

Minutes of the Pioneer District Board of Directors of SPEBSQSA, Inc.
held on October 16, 2015, in the
The Fields Room of the Radisson Plaza Hotel

Attendees:

-----Members of the District Board of Directors present:

Dan Bezaire (President)
Mike Hansen (Executive vice-president)
Jim McMahan (Secretary)
Larry Parker (Treasurer)
Doug Weaver (Immediate past president, and also Director of Financial Development)
Chris Berry (Director of CDD)
Brian Dunckel (Director of C&J)
Roger Lewis (Director of Events)
Dave Montera (Director of Music & Performance)
James O'Dell (Director of Mktg. & PR)
Mike Ridenour (Director of CS/LT)
Ed Bax (Member-at-large)

-----Members of the District Board of Directors absent:

Paul Ellinger (Director of Membership)
Aaron Pollard (Director of YIH)

-----Guests:

Ed Bittle (Society board member-at-large)
J.J. Hankins (Harmony Foundation regional director)
Craig Pollard (reporting on behalf of his son Aaron)
Robb Smith (former District treasurer)

I. Call To Order:

The meeting began at 10:24 a.m. Because the room had a lot of echo in it, the secretary asked that others not speak while others are speaking. That could create chaos in his recording that might make it difficult to identify who was speaking and what the person was saying.

There was some confusion about the scheduled start time for this meeting. The secretary had been given the time of 10:00 a.m. to put in the convention program, but the agenda cited 10:30 a.m.

Dan Bezaire asked Dave Montera to direct the singing of "The Old Songs".

As a matter of administrative detail, it was noted that a quorum of board members was present.

II. Approval of the agenda:

Dan Bezaire referenced to a distribution he had made of the new "Small Board Rules". He advised the board that Ed Bittle was available to answer any questions about this item. Its most important detail is that a motion is not needed if there is no objection to an action.

Dan asked if there were any objections to the agenda. One person indicated he would be making some comments later, but it was determined those would be relevant to a scheduled topic.

Dan confirmed that there were no objections, so the agenda was adopted.

III. Minutes of the BOD meeting on April 24, 2015:

The minutes had been previously distributed by the District Secretary. Dan Bezaire asked if there were any objections to, or issues arising from the content of the minutes. There being none, the minutes were approved.

IV. Financial report:

Larry Parker had previously distributed two documents electronically: a Balance Sheet, and a Profit & Loss Statement. He noted that, as of September 30, we had total assets of \$82,388.56. He added that we had received income for this convention that totaled \$17,538.61, but there were bills that must be paid out of those monies.

Chris Berry asked about where the credit card fees for items like CDWI income and registrations were listed. Larry indicated that he didn't yet have any such items to list. He wasn't sure if some might have come through since September 30. He then found a figure of \$145.35 in that period. Chris concluded that would have come from \$150 of CDWI income, but the fee was \$4.65. Larry noted that he never sees fees in the report from Stripe. Chris stated that he could show Larry how to pull out the figure.

Larry has the same problem with fees deducted from convention registrations. Typically, there might be 140 registrations, but Larry never sees the fee deductions. That is why he only reports the net figures from Stripe. Larry cited a total of \$15,421.88 received for registrations for the current convention, but this is clearly a net figure after Stripe has made its deductions.

Chris reiterated that he could show Larry how to pull out the deduction amounts. It merely requires a little more data entry. He felt it would be useful to see the fees to determine if they might be excessive, and whether a different merchant should be utilized.

Roger Lewis moved that the treasurer's report be received, and Brian Dunckel made the second. Without any objections, the report was received.

V. Consent Calendar:

Dan Bezaire noted that written reports had been received from the Music & Performance, Membership/Outreach, CSLT, C&J, and Events functions. He invited the board members who had not done so to provide verbal reports for their functions.

---Financial Development:

Doug Weaver noted that he has experienced problems in setting up meetings with H/F representatives because of transitions. Initially, he was working with Sean Devine, but who left. After David Calland came on as Sean's replacement, Doug worked with him to develop a schedule of meeting with chapters. Because David subsequently left the Foundation, Doug was glad that J.J. Hankins could be present at this meeting. As soon as new regional reps are defined, Doug will learn who our new rep will be. Doug hopes to continue planning for chapter visits.

In the meantime, Doug's primary focus has been preparation for the Parade of Checks at the HOD meeting to follow this meeting. He has visited several chapters to promote the event, and other board members have also made visits. The goal of that project will be to raise as much money as possible in support of "The Voice Barbershop Chorus" (TVBC)

Doug was sure that, after the P-O-C, we will know how much money the District must contribute to fulfill our commitment. He was confident that we will be in good shape.

It was asked how checks should be written that will be presented at the P-O-C. Initially, it was stated that they should be written to the District. Larry Parker indicated, however, that they should be written to "TCC/Voices". The checks should be directed to the attention of Roger McCaskey, treasurer of the Hillsdale chapter. It was confirmed that checks made out to the District could still be consolidated into one District check.

V. Consent Calendar (cont.):

---Marketing & PR:

James O'Dell had nothing to report.

