them might rankle the rank-and-file. Some of the stories like the ones shared here sound funny and mundane as long as they're happening to someone else, in a galaxy far, far away. Then, when a group gets to blow its entire insurance policy defending a comparable situation, it quickly wishes it had acted less naively and much sooner. It's a fact of life in the 21st century: There are plenty of characters around plotting imaginative ways of getting money out of our pocket into theirs; whether it's through righteous anger or pure avarice is immaterial. Our job as leaders – more than ever – is to work on behalf of our members to keep ahead of these wolves.

It's not a matter of applying some sort of universal tough love, which is another way of saying, "screwing everyone equally"; you don't win over members by subjecting them to the same oversight the inmates get at Sing Sing. You *do* succeed by making sure your members understand their responsibilities to you and to each other and coach them in how to recognize and help avoid issues before they occur. You help them help you.

Talk them through the consequences of glossing over the concussion protocols. Explain to them how shadowy figures might coax or entrap them into throwing a game. Get a friendly lawyer to explain, "The 10 Overlooked Sources of Liability at a Game Site," or similar grist. Be proactive; whatever you do, make it clear you're all on the same side.

The real gains come from setting expectations and then teaching them to make sensible, correct choices for their own benefit – and yours!

Tim Sloan, Davenport, Iowa, is a high school football, basketball and volleyball official, and a former college football and soccer official. ■

June 2019, NASO Association Advantage Advisor is published monthly by the National Association of Sports Officials, 2017 Lathrop Ave., Racine, Wis. 53405. Association Advantage is a service affiliate of NASO providing educational services and benefits to local associations of sports officials, their officers and members.

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LEARN LEADERSHIP LESSONS AT SUMMIT LUNCH BREAKOUTS

There is always room to improve your association and game leadership.

NFL referees Carl Cheffers and Craig Wrolstad will share leadership lessons with NASO Summit attendees over lunch on Tuesday, July 30. Both are longstanding NFL officials, and their talk will focus on what they've learned over the years to manage games effectively so other officials can benefit from their experience.

"Over the years we've tapped into an incredible mix of situations that apply to all sports. Craig and I will take some examples and drill down into them to share specific lessons," Cheffers said.

"NFL officiating is a unique landscape and breeding ground for the development of skills useful to officials of all ages, sports and experience levels. We're looking forward to a lively dialogue with attendees so they head home with an expanded tool kit for their games," Wrolstad said.

In addition to Cheffers and Wrolstad, there are two other lunch breakout options: 1) Legal and Insurance Q&A with Don

Collins, Alan Goldberger and Jina Doyle; and 2) the state high school leadership forum (open to state administrators). Collins and Goldberger are experts in sports officiating legal issues, and Doyle is vice president of client services for American Specialties Insurance (ASI).

The legal and insurance session will include brief talks by Collins, Goldberger and Doyle, followed by what is typically an open Q&A with attendees.

"We've found it's a great format to give a short presentation, then seek specific questions from the audience. That's worked well and allows those in the audience to get answers to their most pressing questions," Collins said.

"The legal issues in sports officiating seem to grow, along with the development and pace of the sports themselves. It's important to get out in front of any legal issues from an association or personal perspective. We'll address cutting-edge issues from a legal perspective and make sure everyone's questions are fully addressed," Goldberger said.

A first-time presenter, Doyle will speak to the changing landscape of sports officiating issues related to insurance and be available for questions concerning NASO insurance coverage.

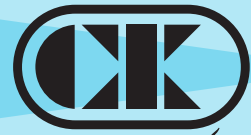
"I'm looking forward to meeting people in the sports officiating industry and providing information for NASO members and others to make the best insurance decisions, whether that's personally or from an association perspective," she said. ■

QUICK TIP

MEET MEMBER NEEDS

Make sure the services you offer meet the current needs of your membership. Offer a member survey to find out if any meetings are stale or if there are any meetings that are not challenging or too advanced for your members.

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THE PULSE

LOCAL ASSOCIATION NEWS NATIONWIDE

University Courses Teach Officiating

The Cleveland Football Officials Association is teaming with the Cleveland Browns, the Ohio High School Athletic Association and a pair of local universities to address the shortage of officials.

The Browns' official certification course is in its third year at Baldwin Wallace and John Carroll universities. The Browns have contributed about \$9,500, or \$275 per student, since the program started in 2017. The seven-week class, taught by area officials, awards college credits.

Umpires Association Contributes to High School Field Trip

The Lockport (N.Y.) Umpires Association recently donated close to \$600 toward the annual North Park Junior High School field trip to Washington, D.C. For the past 14 years a group of about 200 students, teachers and volunteer chaperones have made a trip to the capital. About a quarter of the students need help in getting the financing to go. Most of the funds were raised by other local businesses or individuals, but this year there were not enough funds to take the whole group until the umpires association provided money from its Tony Woods Memorial Fund. In the past, the group has used the funds for student scholarships.

