

Minutes of the Pioneer District Management Team (MT) of SPEBSQSA, Inc.
held on January 6, 2013, in the Hamilton Room of the Okemos Comfort Inn

Attendees:

-----Members of the District Board of Directors present: Doug Weaver (president), Dan Bezaire (executive vice-president), Jim McMahan (secretary), Larry Parker (treasurer), Brian Dunckel (immediate past president, and also MT director of financial development)

-----Members of the District Board of Directors absent: (none)

-----Members of the District Management Team present: Joe McDonald (director of CSLT) and James O'Dell (director of Mktg. & PR)

-----Members of the District Management Team absent: Cliff Dake (director of Music & Performance), Paul Ellinger (director of Membership), Ron Eubank (director of C&J), Roger Lewis (director of Events), Rob Pettigrew (director of CDD), and Doug Lynn (director of YIH)

-----Guests: (none)

I. Call To Order:

President Doug Weaver began the meeting at 9:00 a.m., and asked Dan Bezaire to lead the group in the singing of "The Old Songs".

II. Minutes of the MT meeting on October 19, 2012:

The minutes had been previously distributed by the District Secretary. He noted that, in the future, the minutes of the MT meeting and the BOD meeting will be split into separate documents. Technically, they are two different meetings.

Joe McDonald moved that the minutes be approved, and James O'Dell made the second. **Motion approved.**

III. Financial Report:

Larry Parker reported on the status of the transition of this function from Robb Smith to himself. All of the necessary signatures have been acquired on the paperwork for the account at Comerica. Robb has signed the forms to get the District's credit card transferred to Larry. Larry was planning to transfer some money soon from the Comerica account to the Flagstar account---since that account is used mostly for writing checks.

IV. President's Comments:

Doug Weaver urged everyone in attendance to visit chapters in the District. While there, we should ask the members: "What can the District do for you?", and, "What should we be doing?". Doug anticipated that we will be welcomed warmly by the chapters.

Doug also noted that some functions will have webinars or phone conferences with their counterparts throughout the Society in the near future. If a District staff member cannot be available to participate in such an event, Doug asked that the rest of the staff be notified so that someone could arrange to be a backup.

Dan Bezaire observed that some functions have monthly phone conferences; others may only do it on a quarterly basis.

Doug asked if we wanted to continue to support the Youth Chorus Festival, and if so, we should start promoting this goal among our chapters. One idea that he advanced was for chapters to hold 50:50 drawings to raise money for their donation in the "Parade of Checks".

IV. President's Comments (cont.):

He proposed that we hold two "parade of checks" events---one at each convention. An update could be provided after the first "parade".

He noted that our other problem is sponsoring the Festival without having a chorus participating. He asked for ideas on how we can promote the formation of one by a chapter.

It was noted that several chapters already have 50:50 drawings, but the proceeds are earmarked for things like Sing Canada, or dues assistance for youth members.

Joe McDonald noted that a dilemma for chapters is whether to provide funding for sponsorship of the event, or to provide funding for developing a chorus and assisting with travel costs. He noted that approximately 2/3 of the attendees at the 2012 Harmony Explosion camp got there because of financial assistance---mostly from chapters.

James O'Dell expressed his preference for sending more choruses vs. a donation of \$10,000.

Brian Dunckel observed that the creation of a youth chorus was in Doug Lynn's work plan. It was clearly understood that some chapter (or chapters) must initiate the chorus formation process as a grass-roots effort.

One option that was suggested was the possibility of finding a high school choral director who could become the director of a youth chorus. It was noted that several choruses in other districts have been formed out of existing high school choirs. Although this is not the only way that choruses have gotten started, it has been one of the most successful.

Since a key to the formation of a youth chorus may be to get high school choral directors to "buy into" the barbershop music style, the secretary suggested that our efforts to make more contact with groups like the ACDA may help us.

Doug Weaver noted that Doug Lynn is new in his role with the YIH function, and is currently facing some challenges with computer availability and transportation. He urged that the members of the MT and the BOD offer help to Doug in any way that they can.

Doug emphasized that some of the youth choruses are good-sized, and are singing at a high level. Brian Dunckel pointed out that "Northwest Chorus" got itself chartered a year after it won the Festival, and then qualified to sing the next year at International.