---CDD:

Chris Berry noted that a CDWI and an OIF program would be held simultaneously in Grand Rapids on November 21. Seven directors had requested slots for the CDWI, but he could only accept the first five. He reported that three members of Da Yoopers chorus would be coming. He also mentioned that he had three persons registered so far for the OIF program. He expects to have an announcement about the events that can be read during the convention.

He apologized to the Mt. Pleasant chapter for the confusion that occurred during the planning for the location for this event. The secretary explained that a message was sent that said the chapter couldn't host it in CMU facilities. That message, however, led to a misinterpretation that the chapter couldn't host it at all.

Larry Parker stated that he had not yet received any checks for registrations for the CDWI or the OIF. Chris declared that he will ask the individuals who have said they are coming to do their paperwork.

---Events:

Roger Lewis thought he had made some errors in the planning for this convention, but now was not sure if that was the case. He noted that he had talked to the hotel extensively about having a mass sing on Saturday afternoon in the hotel lobby after the chorus competition. Although it never got publicized, he noted that it will happen!

An announcement will be made after the winners are identified that will direct everyone to the lobby. Chris Berry will assign chorus directors to stand at the top of the escalators to direct songs of their choice. Roger pointed out that there was a 30-minute window before evaluations begin.

Roger emphasized that this activity could not be done on the Radisson's temporary stage because it would not support the expected number of participants.

It is also planned that the hotel person who is traveling around to film convention activities will be advised to be in the lobby at the time of the mass sing. Roger also suggested to James O'Dell that he look into possible TV coverage.

As he looked ahead to the Grand Rapids convention, Roger asked the board if anyone knew what a "pedal pub" was. He described it as a wagon powered by the people who are riding on it. There are five persons on each side. A large ice chest is situated in the center. A driver is in front to steer it. The participants bring the own beverages. As an aside, he mentioned that these units also exist in Nashville.

Roger has noted that a number of people come on the Thursday night before the convention. If he can find ten people who want to do this activity, he will try to organize it. Since the pedal pubs start from the downtown area, the participants must go to the start point. Roger plans to open the activity to both convention attendees and locals. However, it won't be possible to publicize the activity in the program.

Another new item at this convention will be a caricature artist who will be located in the lobby near the ballroom between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m. on both Friday and Saturday. He will charge \$10 per head, or \$40 per quartet. We must pay the artist \$100/hour, i.e., \$400. The host chapter is collecting the money, so it is hoped that the activity will return a profit.

The Tex-Mex quartet tag contest is also scheduled for Friday afternoon. We had 23 quartets that competed at the last convention, so participation in this activity will be tracked.

V. Consent Calendar (cont.):

---Events (cont.):

Larry Parker asked for verification that the hotel is collecting the money for tacos and beverages being served. One time through the line is \$7. A repeat trip would be another \$7. While the normal serving will be two tacos, Roger thought the hotel might accommodate young persons who ask for three.

Roger observed that it is hard to get a hotel to do this kind of activity. The cheapest price is usually \$12.50---plus a 24% combined sales tax and service charge.

He noted that this concept was developed a year earlier at the Grand Rapids spring convention when the goal was to create a simple meal (the pizza party) that would eliminate the need for attendees to go off of the property. He had concluded it was very successful.

Roger thanked William Stutts and James O'Dell who have arranged for judges and emcees for the tag contest.

VI. Other Reports (out of order):

Dan Bezaire noted that it should be entered into the record was that we approved (via an electronic vote) the decision to hold a Parade of Checks at the upcoming House of Delegates meeting.

V. Consent Calendar (cont.) (return to agenda):

---Events (return to):

The topic just mentioned reminded Roger of another detail that was arranged for this convention. TVBC members are using five rooms (four boys per room). Roger identified the various donations of rooms by board members that freed up 10 room nights. Two board members were sharing a room, so that freed up two more room nights. Finally, one room night became available because of Aaron Pollard's schedule. That left Roger short on funding for one night. He asked that anyone who wanted to donate toward that need to talk with Larry Parker.

---YIH:

Because Aaron Pollard had to be in college classes on this day, his father Craig reported on his behalf. He distributed a written report that covered the things to be mentioned. The secretary asked that the report be sent to him later as an electronic file.

The first part of the report dealt with YIH items. It was noted therein that Aaron was able to get the e-mail addresses on all 253 high school choral directors in Michigan. This included all public, private, and parochial schools. In e-mails that were subsequently sent, Aaron created a link to the Society's youth harmony package. This package includes info about free music, learning tracks, and music examples.

In his message to the directors, Aaron mentioned that materials are available for men's ensembles, women's ensembles, and mixed ensembles. Quick links were also embedded in the e-mails that would pull up the insignia of a recent championship high school quartet, a link to the international championship mixed quartet ("Double Date"), a link to a Sweet Adelines young women's top ten championship quartet ("GQ"), a link to the BHS International championship quartet ("Instant Classic"), and a link to Westminster Chorus. Most of the links were not to complete performances, but to one-minute portions thereof. The intent was to show what youth are doing in barbershop.