Umpire Honored by River City Association and Community

The River City Umpires Association joined local high school baseball teams in north Florida to welcome back one of its own on Feb. 21. It was the first high school game back umpiring for Robert Garcia since his daughter, Isabella, died in a car accident last June. The north Florida high school baseball community did a surprise tribute that included purple balloons, Isabella's favorite color, released in her honor. Teams and umpires also donated fees and game checks for the preseason tournament to the Garcia family.

SOURCES: CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS, LOCKPORT (N.Y.) UNION-SUN & JOURNAL, WJXT NEWS4JAX

SIX RULES FOR MENTORS

By Jason Palmer

Mentoring is a critical component in the successful recruiting and retaining of new officials. Picking the right person to be a mentor, and ensuring that person is connected with the right mentee, is something associations must evaluate on a case-by-case basis. However, all mentors should have a few common rules they follow.

1. Make Yourself Available

A big part of being a mentor is just being there. Your accessibility to your mentee will allow you to establish a strong relationship going forward. Being there includes going to games to see your mentee work, allowing the mentee to come see you work and responding to phone calls and emails in a timely manner. The main point of being a mentor is having someone who the mentee can depend on. A mentee may have a rough match and want to talk about it right after. Answering that phone call from a mentee who is sitting in his or her car in the parking lot frightened after blowing a call can be a lifeline for him or her. He or she will need to hear, "things are going to be OK" or "relax, tell me what happened."

At the same time, having your mentee come see you work can be just as educational. Mentees can see how you handle a variety of situations, including how you recover from a missed call. People learn in many different ways. Making yourself available will allow the mentee to get comfortable communicating with you and learning at the same time.

2. Protect Your Mentee

Sometimes mentees can be too eager and get into a situation that is in over their heads. As the mentor, you should be able to assess their skill level and advise them on their

schedule, travel distance to contests, games that are a good fit and a variety of other items.

Protecting your mentees also involves keeping them connected with the right people who can aid in their development. Not every assigner will be a good fit for your mentees. Some assigners will put them on games they are not ready for because they need a person to work the game. Others may put your mentees on a path where they will never see the quality of play they need in order to advance up the ranks. A mentor should be aware of these things and advise appropriately.

3. Be Professional

As a mentor, these people are depending on you. They are vulnerable. It is required you keep the relationship a professional one at all times.

4. Instruct Don't Criticize

It is important that mentors give constructive feedback and instructions to mentees. When they make a mistake, explain to them what they did wrong, and tell or show them how to correct the mistake. Perhaps you see them doing a mechanic improperly. One of the best techniques is to have them stand in a mirror and practice on their mechanics while you are observing. This way they can see for themselves what they are doing wrong and make the adjustments on the spot and see how the mechanic should look. If they are making errors in writing, having a copy of the same form and filling it out properly with them can also aid in teaching.

5. Give Positive Feedback

We all need positive feedback, especially our new mentees who are officiating for the first time. There is a lot to learn in a short period of time. Each time your mentees grasp a new



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HOW TO...

BUILD UP YOUR ASSOCIATION

Creating an officiating association takes a lot of hard work. The basic articles of incorporation must cover a wide range of responsibilities, including a structure of governance and bylaws, and there is also the need to recruit members.

Once those duties are fulfilled and the association is established, however, the work does not get any easier. How do you make your association bigger and better?

Reputation is everything.

Officials talk, and they aren't afraid to let other officials know if their association is doing good work and taking care of them. Does your association have a reputation for conducting its business in a fair and transparent manner? For having its officials' backs when something goes sideways? For making sure officials are paid on time and treated well by schools/organizations? Building a strong reputation is the first step in building up your association.

Remember your place.

Tearing down another association is never the right way to secure your own foundation. Give officials good reasons to join your group, not bad reasons to avoid another one. Highlight your strengths, not their flaws. You want officials who want to join you because of the great work you are doing.

Recruit, recruit, recruit.

You can't afford to accept the status quo and say, "We're good." You should *always* be on the hunt for new officials to join your ranks. As an association, you need to figure out what recruiting activities work for you and embrace them. If you wait until officials start retiring or leaving for other reasons to begin filling gaps, it's already too late.

Retain, retain, retain.

By the same token, the reason your association exists is because of the current membership. Do not neglect them. Give them reasons to stay, including training and education, advancement opportunities, mentorship and any other benefits that let them know they are valued. Make sure they are getting as much bang as possible for the bucks that are their dues.

skill, take the time to praise them and give them encouragement. Remember what it was like for you when you first started. The little things you now take for granted as a veteran official are huge deals for your mentees when they do it correctly for the first time.