Joe McDonald expressed a need for urgency in starting the process of forming a chorus. He cited the benefit of getting support from donors to assist with the cost. He noted that a major donor made it possible for "Northern Rhapsody" to go two years ago. The only expense to members of N/R turned out to be the \$50 registration fee.

It was noted that a golf outing planned by the Flint chapter may be on the same weekend of the 2013 Harmony Explosion camp. However, the Flint chapter is reconsidering the date. If the two events were on the same weekend, it might only affect a very small number of persons who want to attend both the outing and H-Ex show on Saturday night.

Doug reiterated that we still need to resolve our priorities regarding the choices of being a Festival sponsor versus underwriting the development of a chorus.

Joe McDonald urged that we utilize the skills of Craig Johnson and Dan Winer to see if a chorus can be established again. It was clarified that Craig's availability because of his new job is only guaranteed for about nine months.

V. Directors' Reports:

Doug asked if everyone had a copy of each work plan. The secretary mentioned that he had sent out copies of each one except Doug Lynn's (which just come out on Friday morning), and Rob Pettigrew's (which was sent to the Yahoo site).

---Marketing & PR:

James O'Dell was relieved that the preparations for his L/A presentation were over, and he could now get back to his District role. He received numerous compliments for the quality of his L/A session.

He urged the meeting attendees to look at the full-page ads that the Society is placing on the back cover of the magazine of the American Choral Directors Association. The ads highlight youth activities. The current ad focuses on Harmony University. It mentions scholarships that are available to teachers to attend, and the fact that the ACDA executive director will be the keynote speaker at H/U. It also has quotes from educators who have previously attended H/U.

James pointed out the ACDA offers a variety of membership opportunities. James has suggested to Rob Pettigrew that we encourage our directors to become ACDA members. Each director would have to decide if a \$90/year dues payment would be worthwhile. For us, it would have networking value. There is also an institutional membership option of \$180/year that gives the institution access to the ACDA membership list, and discounted rates for advertising in ACDA publications and for exhibiting at ACDA conventions. James suggested that the District consider the latter option.

The secretary observed that payment of a director's membership in ACDA might be a legitimate chapter expense. James O'Dell responded favorably to the idea with the comment that ACDA membership would be consistent with Rob's goal of getting more of our directors certified. He perceived this as a tool that would assist us with this effort.

Doug Weaver knew that ACDA alternated between national and regional conferences. He asked if 2013 would be the year for regional conferences because of ads scheduled in different programs. James clarified that a conference was held in Mt. Pleasant in the fall of 2012. (It was assumed that this was a regional.) No information has been announced yet on their website for their 2013 plans. He suggested that membership would give us quicker awareness of their plans.

James pointed that the organizational structure of ACDA in Michigan is similar to Pioneer in that they have a Michigan board, and reps who oversee different counties. They also have a chairperson who is in charge of repertoire and standards for different types of choirs.

Doug asked if the ACDA organization above the state level was structured into regions, and if those were the kinds of conventions slated for 2013 into which the Society is targeting its ads. James was not sure about this, and indicated that the ACDA website has no info yet about conventions. He did know that the Great Lakes region consisted of Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. However, James was mostly interested in the Michigan organization as a "stand-alone" unit. He also wanted to look for similar organizations that serve Ontario.

Brian Dunckel reported that our District was a member for several years in the Michigan Music Educators Association---which is different from ACDA. (There are several music educator organizations.) It was thought that the MMEA was the group that holds conventions in Grand Rapids

Doug pointed out the Society had a major impact on the ACDA a few years earlier when "The Vocal Majority" sang at its national convention. James urged that we utilize the connections we make with ACDA to try to develop youth choruses.

It was reiterated that we just don't know when the ACDA convention will be, or what type it will be. James will continue to make inquiries about their plans, and about the perquisites of their different membership options. Joe McDonald was totally unaware of the convention held last fall in Mt. Pleasant, but is acquainted with one of the ACDA board members who is on the CMU faculty---and is not barbershop-friendly. James knew of some other board members who are in that category---but we can deal with that.

V. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---Marketing & PR (cont.):

Doug moved the discussion to the plans for the "Scavenger Hunt" by asking both James and Joe about the projected launch date for this activity. They reported that it will probably be initiated at the spring convention, but that there will be extensive marketing beforehand. Retroactive counting of items for the activity will be permitted. It will probably have an end date sometime after the fall convention.

Dan Bezaire asked about how we were going to encourage chapters to participate in the "Celebrate Harmony" program for the 75th anniversary. Since James Hall (Lansing chapter) has done a lot of leg-work to get four chapters to work together to have joint shows, James O'Dell was planning to use the Lansing chapter's experience as a model to share with other chapters. He was planning to spend some one-on-one time with the VPs of Marketing & PR in every chapter to promote the idea.

Doug Weaver commented on the positive experience everyone had in Session 3 the day before in learning to sing the Joe Liles "Celebrate Harmony" song. The secretary praised the fact that the "3-3-3-3" technique of learning a song was utilized. The Gratiot County chapter has been using the technique---albeit with some reluctance by a few members to adopt the technique. The L/A session, however, offered a very successful demonstration of the technique. Joe McDonald reported that many of the evaluation sheets for L/A praised the technique. (The secretary erroneously referred to the technique as having come from Chuck Greene; it actually was developed by Jay Giallombardo.)

---Membership:

It was reported that Paul Ellinger was on the faculty of the Ontario District L/A during this weekend. Paul has reported that he has received requests to present the "Supercharging" program in Hawaii and California. Paul has received a lot of inquiries from throughout the Society about the program, and has spent time talking to Alan Lamson and Shannon Elswick. Paul is on a team with Andrew Shackleton, Christian Hunter and Mike Scott to discuss membership development ideas. Marty Monson is also known to be a fan of the SYC program.

Joe McDonald reported that a Music Educator component of SYC is being developed, and will be rolled out in a few weeks. He mentioned that is designed for participatory interaction with educators.

---Music & Performance:

In addition to his work plan, Cliff Dake had submitted a proposed budget for running a Top Gun weekend. Action of the budget will be a topic on the BOD meeting that will follow this one.

Joe McDonald had assisted Cliff in designing the budget spreadsheet in a format that can be used to explore different scenarios. In the format, green cells are "live" values that can be changed to see what the new outcome would be. The red arrows on some cells are non-printing items that show explanations of a value.

When the MT and the BOD met at Paul Ellinger's house in December, it was learned that Jamie Carey (Mt. Pleasant chapter) had gone off on his own to create plans for a Top Gun weekend with some elaborate ideas. Jamie hadn't gotten approval from the District to do this planning, and hadn't created a budget for it. Subsequently, Cliff scaled back Jamie's ideas to be closer to what we originally envisioned.

Doug Weaver was not aware of who Cliff was considering to be coaches for the event. Doug has arranged for Adam Scott from the Nashville staff to be in the District during the week that is tentatively set for the Top Gun school, and could be one of the coaches. Adam is slated to come on the Wednesday of the week. The actual school will be on a Saturday.

V. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---Music & Performance (cont.):

Doug had not heard this during previous visits by Mike O'Neill and James Estes, but Adam said that the music specialists can come to a district for five day trips. Doug had urged the Grand Rapids and Lansing chapters to switch their rehearsal nights to Thursday to take advantage of Adam's visit, and get some free coaching. They chose not to do so. So far, Doug hadn't found any other places where Adam can go. **[NOTE: It was later arranged for him to go to Mt. Pleasant on Wednesday.]**

Doug asked for feedback on the proposed budget for the Top Gun school. Based on an expected attendance of five quartets, the net cost to the District would be \$1215. Although invitations have been made, responses were unknown at this point. The cost to the quartets would be \$400 each. The event would begin on Friday night, and continue through a show on Saturday evening. The \$400 covers food and lodging. Fortunately, the venue is free.

An observation was made that an expense of approximately \$1000 didn't seem to be very great. It was noted that it has been perhaps four years or more since the last Top Gun school was held. The only recent thing we've done that was close to this activity was the quartet coaching held at last year's Boot Camp. It has been previously said that we need to resume having Top Gun schools.

