



**Michigan Association of Planning  
A Chapter of the American Planning Association**

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Excerpted from the “Meetings” chapter of the Michigan Association of Planning’s **Planning Commissioner’s Toolkit**. To purchase a copy of the Toolkit, contact MAP at (734)913-2000.

### **Meeting Minutes**

Minutes of the planning commission require detail and depth. As a result, the job of taking minutes for an administrative body involves effort and attention. Taking complete minutes and keeping a good record can be an important strategy to improve your municipality’s position if challenged in court, and better yet may help avoid being taken to court in the first place. There are important details that should be included in the minutes, and other items that should be attached, or filed, with the minutes. The minutes, and items that are attached or filed, become the “record” of the meeting. A planning commissioner should not have to take meeting minutes, if at all possible. A staff person should perform this duty so that the planning commissioner can focus completely on the meeting.

There are comments made at the commission meeting which are not important. Thus, simply providing a transcript of the meeting – so every word is recorded – will create minutes that are longer and more extensive than they may need to be. Also, a transcript may still not provide everything that should be in the record. The following section indicates the minimum elements that should be included in the minutes.

#### Contents of the Minutes

The minutes should include the following elements for each action taken:

- ◆ Who testified, by name and address, and a summary of what was said.
- ◆ A statement and precise description of what is being approved (e.g. special land use, variance, conditional use permit, subdivision, land division, etc.)
- ◆ The location of the property involved (tax parcel number and description, legal description is best).

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- ◆ What exhibits were submitted (list each one, describe each, number or letter each and refer to the letter or number in the minutes).
- ◆ What evidence was considered (summary of discussion by members at the meeting)?
- ◆ The commission's findings of fact (required for special land use decisions).
- ◆ Reasons for the decision that has been made. If the decision is to deny, then each reason should refer to the section of the ordinance that would be violated or not complied with.
- ◆ The decision (e.g. approve, deny, approve with modification).
- ◆ A list of all required conditions (and if improvements are to be built up-front or identify the type of performance security that is to be used, if any).
- ◆ List all changes to the map/drawing/site plan that were submitted. Make the map/drawing/site plan part of the motion (e.g. attached to the original copy of these minutes as appendix 'A', and made part of these minutes"). Always note the date of the plan.

#### Post-Decision Documentation

- ◆ The applicant and secretary of the approving body should each sign at least 2 copies of the approved site plan (for PUDs, site plan reviews, etc.). The applicant should keep one copy and the community at least one other. This provides a record of understanding of what site plan was approved and when.
- ◆ A copy of the minutes should be sent to the applicant following review by the approving bodies.
- ◆ A letter should be sent to the applicant specifically noting the action taken by the approving body, including any conditions placed on the approval, if appropriate.
- ◆ This letter may include further instructions regarding the proposal. For example, if the approval granted was for a preliminary site plan, the letter may state that final site plan approval is necessary prior to issuance of a building permit. If other approvals are necessary, such as a variance, this should be noted as well.

#### Record Keeping

Project files should include, at a minimum:

- ◆ Relevant pages of minutes at which the proposal was discussed.
- ◆ Staff notes, meeting notes, correspondence, telephone conversation notes, etc.
- ◆ Copy of the application and supporting material.
- ◆ Approved/signed copy of the site plan
- ◆ Follow-up correspondence (as noted above).