

Minutes of the meeting of the House of Delegates of the Pioneer District of SPEBSQSA, Inc.  
held on October 17, 2014, in the President Room of the Holiday Inn Muskegon-Harbor hotel in Muskegon, MI

I. Call to Order:

District President Dan Bezaire called the meeting to order at 1:41 p.m. He asked Cliff Dake, District Director of Music and Performance, to lead everyone in the singing of "The Old Songs".

II. Agenda:

Dan Bezaire asked for a motion for approval of the agenda. He asked delegates to give their name and chapter whenever they move or second any action. Doran McTaggart (Windsor) moved that the agenda for the meeting be adopted. Tony Schulte (Grosse Pointe) offered the second. **Motion approved.**

III. Quorum:

District Secretary Jim McMahan announced that a quorum (30% of authorized delegates) was present. **[NOTE: The sign-in sheets were attached to the original copy of these minutes.]**

IV. Memorial to Deceased Members:

Paul Ellinger, District Director for Membership, led a memorial service to honor members who had passed away since the last HOD meeting. He began the ceremony with the traditional reading of "Passing of the Bar" by Alfred Lord Tennyson. Then he listed District members who were now known to have joined the "Chapter Eternal":

Ray Grutter (Grand Rapids chapter)  
Bruce Allard (Gaylord & Mt. Pleasant chapters)  
Bob Lovell (Grand Rapids chapter)  
Don Bazeley (Sault Ste. Marie chapter)  
George (Tom) Tomlin (Griatiot County)  
Lew Mahacek (Pontiac-Waterford chapter)  
Kenneth Helder (Holland chapter)  
John Bolton (Grosse Pointe chapter)  
Fred Kienitz (Flint chapter)  
Howard Masters (Gross Pointe chapter)  
Ray Guerin (Pontiac-Waterford chapter)  
Dale Cousino (Monroe North chapter)  
Don Cline (Frank Thorne chapter)---(also reported at April 25, 2014, meeting)  
Hylon J. Heaton, Jr. (Flint chapter)  
Dan Decker (Traverse City chapter)  
John Meyers (Traverse City chapter)  
David Smith (Flint chapter)  
Russell Clark (Flint chapter)  
Chris Davis (Hillsdale chapter)  
Perry Foor (Hillsdale chapter)  
James McDonald (Detroit-Oakland chapter)  
Tom Peil (Saginaw Bay chapter)

Paul concluded the ceremony by quoting a poem written by Linda Jo Jackson entitled "I'm Free". He noted that these 22 members would no longer be on the risers with us. Their voices are silenced. They are friends remembered for the part they played in the history of their chapters and the District. May they sing chords on high, and may their friends and family remember the joy that barbershop music brought to their lives!

The District Secretary had asked for the opportunity to inform the delegates about the process of reporting deceased members. His message was really directed to chapter secretaries, but he hoped that chapter officers in attendance would convey it to their CS if he was not present at this meeting.

He urged that chapters manage the process of recognizing and documenting those persons who have passed away and are no longer among our membership. Specifically, he asked that the process be managed by the chapter secretary, or in his absence, by the chapter president.

IV. Memorial to Deceased Members (cont.):

He noted that there are two reasons for the process to go through the chapter secretary. One of them is to avoid false reports. The second reason is to insure that the chapter's records are kept up-to-date.

There are two tasks that the secretary should do. The first one is to let Paul Ellinger know (in his role as Director of Membership for the District) about the deceased member. Paul should be given the name of the individual and (hopefully) his chapter. (The District Secretary often spends a lot of time after each HOD meeting in tracking down that detail.)

The second task that the chapter secretary should do is to give the BHS Customer Services department the individual's name and membership number, plus the name and address of a next-of-kin. The latter piece of info allows the Society to send a letter of condolence to the individual's family.

The District Secretary reiterated that HOD delegates should pass this message along to their respective secretary if that person is not present at this meeting.

Dale Hanson (Gaylord) asked that Bruce Allard, who was previously mentioned in the memorial service as being a member of the Mt. Pleasant chapter, also be identified as a member of the Gaylord chapter.

V. Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

The minutes of the meeting of April 25, 2014, had previously been distributed electronically by the District Secretary Jim McMahan. Dave Montera (Detroit-Oakland) moved that the minutes be approved. Lud Ouzoonian (Kalamazoo) offered the second. **Motion approved.**

VI. Treasurer's Report:

District Treasurer Larry Parker proceeded to distribute copies of two reports. They were a Balance Sheet, and a Profit & Loss Statement.

In the Balance Sheet, he noted that the total assets of the District (as of September 30) were \$80,604.76. Since that date, he has received a few late registrations and paid for some expenses. He concluded that the current balance now was probably just below the figure he had stated earlier.

Larry pointed out a journal entry of \$1489.88 that had been made as a write-off in the Current Assets section. This represented a number that had been in the records for several years as a "Convention future year" set-aside---but represented an amount that did not actually exist.

Larry noted that there was an escrow liability to the Windsor chapter in the amount of \$2627.61 that would go toward their 2015 Sendoff show. He also identified a long-term liability to the QCA for \$3084.82.

Larry expressed the opinion that the District is still fiscally sound, but is not making as much money as it should. He observed that, when he took over as District treasurer two years earlier, the District had a balance close to \$96,000.

Larry also referred to his second report---the Profit & Loss Statement. He noted that this convention had already generated \$13,560 in income, and he expected that number would increase some more.

Roger Lewis (Battle Creek) moved that the treasurer's report be received. Dale Hanson (Gaylord) made the second. **Motion approved.**

VII. Society Representative Report:

Dan Bezaire proceeded to introduce Don Fuson, the President-elect of the Society.

Don announced that the applause he received was for the District membership to be willing to invite him to come---in spite of knowing him from previous contacts!

VII. Society Representative Report (cont.):

Don recalled that his last visit to Pioneer was about five years earlier when he taught a class at a Leadership Academy in Okemos.

When Marty Monson came to the last Pioneer convention, Don had recommended to him that he visit a chapter that might not be coming to the convention. The goal of such a visit would be to learn what that chapter needs as encouragement to come. Marty did that when he visited Muskegon last spring.

Don asked the secretary if he had distributed the Society's HOD Bulletin to the delegates coming to this HOD meeting. The secretary acknowledged that he did not receive it for re-distribution. Don then asked the delegates if any of them had read it on Livewire---since it was posted there at one point. Don emphasized that the HOD Bulletin contains info on a lot of programs the Society is doing. Those programs could be the "best in the world", but unless the districts, chapters, and members are aware of them, buy into them, adjust them, and reach partial goals, everything goes into a vacuum.

Don was going to ask Dan Bezaire to see if the Bulletin could get sent out to our membership. He felt that our members will recognize many of the plans listed therein are being done in some way in Pioneer. If he could clone some of our members and plant them into other chapters in other districts, he thought those clones would come back with a fuller appreciation of what can be accomplished.

Some of the programs that are being developed by the Society were highlighted by Don. The amount of new music that is being distributed to collaborative groups is a major achievement. Don knew that many of our chapters have established collaborative relationships with music educators and other types of musical groups. He felt that it was important that these groups know that barbershop members and chapters were having fun, and were touching their audiences.

Don mentioned that requests have been made for musical arrangements in different formats, and also for the creation of new selections. He noted that many arrangers have been asked to take modern pieces of music, and make them singable in barbershop style.

Don observed that he has asked for the creation of simpler arrangements of some selections so they could be done by choruses with lesser skills. That way, those groups can still enjoy the message of the song.

Don noted that the delegates at this meeting represented highly successful chapters. The empty seat next to each person represents a nearby chapter that did not come to the convention. He advocated that the delegates contact persons in that chapter, mention that they were missed at the convention, and share some of the insights they got from this meeting, or from other activities that occurred during the weekend. He urged that they point out the things that were learned from the evaluations made by judges---and how similar they were to the comments that are made by chorus directors.

A graph was displayed by Don of data (plotted by a volunteer Society member) of membership trends. The page shown was specifically of Pioneer data. It had a red line of the averages of all of the data from the Society, and a blue line that represented Pioneer's status. The conclusion that Don drew from the graph is that we need to recruit more, retain better, and reach each to every member to learn what they would like to do within their chapter.