There emerged a consensus that this was something "we had to do". A minimum level of participation is needed. It was suggested that if any of the five invited quartets decline, we then continue down the scoring list of other District quartets. However, there needs to be some minimum (three quartets-?) below which the event would have be cancelled. The possibility of even extending invitations to quartets in the JAD or ONT districts was suggested. Those districts may have already planned to hold Top Gun schools, but if not, we might charge them more than \$400 each.

Since it is always hard to re-establish a program, Joe McDonald indicated he would have liked for this event to have been announced at least 100 days in advance. Nevertheless, it appears that we have a good start.

Larry Parker asked about the food costs for the event. Those were identified as being about \$12 per person---a breakfast and a lunch. It order to hold the quartets around to do a show on Saturday night, it was suggested that they should be fed then as well. Food costs were already very low.

Joe McDonald pointed out that having at least one of the coaches coming for free from the Society meant that the cost of coaching would be lower than normal.

It was reported that the original plan developed by Jamie Carey included some very expensive coaches. However, it was noted that there are a lot of good coaches within reasonable distances. Tom Gentry and Dave Calland were mentioned specifically.

---CSLT:

Joe McDonald was glad that L/A 2013 was over. He reported that we had 71 registrations, and only 5 no-shows. (Three of the no-shows called to report they were ill.) Since a "no-refunds" policy on cancellations had already been stated, Joe anticipated no problems in that regard.

Joe had received a lot of evaluation sheets. He was going to create a way to enter all comments on a spread sheet. His first scan of the evaluations indicated mostly positive responses. A few minor details like bigger names on name badges, etc. came up. He received positive verbal comments about the e-mails that confirmed registrations. No problems were encountered regarding people flow.

Joe is still not sure that our L/A model is the best way to do it. A recurring complaint from people was "I had to be here, but I wanted to go there": This is especially important to smaller chapters where someone like the secretary may also carry other responsibilities.

V. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---CSLT (cont.):

A model that some other districts have explored is to split out the President/Secretary/Treasurer portion into a specific date. This portion is very important because of all of the legalities these persons handle. However, if this group meets separately, a facility the size of Okemos would be unnecessary.

The preceding model could then be adapted to build a series of events for specific areas (membership, marketing, music & performance, etc.) that could be held in several different locations.

James O'Dell envisioned this model as consisting of a "legalities" module, a "3-M" module (Music/Marketing/Membership) module, and an "everything else" module. The latter two modules might be done more than once, and in more than one location.

Joe McDonald observed that the "Supercharging" programs were done in five different locations, and thereby reached about 180 persons out of the 1000 members we have in the District. This is a far better penetration of the membership than we have ever done with L/A. This also gives members the chance to get involved in more things. He concluded that when we add things like Top Gun, Bush League, etc., we are beginning to offer a fairly complete educational package. He indicated that he had come to perceive his CSLT role as one of assisting and facilitating all of the District education programs.

There was a question about whether the Okemos facility was meeting our needs. Doug Weaver replied that it was OK, but it was getting very costly.

Joe McDonald reported that he began looking at alternative sites after the 2012 L/A, but didn't get very far on that idea. He noted that we pay a 19% gratuity for setting up each room we use at the Okemos location---in addition to the basic fee for the room. He was concerned that we didn't get some of the set-up services we had requested. He had tried to negotiate a lower gratuity fee with the sales manager, but she contended that their basic room rates were lower than other facilities. Consequently, he shuffled some classes into one side of the ballroom to reduce the number of rooms used. This saved about \$150 for each breakout room that we didn't use.

Brian Dunckel mentioned that some new or remodeled Lansing area sites had been evaluated two years earlier. One is in Holt (south side), and the other is the former Sheraton (west side).

Joe summarized that our usage at Okemos involved five breakout rooms---plus the ballroom. He noted that designing L/A as a modular event would require the usage of smaller facilities, fewer rooms, and less cost---perhaps even free. For example, an event held at CMU in Mt. Pleasant could be done without usage fees. Another option would be to use space in churches with minimal cost.

It was suggested that Roger Lewis, acting in his role as director for Events, be the person who checks out some alternate locations. The process would begin with persons like Joe telling Roger what was needed.

Meanwhile, it was suggested that we approach the Okemos facility about getting a reduction on the 19% fee because of services that were requested, but not provided.