Craig reported that some responses have been received as a result of the e-mails. Aaron is working to get into more communication with those schools and provide more info.

V. Consent Calendar (cont.) (return to agenda):

---YIH (cont.):

A comment was made about inquiries that might come from schools in the UP. It would not be easy for Aaron or youth in the lower part of the state to visit those schools, so it was suggested that we utilize the Marquette and Traverse City chapters to do follow-up. Those chapters couldn't provide youth examples, but it would at least offer a live experience.

Craig agreed this would be ideal if the need develops. So far, the response has been limited to questions. Fortunately, most of the info the directors need is in the links.

VI. Other Reports (previously covered out of order):VII. "The Voice Barbershop Chorus":

Craig moved on with a report on the group. He thanked the board and the District for its support. He noted that the chorus is having fun, it is growing, and it is looking forward to its trip to Reno.

He mentioned that the chorus is working on three new songs. They've added 5-6 new members. They had 23 members that went to New Orleans, and they will take 27 or 28 to Reno. Craig noted that the new members are good singers already because of their high school or college experience. Most of them did not have a prior barbershop background.

During the previous month, the chorus had a three-hour coaching session with David Calland. Craig felt the group was ready for Reno. Their appearance at this convention will be their debut. The chorus has been hired to appear on the November 7 show of the Pontiac-Waterford chapter. "Instant Classic" will be on the show with them. The group is getting paid \$500, and their afterglow expenses will be covered as well. The \$500 will go into the group's funds to cover the Reno trip.

Craig reported that the chorus had received \$4813 in donations so far. Expenses to date were listed on his handout. The rental cost of the church where rehearsals are held is only \$200 per year. The learning tracks for the three songs being used at Reno cost \$190. There is a \$300 registration fee for the YCF. The cost of David Calland's coaching session with the chorus was \$275. Shirts for new members cost \$175.96. Finally, there was a \$1950 deposit that had to be made for plane tickets.

All of this leaves the chorus with a balance of \$1722. However, Craig knew that \$100 checks had been received from the families of several members. He believed that 14-15 of the members have made that minimum payment. Consequently, he felt that the chorus would need to get to a total of \$7800 as of this weekend as a result of audience donations, etc. He noted that the audience gave them around \$4000 last year. If that happens again, the chorus will not need very much support from the District.

Brian Dunckel asked for confirmation the \$1722 balance was included in the total of \$7800 in total of monies needed. That amount would cover the rest of the cost of the plane fares, and would give each member about \$40 for food costs.

Doug Weaver noted that H/F provides one meal for all of the participants during the Festival.

Roger Lewis recalled that a request was made at the last fall convention for a table in the lobby on Saturday night where donations could be received. He asked if that was needed again. Craig verified that it was needed, since that is a prime time for getting donations. Craig had assumed that the tables already there were for that purpose. The secretary suggested that we promote the existence of the tables so that the audience doesn't miss them. Roger mentioned that the tables will still be in use for late registrations at the beginning of Saturday night.

In addition to the appearance of the chorus during the competition on Saturday morning (for scoring only), TVBC is also slated to appear at 6:30 p.m. during the pre-show on Saturday night. TVBC will be followed by the second place winners of the tag contest, and then by the chorus going to International.

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

Craig indicated that Aaron was concerned about how much time his quartet would have to get ready for the quartet finals---assuming it made the cut. Roger assured Craig that his son's quartet would have ample time because of all that is occurring.

Roger suggested that Craig prepare an announcement for Doran McTaggart to make that directs the audience to the donation table.

Craig reiterated the chorus's appreciation for the support it has received from the District.

Larry Parker asked for info on the design and cost of the shirts that are worn by TVBC members. He suggested that a member of the Lansing chorus might be able to arrange a good price. Craig recalled that it was a member of that chapter that set up the original purchase of the shirts.

Dan Bezaire expressed his thanks to Craig for the info presented. He felt the District was excited about the participation of the chorus in the YCF. Dan was optimistic there would be a good response at the Parade-of-Checks because of the extra push made to promote it.

It was asked if the board had already made a motion to approve a payment by the District of the balance needed to cover the total costs that the chorus will incur. Doug Weaver indicated that he would determine at the end of the weekend how much more money was needed. He will then make a motion to the board to expend that amount.

It was noted that nothing has been defined in the budget for this expense. A consensus had merely been established that we would act to support the difference when it was known. That was necessary because the board did not know earlier what the amount might be. The only stipulation had been that each participant would have to contribute \$100.

Doug Weaver reiterated that it appears that everything will be in good shape because of the fund-raising that has been done. It was observed that the \$4800 averages out to much more than \$100 per chorus member. That figure has been presently reduced, for now, to \$1722 because of expenses---like the down payments on airfares.

It was asked if the \$4800 included any performance money. It was noted that it did not, since that income will come late in November. Doug Weaver suggested that he and Craig get together to define any additional items that will come later.

Doug thought it would be interesting to see how much is collected at the door this year. Last year there was a matching donation that might have encouraged donors to give more. That circumstance does not exist this time.