Don emphasized that every district is showing similar trends. The one special quality that our District has is leadership that is working to reverse some of these trends. Nevertheless, if the trends are not turned around, we will continue to operate financially in the red.

Don noted that he would be emceeding the chorus contest the next day. During his moments between choruses, he plans to "preach" about the "E" in S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A. (Encouragement), and ask the audience members if they do that.

Another "E" word that Don mentioned is "engage". He asked: "Do we engage each of our members to find out what their "itch" is?" This is the "itch" that caused them to join. Are we still scratching that itch at each chapter event? Is it still in our planning?

VII. Society Representative Report (cont.):

Don commented about the insights that can be obtained in classes at Harmony University. He asked for a hand count of those at this meeting who attended H/U in 2014. He related some of the reasons why the location had been moved from St. Joseph (MO) to Belmont U. in Nashville, and some of the challenges that the food service staff encountered at Belmont. (As an aside, he mentioned our tradition of having ice cream in the evening required that they increase that line item in their budget from \$1000 to \$5000!)

Don urged that chapters who have not sent their director to H/U in the last few years should do so. This is an obligation that the chapter has for the continuing education development of that person.

He related an experience he had of visiting a public school, and encouraging the music teacher to attend H/U on a scholarship. Subsequently, he visited her while she was there. She commented how tired she was because of the mental energy that was being demanded of her by her classes. She commented on the opportunity of meeting and sharing with so many other educators like herself. Her most profound observation, however, was the caliber of the faculty at H/U---which she felt exceeded anything she had ever received at any other music educator training event. And then she had discovered that most of the faculty members were not professionally-trained as music educators!

Don reminded the delegates that they already had one homework assignment---to call someone who wasn't at this convention. Now he gave the delegates a second assignment---to talk with their chorus director about attending H/U, and then call Don if that person doesn't feel if he/she would benefit from coming.

The last topic that Don covered was at the request of Marty Monson---to avoid having to say that barbershop is the best-kept secret. Don revealed that he sang madrigal music for 13 years in the St. Louis (MO) area. Although there were several barbershop choruses in the area (including Masters of Harmony), not once during those 13 years did he hear about them. He found it amazing that his madrigal group and the barbershop groups performed at some of the same venues, and yet never met. Don wondered how many of the people on the street in our communities know that we are having fun while singing.

Don described the experience of a chapter in Kansas. It has an annual show in a high school auditorium at little or no rental cost. Two years ago they invited both "FRED" and "Vocal Spectrum" to appear on their show. Their tickets had no declared price. Nevertheless, they gave two shows that had so many people standing in the aisles that the fire marshal complained. The chapter earned \$30,000 from their event. The key to their success was that they were well-connected to their community. They did intense marketing of the event.

Don asked how many delegates could report similar successes with their chapter shows, and how many would like to achieve that kind of success. He felt that happens, in part, because of the things that delegates learn at meetings like this one. He challenged the delegates to take things back to their chapters---because they are part of the official governing bodies within the District. "Do not take your job lightly. You represent yourselves, and your local chapter, and all of the folks who aren't even present." Don observed that some districts struggle to get a 30% attendance (a quorum) at their HOD meetings.

Finally, Don indicated that, later on, he might call individual delegates and ask them what they learned from the weekend that they didn't already know, and how did they follow-up. Also, what ultimate failure did your chapter have last year, and was the failure caused by using a bad idea, or by poor execution? If it was the latter, do it again with a different person in charge, and "engage" all of the other chapter members.

Don reminded the delegates that his contact info is listed in the back of the Harmonizer. If members contact him, he will get the question to the staff member who can answer it. Also, if they get a good idea from Don, they are welcome to "borrow that idea with honor"!

VIII. Consent Calendar Reports:

The secretary noted that any items in this category were approved by virtue of the motion to adopt the agenda.

IX. Events:

Roger Lewis asked if anyone had ever attended a convention in Muskegon. It was confirmed that no one was old enough to have done that. Roger also wondered if Holland and Muskegon had ever hosted a convention before. He expressed appreciation for those chapters being willing to accept the responsibility for doing the event. He identified the co-chairs from the two chapters, and asked that they be congratulated for the things that go right.

