

CAN A CITIZEN COMPEL THE SELECTBOARD TO ALTER ITS MINUTES BEFORE APPROVING THEM?

No, a citizen cannot compel a selectboard to alter its minutes. Only the selectboard can take action to amend its meeting minutes by a concurrence of a majority of the members. 1 V.S.A. § 172.

However, citizens must be given an opportunity to express their opinion on matters considered by the public body (as long as order is maintained). 1 V.S.A. § 312 (h). This would most likely happen during the agenda item “Approve Minutes of the (date) Meeting.” Alternatively, if the minutes in question were previously approved by the board, public discussion of their accuracy could occur during the agenda items “Public Discussion” or “Other Business.”

If a selectboard accepts proposed amendments from the public, the board would make a motion to accept the amended minutes as discussed. The selectboard could also reject any suggested amendments, and take action on the minutes as submitted.

Minutes are not a transcript of the meeting. They are only required to contain:

- all members of the public body present;
- all other active participants in the meeting;
- all motions, proposals and resolutions made, offered and considered, and what disposition is made of same; and
- the results of any votes, with a record of the individual vote of each member if a roll call is taken.

In addition to these requirements, the law also says “the minutes shall cover all topics and motions that arise at the meeting and give a true indication of the business of the meeting.” 1 VSA § 312 (b) (1).

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