Dan Bezaire was also anxious to see how much would be received at the Parade-of-Checks this year. Dan indicated that the treasurer of the Pontiac-Waterford chapter had confirmed that his chapter would be giving \$500 to the chorus to be on its show, but would not be contributing at the P-O-C. The chorus members will also be treated to an afterglow breakfast at the P-W show. This will be a \$14/person benefit. Dan observed that constitutes a \$920 donation---if the chorus chooses to treat it as such.

Mike Hansen asked if there has been any tracking of the movement of youth chorus members into Society chapters---especially after they age out of the chorus. Craig Pollard responded that the chorus was lucky this year. When the age limit was dropped to 25, the chorus only lost one member. Two more dropped out for other reasons. However, the chorus gained six new members. As a result, the chorus doesn't have much statistical data. It was noted that 10-12 of its members do belong to Pioneer chapters (Flint, Grosse Pointe, Kalamazoo, and Pontiac-Waterford). Most of the rest of them are new, or are in college. Those individuals will need to be tracked in the future.

Mike observed that a lot of interest exists in the District about future involvement of youth chorus members in the Society. Craig Pollard agreed that it is great if they become "hooked", and then move on into chapters after college---depending on where their careers take them.

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

Larry Parker asked if those who are members of chapters are registered to sing with their respective groups. Craig confirmed that all of those who are in that situation are competing. Larry, however, was concerned that he didn't have paid registrations from most of them. He knew that an individual from the Battle Creek chapter was registered, but he knew of two more from the Lansing chapter that had not done so. It was noted that those two were also in a competition quartet.

Doug Weaver asserted that this requirement is not new. Indeed, Craig Pollard mentioned that the topic was discussed at the last TVBC rehearsal. At that time, everyone declared he was registered. Craig was mystified by the comments being made at this juncture. It was suggested that registration with the Society as a quartet may be getting confused with convention registration.

Larry Parker said that one of the quartet members had sent a check, but it did not arrive. A new check was being brought this weekend. Consequently, Larry is giving him the benefit of the early registration rate. However, Larry had not received registrations from some TVBC members who belong to the Flint chapter. Craig indicated he would follow up with the chorus and the quartet at their rehearsals that evening. Roger Lewis noted that they can't even get into the contest on Friday night without at least a TVBC badge.

Craig reiterated that he will talk with the members of TVBC and the quartet about this matter.

VIII. Society board member report:

Ed Bittle began by observing that he knows more than he did last year as a new Society board member, and he also knows more about what he doesn't know.

He mentioned that he did not have with him a copy of the Society's fall 2015 report when he recently went to the Rocky Mountain District convention. He asked if Pioneer board members had received a copy. It was determined that no one had. However, Ed indicated he was not going to cover all of the items in that report.

He had conferred with J.J. Hankins to avoid discussing topics therein that J.J. was going to cover later in his report. Ed discovered that he and Jim Clark were doing some repetition of topics when they were at the RMD event. Therefore, Ed planned to let J.J. cover H/F, membership, youth chorus, and grants issues, and Ed will cover Society business issues.

Ed stated that he would talk about the new manager of chapter leadership position that has been created on the Society staff. This position was created with a H/F grant. This individual will report to Donny Rose. He started working in his role on this very day, and will be at the Forum in November. His job will be to provide support to chapters. His name is Dr. Duane Gunn.

The next item that Ed covered came as a result of discussions at the Pittsburgh convention by the district presidents. The document is a draft of proposed revisions to the Standard Chapter Bylaws. The ideas were submitted originally by the "Sound of the Rockies" and "Pride of Iowa" chapters to the Society. Noah Funderberg felt that it would be better to incorporate these changes into the SCB rather than into a Society document.

The genesis of these changes resulted from grant requests made by the aforementioned chapters. Grant-making institutions saw complications in the language of the SCB.

Ed reported that some of these issues will be reviewed in a Society board phone conference that is scheduled for the Sunday evening after this convention. Ed emphasized that the bulk of the SCB will not change.

Ed mentioned that another issue being considered is the "males only" stipulation in the SCB. This issue has arisen because females are sometimes singing (as associate members) in some choruses, or as members of mixed quartets.

VIII. Society board member report (cont.):

The issue was raised further when Ed visited a regional meeting of the Iowa ACDA. A quartet was brought in to perform, and a lot of free music was distributed. Afterwards, Ed was talking to three female and two male directors about the Music Directors Handbook that was in the distribution. He was also selling them on the idea of getting associate memberships. Later on, Sherri Lewis pointed out to him that associate memberships are only sold to females!

Ed knows that smaller chapters in some districts use women to cover certain parts like tenor in their shows. Most of those women have associate memberships, but are offended that they aren't considered to be members when they are on stage. Ed did not want to get into a debate for now on this issue, but he said there are strong feelings about it on the Society board.

It was verified that women in the chapters previously cited are not participating in competitions.

Ed mentioned that RMD has only one convention in the fall, and then has a Harmony College in the spring where they have quartet competitions. There was conjecture that allowing women to sing in those quartets would bring more attendees to that event.

Another issue that is being raised is participation of transgender members. Again, there have been no decisions.