Roger declared that the working relationships with the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and with the hotel managements, have been absolutely wonderful.

He noted that an effort has been for the last few years to add fun events to convention weekends. He noted that a guided walking tour of the downtown area was underway at the very moment. Maps are available for those who wish to do a self-guided version.

From 7:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. of the following day (Saturday), a \$6 pancake breakfast is being held on the deck of a WWII ship; it will be hosted by the local Lions Club. The ship is one of two such ships that were used in the Normandy invasion to transport 28 Sherman tanks. The ship doubles as a museum. The cost of the breakfast includes the cost (normally \$8) of a tour of the ship.

On Saturday afternoon, an "Amazing Great Chili Hot Dog and Tag" party will be held on the third floor of the Frauenthal Center. The cost will be \$7. This event was suggested by the CVB in lieu of another pizza party like the one held at the last convention. In addition to the food, attendees will be allowed to sing a tag and get judged. The winning quartet will get a special name tag that says "Winner".

Roger also mentioned that a special event not listed in the program is a plan to invite all barbershoppers in attendance (250+?) onto the stage after the chorus competition to do a mass singing of "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" and "Sweet and Lovely". The directors for these two songs will be selected by surprise by Chris Berry.

Roger noted that Paul Ellinger had suggested that all of the 50-year and 50(+)-year members in the District be honored during the convention. Therefore, all of these members will be invited to come backstage during the intermission of the quartet finals. All of the 50(+)-year members will be recognized first, and then the newest 50-year members will come on stage. Each person in the latter group will receive his 50 year pin and a special ribbon that Roger discovered was being used in the Sunshine District.

For several years, there has been an attempt to get local non-barbershop acappella groups to perform at a convention. This year, two such groups have been invited. A girl's quartet from Mona Shores H.S. will appear on Friday night after the quartet prelim contest. During the pre-show on Saturday night, another girl's quartet (also from Mona Shores) will perform. These two groups reflect efforts made during the last few years by the Muskegon chapter to promote the "Rockin' Barbershop" program.

X. Leadership Academy:

As a way to introduce the next topic, Dan Bezaire reminded that delegates that their chapters should have had elections by now. He hoped that their 2015 officers had been reported to the Society. He also asked that those officers be encouraged to attend Leadership Academy.

Mike Ridenour announced that the event is scheduled for January 17, 2015, at CMU. Housing will probably be arranged to be offered at the Soaring Eagle Waterpark unless better pricing can be found elsewhere. He urged everyone to attend. One of the themes that will be promoted is to build depth in our leadership. Leaders should be trying to find their replacements. He urged that a chapter not only send its current leaders, but also its future leaders.

VII. Society Representative Report (return to):

Don Fuson indicated that he had one more topic to address. The Society is very concerned that chapters file their annual reports with the IRS or the Canadian tax authority. He feared that some chapters have not done so, or if they have, they haven't told the Society.

VII. Society Representative Report (return to) (cont.):

These reports are supposed to be submitted through the Financial Filings link on their chapter's webpage under .ebiz. The District Secretary has been receiving rosters from the Society that show which chapters have failed to submit those reports. In a number of cases, the D.S. has been able to follow up with those chapters about their delinquencies. Don asserted that he wants to know that chapters are submitting their documents so they can be given credit for doing the right thing.

Another document that must be submitted through the Financial Filings link is the "financial review". He emphasized that a review is not an "audit". Nevertheless, it is something that every chapter must do every year. There is no exception based on the size of the chapter's finances. It is a review of the procedures that the chapter treasurer has been following. He cited timely billing of invoices for expenses for shows as one detail that should not be neglected. Don noted that the team that does the financial review really should be appointed by the chapter president at the start of the fiscal year, and not after the end of the year.

The third document that should be submitted through the Financial Filings link is the proof that the chapter is still incorporated in its state or province of residence. This document is usually called the Certificate of Continuing Existence. Don observed that some chapters have a notation on their .ebiz webpage that indicates they have not filed that document in the last five years!