6. Work a Game With the Mentee

This could arguably be the most valuable thing you can ever do for your mentees. Working a game with

them will give them confidence. It means you see them as an equal. By working together, you will also be able to evaluate their performance better and provide immediate feedback during breaks in the contest or afterward in the locker room. While you may not be able to answer their questions during play, be prepared to answer them when the game is over, as the questions or your comments will be fresh in your everyone's minds. ■

Association Spotlight:

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY FOOTBALL OFFICIALS ASSOCIATION

Let it be said that the leadership of the San Fernando Valley (Calif.) Football Officials Association (SFVFOA) does have a sense of humor.

On its "Become an Official" webpage, after all the well-detailed information on how to become an official, training, first-year guidelines and other important data, there are a series of commonly asked questions including those about training, uniforms, supplies and what positions are available.

There is also one, done somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that asks, "Will I make a lot of money?" To which the answer is, and cue the rim shot on the drum kit please:

"Yes, if you have a high-paying day job!"

"That one always gets a lot of laughs," said Larry Obar, SFVFOA secretary/treasurer, with a chuckle.

It's important to maintain a sense of humor, said Obar, as the SFVFOA has seen a lot since its inception. Obar, who has been an official since about 1963, said the association was born when the enormous Southern California Football Officials Association, which covered 1,500 to 2,000 officials at one time and which worked huge swaths of Ventura, Orange and Los Angeles counties, decided to decentralize into smaller, more manageable units after 1976.

Since then, the SFVFOA has worked mostly high school football with a smattering of individuals

NEW ADVANTAGE

Association Advantage currently has more than 1,000 members. In all, those groups represent more than 100,000 individual officials. We welcome our newest Association Advantage member associations, listed below along with home city and contact person:

California: Santa Clara Federation of Umpires, Campbell (Gil Zamora)

who do some collegiate work. The association works games in five leagues in and around the San Fernando Valley for the Southern Section of the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF). Members also work games for the Los Angeles City Section.

At its peak, said Obar, the association had about 140 members and is currently sitting around 105.

“The main goal of our program is to make everyone just a little bit better,” Obar added.

Obar said the SFVFOA prides itself on its innovation and that started early as it works hard to retain young officials. It has since its earliest days run an independent summer program for first- and second-year officials called Sports Officiating School (SOS). Obar said its aim is to refresh and revitalize everyone after a long offseason.

“Everyone is encouraged to take part,” Obar said. “We try to get everyone on the field before August so they are ready for the season.”

Along with that is a comprehensive in-season training program that includes regular Tuesday night meetings that begin in September. First-year officials

get weekly assignments on the freshmen and junior varsity levels starting at the line judge position. They usually work with more experienced officials so they can get some onfield guidance.

Obar said that as officials grow they can try different positions and even specialize if they want. Older officials of the association tend to stay on and work as observers when retired, said Obar.

“Everyone tries to mentor,” he said.

The SFVFOA is coming off what Obar felt was a successful 2018 season with several members working state playoff contests and some even being assigned state title games.

Planning for the new season starts in May and the first meetings are in July, said Obar.

Recruitment is always an issue but Obar said he’s been pleased that the group has been able to maintain a steady membership in recent years.

It has been helped by the group’s attitude, for the final question on the website’s Q & A asks: “What is the most important thing for first-year officials to know” and the answer is, with no irony intended: “Have fun!” ■

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MINUTES (CONTINUED FROM P. 1)

6. Separate facts from opinion.

If you're the recording secretary for your association, you want the absolute facts in the meeting minutes. What really happened? That's *all* that needs to be in the minutes. If you have an opinion about what or who was discussed at the meeting and you think it needs to be passed along to the board, state it as such and leave it separate. Explain your reasoning for the board members to review, but don't include it in the minutes or portray it as fact. Keep it professional, even if it "feels" personal. A good approach would be to save that opinion as an agenda item for a future board meeting.

7. Be confidential. If you're recording minutes for a board meeting, for example, and it involves disciplinary action of a member, perhaps a sensitive family or legal situation, or even a

financial item (contracts, fees), that's all confidential, and needs to be kept that way. You must have the integrity to record the facts, but not "blab" the facts. Err on the side of caution, as this action could always come back to "bite" you.

8. Receive constructive criticism well. If a board member or general member reads the minutes and makes a suggestion for improvement of format or content, take it graciously and with a grain of salt. As we all know, everyone has at least a couple opinions, and while many of them make not work, we need to at least attempt to give them their say. If what they're saying is abusive, refer them to the board as a whole and walk away. You're *never* going to please everyone. As a board member, you are working *for* the members, *all* of them. There's bound to be at least one or two who think they can do a better job.

Meeting minutes for any association are crucial. What you put into them is also what you'll be able to refer to later, and rely on for the facts. If you're not putting good info in, you can't expect to get good info out.

Carl Smith, Anchorage, Alaska, is the treasurer and assigner for the Anchorage Sports Officials Association. ■

BYLAW BIT

Officials associations should use their creativity for recruiting and retention issues, not for creating new phrasing of bylaws. It's OK to review other group's bylaws and use phrases that work for your group.

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National Intercollegiate Soccer Officials Assn.
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