Ed noted that several historically all-male organizations changed their membership rules many years ago. Our Society has now moved onto the "cutting edge" of change.

Ed invited those who have interest in these issues to share their thoughts with him later.

The other SCB changes that are being considered for revision are related to giving chapters more flexibility. Currently, chapters are required to have a president, a VP of Chapter Development, a VP of Music and Performance, VP of Marketing & PR (if there are more than 25 members in the chapter), a secretary, and a treasurer. Such other officers as are necessary can be added to that list.

A proposed change would say that the chapter must have a president, a secretary/treasurer, and such other officers as needed. This change would help out very small chapters.

The topic of terms of office was prompted by grant-seeking processes in Iowa and Colorado. Some grant requests to cover reimbursement of hotel and motel taxes in Iowa, and sales taxes in Colorado, were turned down initially because the chapters were perceived as being non-local in character. When those rejections were challenged, the grant-making organizations also noted that the officers of chapters had one-year terms, but the grant payments would be made after new officers were elected. They questioned whether new officers would still be pursuing the original terms of the grant(s).

To overcome this objection, there is a proposed revision of the SCB to allow for officers to have two year terms. Another option in the proposed SCB revisions to deal with one-year terms of office is to allow the election of an executive vice-president who would become the president-elect. This would serve to demonstrate a succession plan for a chapter. Ed emphasized that chapters would not have to implement these options.

Ed reported that the Des Moines chapter has been having quarterly strategic planning meetings, but they are essentially board meetings---even though SCB call for monthly meetings. Another proposed SCB change would call for regular board meetings to be held "at least quarterly". Ed admitted that some small chapters might still have a problem achieving that criterion!

An option in the proposed SCB changes that could benefit large chapters would be to allow the creation of an executive committee (president, secretary, and treasurer) that could handle a lot of interim decisions.

VIII. Society board member report (cont.):

Ed offered a reminder about the option of using Small Board Procedures as a means of saving some time in board meetings. They would eliminate the need for motions and seconds. An idea can be submitted by a board member, and can be approved if there are no objections. Perhaps a motion would only be needed to initiate the discussion. Dan Bezaire pointed out that the Small Board Procedures would really smooth out electronic votes. An idea can merely be presented; if there are no responses within a set time, the idea is approved.

Ed mentioned that chapters should verify that electronic votes are allowed within the state of incorporation. He suggested that the electronic vote option should be included in a chapter's SCB. He added that electronic votes are being used a lot by community college boards. However, Mike Hansen mentioned that there is debate about continuing to allow that to happen in those organizations because they are public institutions.

Ed commented on the recent option for chapters to get permission to add up to two non-member community-member-at-large positions (CMALs) to their boards. He thought there were eight chapters who have been allowed to have them. The secretary noted that the Mt. Pleasant chapter has two CMALs. Ed then recalled that one of the Mt. Pleasant members is a female. He noted that this brings us back to an issue of persons not being members, but being voting board members.

Another option being proposed for change in the SCB is the creation of advisory boards that would not have any board members. These types of groups are used often by other non-profits when they do fund-raising. The concept is to bring into these advisory boards some persons from community groups that might become contributors. Advisory boards might only meet a few times a year, but could help the chapter to become better known in the community.

Ed admitted that the Society board hasn't gotten much response back from district presidents about the proposed SCB changes other than appreciation for those things that would give more flexibility to small chapters.

A topic of concern that has come up this year as the Society and H/F seek to raise money is the compliance of chapters with state and Federal regulations. Ed specifically mentioned the filing of 990 forms with the IRS. Chapters that fail to file for three years in a row are no longer under the Society's tax-exempt status. Failure of a chapter to maintain its incorporation status with the state for three years in row also removes it from tax-exempt status.

Since districts and chapters are subsidiaries of the Society, their non-compliances raise questions about the non-profit status of the Society. This is why discussion of the topic at Leadership Academies has become so important.

Ed recalled that we had discussed these issues at the last Pioneer BOD meeting he attended. He also mentioned that there was heated concern about this topic at a recent HOD meeting in the RMD.

Another issue that has been discussed by the Society board is that of "permanent guests". These are persons who sing with chapters on their shows, but never become members. This topic has been discussed extensively, but no solutions have been found.

It was reported that the SCJC Committee is considered a redefinition of the Presentation category as the "Performance" category. This would be done to reflect that we should become focused on entertainment. However, there is a concern that performance could then get in the way of singing.

One problem being considered is how to avoid the grouping of choruses and quartets that sometimes occurs at the International events. When high performing groups appear back to back, average groups become isolated and get very little audience. While nothing has been proposed on this topic, it is continuing to be discussed. The ultimate goal is to make conventions more interesting. One idea that Ed has advanced is the incorporation of plateaus at International just like is done at district events.

VIII. Society board member report (cont.):

The concept of Outreach is a new one that being developed. Ed pointed out that his title in his Des Moines chapter is VP of Community Outreach, and not the VP of YIH. This change has evolved because chapters are doing more than just interacting with youth; they are also working with older segments of their communities. This is still important because much of our membership is over 50. We have a large gap between those served by our youth programs, and age of our membership. One possible approach to connecting with that intermediate age group is usage of advisory boards.