Don's concern was that chapters might say that they'll catch up, and then discover that the IRS no longer considers them to exist because they are not incorporated anymore. They have lost their 501(c)(3) status, and have compromised the status of the Society. Don noted that not only do districts and chapters have to have that status, but also brigades and other Society subsidiaries.

Don added an item to the delegates' homework list: check their status on Don's list, and then go back to their chapter officers if they find their chapter is delinquent.

The secretary mentioned that his Secretary Track class at Leadership Academy will have some extra material about this topic. Chapter secretaries really should attend.

XI. "The Voice Barbershop Chorus":

Dan Bezaire declared that he was excited to hear the youth chorus this weekend. He was sure they were gearing up to go the Youth Chorus Festival in New Orleans. He asked Doug Weaver to provide an update on the chorus and some other topics.

Since Doug was covering the next three agenda items, he was changing the order of them slightly. He wanted to cover Financial Planning first. He reminded the delegates that Sean Devine was no longer on the staff of Harmony Foundation, and therefore is not present to represent H/F. David Calland is now assigned to be our liaison to H/F. Since David could not attend this weekend, Doug is hoping to get David to come to Pioneer soon and to visit some chapters with him. Doug knew that it had been a few years since H/F reps have visited come chapters.

Doug then announced that he was going to do the Parade of Checks next. He reminded the delegates that Pioneer has been a sponsor of the YCF for the last two years. Very few districts can make that claim. It is a commitment of \$10,000 from the district. He noted that it was decided at the spring 2014 convention to be a sponsor again. The checks that are presented today will go in support of our \$10,000 commitment

Doug was going to begin the Parade by submitting some checks that he had received from others who could not be present. As further checks are presented, he informed the delegates that they could either report the amount of the check, or simply identify the donor. Hopefully, the total of the checks presented will cover a significant percentage of our \$10,000 commitment.

The following amounts were received:

Grand Rapids	\$600	Limited Edition (quartet)	\$100
Majestyx (quartet)	50	Kalamazoo	140
Hillsdale	500	(private donor in Hillsdale)	500

XI. "The Voice Barbershop Chorus" (cont.):

Grosse Pointe	\$600	Mt. Pleasant	\$200
DOC	1000	Holland	815
Huron Valley	150	Muskegon	250
Windsor (*)	100	Lansing	400

During the early receipt of donations from quartets, Doug also mentioned that he had a pledge from one more quartet.

(\*) Doran McTaggart pointed out that the Windsor chapter must make most of its donations to Sing Canada in order to get tax benefits. This donation was separate from those donations.

Doug reminded the delegates that three other private donors within the District have also given \$10,000 sponsorships in support of the YCF. One of those came from the "Harmony for Life" event that Paul Teska organized back in the spring. The funds received from that event amounted to over \$10,000. Paul will be designated as an honorary YCF sponsor.

At this point, Doug moved to discussion of the stated agenda topic. He reminded the delegates that Pioneer sent a youth chorus to Las Vegas in 2011. Now we have one that will be going to New Orleans. The group is known as the "The Voice (Barbershop Chorus)". It has been rehearsing for most of the year. Currently, the group has 24 members.

TVBC has identified expenses that must be made in order to get them to New Orleans. The Mt. Pleasant chapter is having the group appear on its November 1 show, and will get a donation. They will be getting donations from other sources. The family of Dan Decker (recently-deceased member of the Traverse City chapter) has sent a \$1000 check in support of TVBC. Members of the T.C. chapter have contributed an additional \$470.

It is planned that TVBC will sing on Saturday night prior to the quartet finals. Afterwards, members of the group will stand at the entrance doors with buckets to collect contributions. A private donor has announced that the money collected in the buckets will be matched. Hopefully, by the end of the weekend, the group will be in good shape financially. They will have airfare costs, and they had some rehearsal facility rental costs early on. Doug emphasized that the District will be providing additional support beyond what was collected from the Parade of Checks.

Larry Parker had done a quick tally of the checks just received, and indicated that just over \$4000 was collected. Doug pointed out that support doesn't end this weekend. Quartets and chapters that wish to offer donations can do so through December 1.

XII. Financial Planning:

(This topic was previously covered during Item XI.)

