The meetingmins \LaTeX class: Hierarchically organized meeting agendas and minutes

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Abstract
Many professionals (including faculty in higher education) must at least occasionally document the happenings of group meetings. Although a few different \LaTeX classes are available for this purpose, the meetingmins class is simple and straightforward and most importantly, allows for a hierarchical organization of minutes using standard \LaTeX \section commands. An agenda function is also available.

1 Introduction
Faculty in higher education and other professionals are often expected to compose a written record of group meetings. In addition, the agenda for these meetings is sometimes expected to be circulated in advance. A few \LaTeX classes are available for formatting meeting minutes. Some are simple; others (I’m looking at you, minutes) are extraordinarily powerful but rather complicated. To the best of my knowledge, none integrates an agenda function.

The meetingmins class (http://ctan.org/pkg/meetingmins) takes a middle-of-the-road approach, providing a flexible document structure yet including all of the basics needed to chronicle the typical meeting. It is based on Jim Hefferon’s mins class (http://tug.org/pracjourn/2005-4/hefferon/), which has a one-level (non-hierarchical) document structure. In departmental meetings at academic institutions, faculty report back from departmental committees as well as various institution-wide committees. Thus a hierarchical document structure (with each committee report being subordinate to either the department or the institution) is required to adequately represent the structure of the meeting.

2 Basic features
The nuts and bolts are all here, via commands in the document preamble: the group’s name, meeting date, members present, members absent, and guests. The absentee and guest lines are not printed if they are not needed. There is also a \nextmeeting command that can be included at the end of the document to display the next meeting date. See the meetingmins documentation for details.

There are no pre-established sections within the body of the document; simply call the \section command in the standard way to create sections such as Announcements, Old Business, etc., titled and sequenced as you desire. Numbered items are available within any section by using an environment named \items.

3 Distinctive features
3.1 Using \section commands to establish hierarchy
To transparently represent the hierarchical structure of the document, the standard \LaTeX \section commands are used (down to \subsection). The document structure is then visually conveyed through the use of indentation and other formatting. More detail and examples are provided in the meetingmins documentation.

3.2 Agenda
Even the powerful minutes class does not support the creation of meeting agendas, so the lowly meetingmins steps in to fill the gap. To create an agenda, specify the agenda option when the class is loaded. The printed document will contain a skeleton agenda, titled “Agenda for ⟨date⟩” underneath the committee/department name. Numbered items of business will also be printed if they have not been suppressed (see next section).

3.3 Hidden items
Agenda items can be suppressed from being printed by using the hiddenitems environment (in place of the items environment). No need to give away the surprise announcement before the meeting! The hiddenitems environment can be used in any section of the document. When the agenda option is removed from the \documentclass line to produce the minutes of the meeting, all items in hiddenitems environments will be printed; there is no need to alter environment names.

3.4 Chair’s agenda
How many meetings have you attended (or led) in which you asked, “Who is missing?” With the chair’s agenda, that question is moot. Specify the chair option (instead of agenda — don’t use both) and a handy list of members will be printed at the top of the agenda, complete with checkboxes beside each name to facilitate taking attendance. And there are no surprises on the chair’s agenda; hiddenitems environments are printed for easy reference by the chair throughout the meeting.

4 Sample documents
The meetingmins documentation includes complete samples for (a) an agenda containing some hidden items; (b) a chair’s agenda; and (c) the meeting
Announcements

Committee Reports

College-wide Committees
Library
Curriculum

Department Committees
Personnel
Assistant Professor Search

Old Business

New Business

1. Approve minutes from the September 7 meeting.

2. Discuss class schedules for next semester.

2. Discuss research plans for next semester.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 2, at 3:00.