Ed reported that his Iowa chapter took the Society materials developed for distribution to the ACDA to a Iowa choral director's summer symposium. He noted that Iowa has the second largest choral directors group in the U.S. (Texas is larger.)

His next remark was put into the context of efforts we have been making to teach improved vocal techniques to our membership. At the Iowa event, Ed attended a focus group that dealt with contributions that the Society is trying to make. One director commented that he appreciated what we were trying to do, but he didn't want the barbershop chorus in his community to come to his school because the group didn't sing with the techniques that he was teaching.

Ed noted that he would be emphasizing during the convention that our members must learn the techniques that are being taught today in the schools. This is important not only for the purpose of going to competitions, but because it is part of our continuing education and our acceptance by the academic world.

He moved on to discussion of the grants process. He declared that it is changing, and will continue to change. Applications are currently being considered for FY 2016. Ed was of the opinion that wasn't long enough if one is looking at activities that involve youth. He learned at the Iowa meeting of the ACDA that planning for the 2016-2017 school year was occurring at that time. By March 2016, those plans will be rigidly set. Announcing in the spring of 2016 that you are organizing a fall 2016 youth festival is too late. Ed admitted that he didn't realize that planning was being done that far ahead. He has learned that most 2016-2017 school music calendars are already published.

The last item that Ed wanted to present was development of long range strategic plans. When the Society board approves the budget at its November 2015 meeting, there will also be initiation of the process to create a three-year strategic plan. Currently, there is no such plan on the Society website. However, the budget being developed will be focused on a three-year basis.

In the development of a three-year strategic plan, Ed felt that district and chapter officers should be involved in the discussion.

It was asked if the Small Board Rules came from the Society board. It was noted that these rules actually come from Robert's Rules of Order, and had been merely recommended for adoption by chapter and district boards.

[Departure of Craig Pollard noted.]

An additional item that Ed remembered he should mention is based on work done by Tom Gentry to develop an introduction to barbershop singing. That document led Wayne Grimmer to create a middle school curriculum. The pilot program will be rolled out in the Nashville area in the following week. Ed is suggesting that there should be some more pilot opportunities. He is considering a request for a grant to do one in the Des Moines schools.

Ed has observed that middle school boys may get started in singing programs, but drop out when they reach high school. He felt this is a perfect age to offer them something different besides vocal jazz. He asked if barbershop was a competition category in Michigan high school programs; he knew it was in Wisconsin. He has observed that a lot of the vocal jazz he hears is close to barbershop. He thought that either category would be a lot more fun for boys---compared to the repertoire usually done in high school competitions. Ed has concluded that the materials coming from Wayne Grimmer should be beneficial down the road in getting music educators interested in barbershop.

VIII. Society board member report (cont.):

Roger Lewis asked for info about the date of the 2016 Forum. Dan Bezaire indicated it would be held on the weekend before Harmony University. Roger then wondered if that would have any impact on when 2017 District officers were elected. It was suggested that the election might need to be held in April.

Mike Hansen pointed out the personal scheduling challenge that officers will encounter in 2016 with International occurring just two weeks before Forum.

Brian Dunckel observed that we might need to amend our SDB to allow for an election in April of the officers for the following calendar year. Ed Bittle immediately made a note to himself about that being a detail that should be part of the bylaws revision discussion.

Roger Lewis noted that chapter board elections wouldn't be affected by the timing of Forum, but district elections could be.

Dan Bezaire said that 2016 would be a Forum transition year, since there would only be seven months between the 2015 event in November and the 2016 event in July. However, the change of the timing of Forum is a permanent change. The advantage of having Forum in July is the availability of the facility at Belmont University. Roger Lewis pointed out that having Forum sooner would generate longer planning time.

Larry Parker expressed a concern about the long time that it was taking for membership renewals to be processed. Ed Bittle knew that a change in the language of the ethics portion of the membership card was made. He suspected that the printing of new cards may be causing a delay. However, not all chapters have experienced this problem. Dave Montera had heard that reprinting required the acquisition of new paper stock, and that was a recent source of the delay.

IX. Harmony Foundation representative report:

Dan Bezaire introduced J.J. Hankins, who is our new H/F rep. J.J. dimmed the room lights for a slide presentation he was going to make.

He introduced his slides as a high level overview of the activities of the Foundation. He indicated he would begin with the status in 1985. At that time, he noted that popular music, music educators, the media, music publishers, and the general public looked down on barbershop as a musical genre. The leadership of the Society was dreaming of reversing a downward drift in membership. However, there was no unified, long term plan to change that trend.

He pointed out that the H/F used to send a card out with the membership renewal cards that said "Won't you do your part today?" The main effort was to get gifts of \$15, \$20, and \$25. The process wasn't effective.

New initiatives have been instituted in the last few years that have allowed the Society to bring its members in at a higher level, and to accomplish a lot of things.