XIII. Parade of Checks:

(This topic was previously covered during Item XI.)

XIV. Old Business:

(There was no Old Business to consider.)

XV. New Business:

Dan Bezaire informed the delegates that a new chapter is being organized in Marquette. The group had its first meeting on September 22 or 23. Dan and James O'Dell participated in the meeting via Skype. Some members of the Escanaba (WI) chapter also attended. Subsequently, the group has had a second meeting. Although the group is small, they are enthusiastic.

XV. New Business (cont.):

The secretary expanded on what was happening in the formation of this chapter. Our Standard District Bylaws define the Pioneer District as encompassing only the four easternmost counties of the Upper Peninsula. Marquette County is outside of that area. However, the group being organized has requested that they be allowed to be a part of Pioneer. This is quite an honor for us, and it is hoped that it will happen. Dan Bezaire added that the LOL District has agreed to this plan.

Dan moved to a new topic of business---modification of our District dues and convention registration fees. He pointed out a sheet that had been placed on the tables. This document showed a comparison of these numbers between the different districts.

Dan observed that our District has not made any changes in our dues and fees in quite a few years. He referred to earlier remarks that Larry Parker made about our financial status, i.e., that we're doing OK, but that we're not growing in our income. Reluctantly, Dan noted that we must make some increases in our dues and fees. He pointed out that we would still be below the average of all of the districts in these categories.

It was indicated that convention costs are inescapably going up. Most of the increase is related to travel costs for judges. Therefore, the Board of Directors had proposed in its meeting earlier in the day that a \$10 increase be made in district dues. Dan noted that increase has a ripple effect in some membership categories that follow percentage rules. The board has also proposed a \$10 increase in each category of convention registrations fees (early and late), and a \$5 increase in single event registrations. These actions had been approved by the board at its meeting earlier.

Dale Hanson (Gaylord) moved that the changes be made, and Earl Berry (Detroit-Oakland) made the second. Dan Bezaire noted that, if approved, these changes would take effect on January 1, 2015. **Motion approved.**

Dan Bezaire then offered a bittersweet announcement by indicating that Cliff Dake was stepping down as Pioneer's Director of Music and Performance. He asked for applause in recognition of Cliff's service. Dan then was privileged to announce that Dave Montera (Detroit-Oakland) had agreed to take on the responsibility.

Dan invited the delegates to present any announcements that they wished to offer. Dale Hanson (Gaylord) announced that his chapter had moved the date of Bush League from August to September---specifically to the last weekend.

Doran McTaggart (Windsor) indicated he wanted to discuss the Windsor Sendoff which his chapter has hosted for 37 years. He pointed out that tickets call the event the "Pioneer Sendoff" (not the "Windsor Sendoff"), even though it is held in Windsor. He asked for more support of the Sendoff from Michigan chapters. And while enhanced drivers licenses make it easier for Americans to come into Canada, returning is still a problem!

Doran emphasized that it is important for members of Michigan chapters to attend in order to generate funds for support of the chorus and quartets that represent Pioneer at International events. He observed that, over the years, only one chapter that has not had attendees at the Sendoff has sent a check to support the event. He asked that more of the chapters who cannot be represented send a donation nevertheless.

Doran observed that the amounts contributed (combined District and chapters) to individual quartets and choruses have not changed for forty years. He had calculated that the contributions have amounted to \$50/man (up to a 60-man maximum). This is equivalent to a \$3000 maximum. He was perturbed that this number has remained constant in spite of increases in travel costs and registration fees. He noted that sometimes we have had as many as four quartets going to the two International competitions. Doran urged that all groups in the District plan to budget increases in their giving for this purpose.

Earl Berry (Detroit-Oakland) announced that his chapter would be hosting its annual Canada Night three weekends hence. The event will be held in a new location. He noted that flyers were on the tables that gave more information. Part of the evening will be devoted to a mini-chorus (12-16 members) competition.

XIV. Adjournment:

At 2:50 p.m., a motion to adjourn the meeting was received from Earl Berry (Detroit-Oakland), and was seconded by Doran McTaggart (Windsor). **Motion approved.** Dave Montera was asked to lead the group in "Keep the Whole World Singing".