James O'Dell asked for clarification of what would be needed for modular-type sessions. Joe noted that it would be the number of rooms needed (probably three conference rooms) and some technology requirements. In most places, arrangements would have to be made to get Internet service. He indicated that projectors, etc. had been rented previously from a national company, but he'd found a local source that matched the national price. Joe suspected that a large room wouldn't be needed for modular events as long as the breakout rooms could be used for lunch. Educational facilities usually have eating areas that would only involve a cleanup fee. Since a facility would not be "rented", the only fee might be the cost of a custodian to be present.

V. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---CSLT (cont.):

Joe strongly favored going the modular route because we could contact more members, and get closer to their home locations. While the Lansing site is a good central location, it isn't close to the largest population groupings of our members in the southwest and southeast ends of the state.

It was observed that 19 chapters were represented at this L/A. The best we've ever had was 25.

In response to a question from Doug, Joe affirmed his belief that a modular approach would give us contact with over 100 members. He felt we could still meet this goal with a single event structure, but only by spending more for outside people with "name recognition".

While the Society used to provide a list of names of resource people, it's now telling districts to ask for suggestions if they can't find someone in-house. Joe urged Doug to work at the Society level on getting the publication of the resource base re-established (at the least). Joe proposed that we consider a budget increase to cover the cost (fee, travel, and housing) of a few outside people in the future.

Joe reported that over half of our local presenters did not stay overnight at this L/A. He budgeted \$700, but only used \$300---an advantage to using members who live close by. At a modular-style event, he envisioned only having to pay for the housing of one presenter.

Larry Parker urged that we begin looking very soon for an alternate location if we choose to stay with the single event structure. He observed that the Okemos facility gave us very good rates initially. With time, however, those rates have crept up. Joe McDonald noted that the hotel was selling 50-60 rooms when L/A was an overnight event. Now the hotel is seeing a big drop in room sales.

In a change of subject, Joe commented on his plans for developing "Train the Trainers" events in support of the "Supercharging" program. He is looking primarily for locations along the I-94 corridor, since the sessions will be done on a regional basis. He will be preparing a proposed budget in the same format as was used for the Top Gun event. He is hoping to develop 6-8 trainers. He referred to the work that Jim Whitten (Mt. Pleasant chapter) did at L/A the day before. Joe and Jim also talked on Saturday with officers of the Gratiot County chapter about providing training to them on the Turbogrowth and Wavebox components (respectively). Joe compared the efforts of the "trainers" to the old "chapter counselors" that we used to have.

Doug Weaver asked if there was a possibility that trainers might be asked to go to chapters outside of the District. Joe said "yes", and also surmised that members from other districts might be invited to attend training sessions. If we did this, he envisioned a two-tier fee structure.

Doug asked if we might also receive support from the Society. Joe did not know the answer to that. Because of calls he has received from Harmony Foundation staff, he was hoping some financial support might eventually come from the Foundation. Doug urged that we pursue that concept.

Finally, Joe touched on the subject of the "Scavenger Hunt". He was looking at a "passport book" design for the score cards for the program. He anticipated a pre-announcement of the program in mid to late February, and then a marketing period for about sixty days before convention.

James O'Dell suggested that we let people know about activities held prior to official start of the "Hunt" that can be counted.

---CDD:

Since Rob Pettigrew could not be present, he had asked Doug to point out that his work plan was proposing that \$2000 be set aside for supplemental scholarships to help chapters to send their directors to Director's College at Harmony University. This is in line with his goal of getting more directors through the director certification program.

V. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---CDD (cont.):

The secretary asked when the deadline occurs to get H/U registrations at the "early bird" rate. It was believed that the deadline date is sometime in the spring, but it was noted that price jump after the deadline is not very large.

Joe McDonald announced that Pioneer will have a presenter on the faculty of H/U this year---Paul Ellinger.

Dan Bezaire asked about the process that Rob would be using to get more directors to go to H/U. It was noted that Rob had said he would make personal contacts with all of the directors in the District. It was observed that many of our directors would be eligible for scholarships from Harmony Foundation as first-time attendees.