J.J. first commented on our partnership with the ACDA in 2013. That year we invited an ACDA rep to the Mid-Winter convention. We put an ad in every ACDA journal that year. We had a booth at every regional ACDA event. Finally, we gave over 2500 copies of music to educators. The executive director of the ACDA (Dr. Tim Sharp) gave the keynote address at H/U. Those efforts led to arrangers like Kirby Shaw, Deke Sharon, et.al. to generate more charts and to present them at 10 ACDA events. (As an aside, J.J. showed a slide of Tim Sharp doing his first tag at Society headquarters a month earlier.)

One of the problems that the Society faces is a shortage of qualified directors. It is well understood that we are not doing enough great singing, and great singing attracts more singers. J.J. asserted that this is one of the biggest challenges facing our chapters today. He noted that one of the largest sources of qualified directors may be music educators. This is one of the most important aspects of the BHS/ACDA partnership. It allows us to reach out to them at a higher level.

IX. Harmony Foundation representative report (cont.):

Hopefully, it will become understood that ACDA believes in barbershop as a legitimate art form that educators should be pursuing.

J.J. referred to an address that Tim Sharp gave at an ACDA national convention where he listed the forms of choral music that should be brought into schools. He mentioned "barbershop" as an obvious inclusion in that list.

Historically, chapters have approached local music educators directly. Now, however, members of ACDA are beginning to see barbershop as being viable for their professional development. Gaining this kind of acceptance was hard for chapters and districts to do on their own. The new partnership should make it lot easier to them to do.

Another partnership is the one established in 2014 with the Hal Leonard corporation---the largest music distributor in North America. Initially the firm asked for 100 charts, and agreed to pay 75 cents to the Society for every dollar received. As a result, year-to-year sales of music have increased 59%. Hal Leonard reaches 45,000 customers that BHS does not reach.

J.J. noted that there are 6000+ charts that could be sold, but the clearance and licensing process is expensive, and it is grossly under-funded.

Another initiative is the youth barbershop quartet contest. This is the new name for the collegiate quartet contest. The new name reflects a desire to involve younger singers like high schoolers. There used to be a low-end age limit on the college contest, but this was eliminated when the name change was made. There will be a special division for high school quartets, and winners in that category will receive a separate award.

J.J. noted that the college quartet program has existed for 24 years. There were 24 quartets that competed at the last International. He added that every qualifying quartet receives a scholarship. He showed a graph of the growth of participation over the years. He noted that 57 quartets attempted to qualify in 2015. Those figures were compared with 1992 where 14 quartets were invited, but there was no qualification process then.

He summarized that there have been 24 collegiate champion quartets since 1992, or 96 individual champions. Of those 96 individuals, 61 of them (64%) are members today. Many of them are in leadership roles in the Society.

J.J. moved on to the topic of the Youth Chorus Festival---which has a goal of getting more young people singing. Since the inception of the YCF in 2008, 117 choruses (over 3000 youth) have participated. Because of a rule that 66% of the members of each chorus must be non-members, approximately 2000 individuals are new to barbershop. The YCF costs around \$250,000. Sponsorships have been provided that serve to support the festival exclusively.

Harmony University was another item that J.J. discussed. Because of the partnership with ACDA, there has been an opportunity to get more music educators involved. In 2014, there were 29 educators at H/U on scholarships. In 2015, that increased to over 100. Total attendance at the 2015 H/U was 730---a new record. Fifty-four persons were on full scholarships, and 64 were on half scholarships. There were also four quartet scholarships. Fourteen countries were represented---including Poland, Brazil, and Sri Lanka.

Harmony Explosion camps/one-day workshops was the next topic in J.J.'s presentation. In 2013, it was observed that the number of camps and workshops was dropping. This prompted the creation of a new grant process. The number of events in 2013 was 40. In 2014 that figure grew to 56. The prediction for 2015 was a 30% increase. Instead, there were funding requests to support 144. It was only possible to approve 107. There were 7900 youth who attended camps/workshops in 2014. In 2015, the number went to 21,000. J.J. summarized the numbers to indicate this represented approximately a 50% increase in camps, and a 260% increase in attendees. The fact that 37 events could not be funded indicates that there is still insufficient funding for this activity---in spite of a doubling of the H/F grant to the Society.

IX. Harmony Foundation representative report (cont.):

J.J. announced that the foundation was launching the "Every Voice Matters" campaign at the fall district conventions. The full logo of the campaign is "Even the smallest voice, speaking through love, can be heard by the world". This is a quote that came from Ryan Killeen (not Aristotle).

The goal of the campaign is to add 1000 new Ambassadors of Song or Presidents Council members to those annual giving programs. He reminded the board members that A-O-S membership is \$10 per month, or \$120 per year, while the P-C program starts at \$1000 per year.

The purposes of the campaign are to get people together to experience the joy of singing, and to connect them with other lifelong singers. He reiterated his previous remark about not being able to fund 37 YCF choruses in spite of a doubling of the H/F grant for this purpose.

Another purpose of the campaign is to show music educators, singers, and directors how to build better, bigger, and stronger communities of singers. J.J. noted that the music educators who go to H/U represent hundreds of choruses and thousands of youth.

Another purpose is to create and publish relevant and exciting barbershop music for every major country on earth. J.J. felt that the Hal Leonard firm will help us to do that.

The goal is to reach out to 90,000 students, educators, and music professionals, and to provide them with the vital help they need. This becomes especially important with the diminishing prioritization of singing in America. J.J. noted the statistics are that 1 in 5 schools will drop their music programs next year. With the help that BHS offers, school systems may be able to say that it won't cost them as much to maintain their programs. J.J. observed that we are on track to assist 100,000 students, et.al. this year.

Another purpose is to continue to provide our world-class youth festivals and contests, to make those activities visible to the choral arts world, and to let them prove the relevance, value, and necessity of barbershop harmony music in educational curriculums.

An important task is to bridge the gap between elementary and high school music education. J.J. alluded to Ed Bittle's remarks about Wayne Grimmer's new program being piloted in Nashville middle schools. The challenge with this group is the changes occurring in boys' voices at this age. Many of our current arrangements are either too high or too low for them. Restructuring of voicing may help with this problem.

Another gap that must be bridged is the one between the Society and its chapters. J.J. referred to the recent hiring of Dr. Duane Gunn to serve as a liaison with chapters to help them go forward. As an example, he suggested assistance with the process of seeking a new director. Another example would be assistance with recruiting.

J.J. announced that there is a match that has been offered for the "Every Voice Matters" campaign. \$250,000 will be contributed if the goal of 1000 new donors is attained. The specific goal for the Pioneer convention is to bring in 20 new donors. J.J. was hoping that he would have at least five of those donors signed up before the convention actually begins.

J.J. noted that he had shared the purposes of the funds that will be expended as a result of this campaign. He had pledge cards with him that would be distributed. He realized that a lot of the board members are already donors, so he might be "preaching to the choir". For those who are not members, however, now is the time to sign up when gifts have twice as much value.

X. Old Business:A. Chapter contacts:

Dan Bezaire asked if there were any negative feedbacks acquired from chapters. His comment was not a negative, but Brian Dunckel mentioned that he visited both of his chapters recently. Mike Hansen was able to accompany him on both visits.

X. Old Business (cont.):A. Chapter contacts (cont.):

Brian noted that the Saginaw Bay chapter had gained a new member. The gentleman is 92. After the chapter sang at his retirement home, he became so interested that he now drives from Midland to Bay City to be a part of the chorus.

Dan Bezaire recalled a visit that he made to the same chapter to present a 70 year membership renewal to one of its members.

Dan reported on the concept of creating a senior competition chorus within the District. If created, such a chorus would compete at the Mid-Winter. While some districts have pursued the idea, Dan had determined that there was no interest in our district. Doug Weaver asked how much response there had been. Dan understood that only a couple of districts were going to try the idea. It was known that the Cardinal District was doing it.

XI. New Business:A. Harmony Mercenaries:

Dan had just heard about this program, but didn't know any details. Doug Weaver indicated it was spearheaded by Jamie Carey. In addition to Grand Rapids, the other chapters that are involved are Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Muskegon, and Holland. The Mercenaries have chosen around six songs. The group then becomes available to help out on a chapter show, and create a larger chorus to appear on stage. The Mercenaries might also be able to take on a performance opportunity that a chapter could not accept.

Doug mentioned that the group has had two rehearsals. At their last one in Battle Creek the group had sixty attendees. Some persons were present that are not members of the aforementioned chapters. Jamie has even had a conversation with Marty Monson about getting a grant to support the group's program. Specifically, Jamie is looking for funding to cover the cost of music for the group. Marty offered suggestions on how to proceed with a grant application.

Doug reported that the next rehearsal of the Mercenaries would be in Lansing on the following Tuesday. The plan is for the group to rehearse once a month at rotating locations.

Ed Bittle noted that this concept is an expansion of a program done by the Alexandria (VA) chorus to create a VLQ that can cover events that entire chorus cannot handle. Ed thought that the district aspect of the Mercenaries was great. He observed that the Alexandria chapter adopted this concept after trade associations in Washington D.C. declared that they could not provide enough space for performances by large groups.

Roger Lewis observed that the impetus for this idea came from the joint chorus shows that were held during the 75th anniversary celebration. There were 50-80 participants in those joint appearances. Using this same concept, the Mercenaries were able to help the Muskegon chapter with a recent show.

Roger mentioned that there would be an announcement at the Saturday night contest about plans the Kalamazoo chapter has for a Christmas eve program at a local mall.

Larry Parker reported that the Lansing chapter hopes to have the Mercenaries sing on its 2017 show. This will be done in a manner similar to the 75th anniversary events.

XII. Forum Update:

Dan Bezaire reported that the three Pioneer representatives to the Forum in November will be Mike Hansen, Mike Ridenour, and Roger Lewis. Larry Parker asked the three individuals to let him know if they needed re-imbusement for their airfares.

XIII. Adjournment:

At 12:07 p.m., the meeting was adjourned without objection.

Ed Bax was asked to direct the singing of "Keep the Whole World Singing".

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