---Events:

In addition to the details in the work plan from Roger Lewis, Doug added that he and Roger had gone to Traverse City on the preceding Thursday. Along with several members of the T.C. chapter, they visited the convention facilities.

Doug was pleased to report that complimentary suites had been restored to the hotel package, and the room rates had been reduced to \$95/night (hotel) and \$125/night (tower). In exchange for those perks, we agreed to use the facility for the 2017 and 2019 conventions. However, we could not commit to usage in 2021. We were guaranteed that increases on room rates for 2017 and 2019 would be no more than 2%. A reminder was made of the non-negotiable resort fee of \$9.95/night that the county demands.

Doug did not know how some undesirable changes slipped into the contract that Jerry Ditto had negotiated, but they have been fixed.

It was reported that invitations have been made to two highly-acclaimed high school choruses in the T.C. area. Presumably, one of them will accept and do a 15-minute set on Saturday night before the quartet finals.

Another feature being planned to be made available to spouses of members for Friday afternoon is a three-hour tour of some local wineries.

There is a possibility that space can be opened up for exhibitors to rent for display of products that don't compete with the items in the Barbershop Shop or which the hotel sells.

It was announced that a "Celebrate Harmony" chorus will be the microphone testers for the chorus competition. A Harmony Brigade chorus has been invited to sing after that competition is over.

Usage of some local photographers is being considered. We got the same complaint again at the last convention about the photographer---slow service. The quality of the lighting of the photos was deemed acceptable.

Joe McDonald reminded everyone that our current videographer is phasing out his business, so we need to find a replacement for him. Joe mentioned that the Lansing supplier of the projectors also rents video equipment, and could give us a list of possible providers.

Brian Dunckel suggested that we see if we have anyone in the District who has the skills to do this task---but may not have the equipment. He noted that Mid-Atlantic District does its own video work. It was observed that our current videographer has been doing it "forever", and the age of his equipment is revealed in the quality of color reproduction that we see.

Larry Parker noted an addition that should be made to Roger's report. The host chapter for the Kalamazoo convention in the fall of 2013 should be identified as Lansing.

V. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---Events (cont.):

Joe McDonald reminded the group of the discussion back in December about the plans of some districts to bring all of their contests into one convention and not have a second one, or restructuring the second one.

Doug Weaver observed that this topic is to be discussed further at the District Presidents meeting at the Mid-Winter convention. The impetus for this discussion is the fact that many districts are losing money with the two-convention structure. They want to have just one, and maybe have a festival instead at some other time. Doug indicated that he and Roger Lewis had discussed this subject already. He mentioned that an item from Nels Carlson regarding the 2014 convention to be considered later under New Business might have some impact on this concept.

It was emphasized that we are doing OK financially with both of our conventions right now. However, this is not the case with districts whose members must travel large distances.

Joe McDonald pointed out that while we do well, on average, with our conventions, we do "yo-yo". The question is "Why?" Joe admitted that the two-different-events concept appealed to him if one of the events was focused on one of the educational modules mentioned in the CSLT section of Item V.

---C&J:

Doug Weaver reported that Roger Lewis had observed, after seeing Ron Eubank's work plan, that there needed to be a recruiting of more judges out of our District. It was noted that we have very few.

It was reported that Ron had learned that he had been selected to be the Contest Administrator for the collegiate quartet contest in Toronto.

Joe McDonald had learned that Al Fisk is looking for things to do now that he is retired. There were also comments in the L/A evaluation sheets that urged that we utilize Al's talents more. It was suggested that we use Al as a resource for doing the recruitment of judges.

---YIH:

Since Doug Lynn is just getting started on his new role, it was understood that he had nothing yet to report. His work plan was perceived as being good.

---Financial Development:

Brian Dunckel stated that he had requested updated numbers from H/F on new donors. He had not received any data, so he was optimistic that they were swamped with end-of-the-year donations and new sign-ups at the Mid-Winter convention---and just hadn't caught up!

Doug asked Brian's opinion on the impact of the relocation of Sean Devine to Pennsylvania. Brian didn't see that there would be any. He did observe that we can expect to get less of Sean's time when he comes to conventions---as we did at the last one.

Brian was planning to have a reception for potential President's Club donors at the next convention. It will probably be on Saturday afternoon. Since this event would involve Sean, it was hoped that we could get Sean's participation in some other activities during the weekend.

Brian also intends to contact all of the Ambassador of Song donors to encourage them to consider an increase in their donations. Since Brian has a list of all of the donors to P/C and A/O/S, he will give that list to Doug so he can know who they are when he visits chapters.

V. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---Financial Development (cont.):

Larry Parker mentioned that he had been unable to deposit the check for \$2050 representing donations made in support of the Youth Festival chorus. He planned to get it into the bank in a few days. He will then send in a check to the Festival for \$4199. After deducting the \$2050 check and other amounts from chapters, the net cost to the District will be \$2149.

VI. New Business:

Doug Weaver noted that he had two items for consideration.

---Fall 2014 convention:

The Muskegon chapter has proposed a 7:00 p.m. show be identified as part of the Saturday night portion of the convention, and that it be marketed to non-barbershop attendees. Nels Carlson had perceived that this would be a major change in the character of the event that needed early approval from the District board.

Several people questioned whether this really represented a "major change". Our conventions have always been open to the public, and we want them to be entertaining. Nevertheless, we do have to run a contest within that time. It was noted that quartet contests run fairly swiftly, and our emcee (usually Doran McTaggart) keeps the audience entertained between quartets.

Joe McDonald had discussed ideas with others about doing some PR-related communications prior to the contest by means of the "big screen". This could be supplemented with remarks between quartets to explain things to visitors. He envisioned doing things that would make the event more accessible for the visitors' enjoyment by adding to it---but not changing it. He suggested that recruitment-oriented info could be included.

Joe presented a scenario of the event beginning with a "Celebrate Harmony" chorus. That would be followed by the quartet contest. Finally, there would some kind of closer. After that, there would be break when visitors could leave. The rest of the event would finish in the traditional way.

Joe wondered if the order of the quartets could be pre-slotted to build a climax in the entertainment. It was recognized, however, that contest and judging rules do not permit this.

Dan Bezaire pointed out that we have always sold single admission tickets that would cater to the needs of visitors.

Doug Weaver asked if this change was significant enough to require that it get pre-approval from the C&J function since we are inserting some things into the sequence. James O'Dell asserted that we weren't putting in a lot of stuff; we just need to think of it differently. He felt we should remember that it is an entertainment package that contains a contest. Dan Bezaire noted that we already have the winning chorus do a performance. James suggested that don't have to create a drastically new product. We just have to package it differently, and explain some of the peripheral activities to non-barbershoppers.

Doug asked if there was a point where the C&J function should become involved in this idea. It was recommended that it be discussed soon with Ron Eubank.

The question remained about whether this was really an issue. On Friday night we have a contest, and then a show after intermission. However, the structure of Saturday night defines the contest as the show. Doug found himself still mystified: "What does the Muskegon chapter want to add to it to make it a show on top of the contest?" The written proposal from Nels Carlson didn't explain what Muskegon wants to add on top of an appearance by the winning chorus and nine quartets. Is there something else?

Dan Bezaire concluded that he couldn't identify the kind of commitments that Muskegon needed from the District.

VI. New Business (cont.):

---Fall 2014 convention (cont.):

Larry Parker wondered if Muskegon was thinking about beginning with a 15-minute performance by a youth chorus. That might be followed by the appearance of the winning chorus, and then continue as normal.

James O'Dell felt that the Saturday night event would work for an outside audience because it is a defined period of time that is relatively short (about an hour and a half). A longer time would make it less appealing to outsiders. Since the quartet evaluations will add time later on, James emphasized that he didn't want to add a bunch of stuff that would increase the length of the overall event. He thought that Nels wanted encouragement from us that we were open to his ideas. However, we can't give him a "blank check" to do anything.

Joe McDonald did note that the proposal included a request for discounted tickets for educators and students, so this might represent something really new. Larry Parker observed that such tickets would have to be printed and distributed beforehand.

Doug Weaver indicated that he would follow up with Nels, and would note that we, as a board, were OK with him pursuing this as long as we can adhere to basic convention parameters. It was emphasized that Nels should check with Ron Eubank, Roger Lewis, and James O'Dell on how the details will be done.

James reminded everyone that he is already looking at discounted ticket options for the Traverse City event with his "two-on-the-town" restaurant program. He proposed that the Muskegon chapter look at similar options for the 2014 convention---since they really don't cost us anything. He described how the Huron Valley chapter did a fund-raiser through a "meet up" website.

Joe McDonald suggested that every convention we hold should go this way, and that should have a component such as Nels was proposing. James observed that Nels may be brainstorming some ideas that will apply to the future.

---Sault Ste. Marie chapter at Traverse City:

Doug Weaver referred to previous discussions about asking the Soo chapter be the "Chapter-of-Honour" at this convention. The last he knew, the chapter had reacted favorably to the idea. The members would get free registrations, and they could sing either for competition or scoring only.

Dan Bezaire suggested that the Soo chapter and Windsor chapter be featured in the singing of "O Canada" on Saturday night.

---Fall 2014 convention (return to):

Larry Parker spotted a request in Nels' proposal for re-establishment of a Ladies Hospitality Room. This is something that could be organized by the host chapter. It has also been done by the wife of the immediate past president. Brian advised that the activity was discontinued a few years ago due to the cost of offering it while getting poor attendance. While resumption of this event may not be beneficial, James O'Dell urged that we still have some kind of activity for the wives.

---Financial status (extra item):

James O'Dell recognized that Larry Parker did not yet have all of the financial records available to him, but he asked what our general balance was. Larry responded that it was around \$90,000. It was observed that we are in good shape. A few districts have larger balances, but many of them have much less. Ideally, we should have a cushion in case we must cancel a convention, or have one that is very poorly attended. Larry Parker reported a situation that occurred 15 years ago when the Lansing chapter had to loan \$8000 to Pioneer to keep it solvent.

VI. New Business (cont.):

---Financial status (extra item) (cont.):

Because he is still new on the job, Larry could not offer a financial projection for the spring convention. He mentioned that Robb Smith had met with him and brought six "carloads" (?) of records going back to 1982. He also brought a CD with all kinds of info on procedures. Larry has purchased the Quick-books® software. Robb then sent an e-mail to Larry with a file of the current account records. Robb will be doing the final report for the 2012 fiscal year.

James O'Dell asked if the financial records for the conventions include attendance numbers for each one. Larry was sure they were there; he just didn't know where.

It was suggested that Roger Lewis could know the numbers. James urged that we make a review of the numbers from the spring 2012 convention before we hold the Traverse City event. Dismay was expressed that the registration chairperson for the fall 2012 convention never reported any numbers at the Post-Convention meeting; it was hoped that Robb Smith eventually got them.

Joe McDonald mentioned that he and Larry Parker had been discussing mechanisms for accepting credit card payments for convention activities and doing registrations through electronic payments. In conjunction with that effort, Joe wondered if we were paying more for credit card fees than we should be. Larry stated that Robb Smith had declared that the current credit card we have through Comerica is the cheapest. Brian Dunckel knew that Robb compare rates about once a year to determine which company is the best one to use.

Joe wondered if there were any advantages to switching away from traditional bank sources for getting this service. There are devices available now that can be attached to cell phones for the swiping of cards. The fee for those devices is typically 15 cents per transaction. Larry was concerned about the possibility of having to restrict which cell phone(s) would be used for this purpose.

James O'Dell also suggested exploration of services such as Paypal® and Google Checkout®. All of these approaches utilize "virtual terminals" through the use of wireless Internet connections.

Joe urged that we explore these "virtual" options, and then standardize the registrations of all of our District events through one system. The advantage he saw in doing this was the fact that all of the data is consolidated for other things such as mail merges, name tag printing, etc.

Larry indicated that the current District credit card has Robb Smith's name on it. Larry will have to get the card re-issued.

Brian Dunckel asked if the expenditures for Troubadour were going to be discussed. Doug Weaver indicated that the topic would be covered during the follow BOD meeting.

XI. Adjournment:

At 10:38 a.m., Brian Dunckel moved that the meeting be adjourned, and Larry Parker made the second. **Motion approved.**

Minutes prepared by Jim McMahan, Secretary, Pioneer District of SPEBSQSA, Inc.