

Minutes of the Pioneer District Board of Directors of SPEBSQSA, Inc.  
held on April 20, 2018, in the Harbor Springs Room of the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Attendees:

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

Dave Montera (President)  
Mike Hansen (Immediate past president)  
Joe McDonald (Executive vice-president)  
Jim McMahan (Secretary)  
Chris Berry (Treasurer)  
Dan Bezaire (Director of Marketing)  
Roger Boyer (Director of Community Outreach)  
Jamie Carey (Director of Chorus Director Development)  
Brian Dunckel (Director of Contests & Judging)  
Roger Lewis (Director of Events)  
Aaron Pollard (Director of Youth In Harmony)

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

(none)

-----Guests:

Marty Monson (BHS chief executive officer)  
Craig Roney (observer of District Secretary function)  
Doug Weaver (former BOD member)  
Lynn Weaver (Harmony Foundation board chairperson)

1. Call to order:

President Dave Montera called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and asked Dan Bezaire to lead the singing of "The Old Songs".

2. Adoption of the agenda:

President Dave Montera referred to the agenda that had been submitted. He identified one correction in Item C---the date for the joint meeting of the boards of Pioneer, Cardinal, and Johnny Appleseed Districts should be stated as May 20. Brian Dunckel mentioned that he needed to get approval for a new coffee pot.

Aaron Pollard wondered if any youth-related topics were in the agenda. Dave Montera noted that those items were included when he submitted his report for the Consent Calendar.

Roger Lewis mentioned that he wanted to make some comments about conventions at some point.

Joe McDonald moved that the agenda be adopted with the corrections noted. Chris Berry made the second. **Motion approved.**

Dave Montera reported that the Society board opens its meetings with a reading of its Vision Statement and Mission Statement. He found the equivalent documents for the District in the October 2002 minutes. He chose to read them.

The Pioneer Vision statement says: "The Pioneer District of the BHS is an ever-growing association of barbershop chapters, where chapters promote singing in their communities, and members enjoy participation in the artform."

2. Adoption of the agenda (cont.):

The Pioneer Mission statement says: "The mission of the Pioneer District of the BHS is to provide human and material resources enabling the member chapters to present an enjoyable, productive musical experience to its members and community."

Dave added that the minutes of October 2002 also stated that it was agreed these two statements would be reviewed each year at the August BOD meeting. Dave observed that there has not been an August BOD meeting in many years, so the statements obviously have not been reviewed! He suggested we might want to do that task to see if there are updates we would like to make. He will arrange for them to be sent to everyone, since they are currently hidden on the District website.

Dave also chose to refer to the District's business plan (focus) for the next few years. He cited the theme "Lasting Friendships, Enduring Music". The District is focused on maintaining lasting friendships through the medium of barbershop harmony---a truly unique and enduring American musical form.

3. Minutes of the BOD meeting on October 20, 2017:

The minutes were previously prepared and distributed by the secretary several months earlier, and also through the Second Notices. Joe McDonald moved that the minutes be approved, and Dan Bezaire made the second. **Motion approved.**

4. Treasurer's report:

Chris Berry displayed both the 2017 EOY balance sheet and the 2018 YTD balance sheet. In response to a question, he identified the number **[\$91,793.03]** on the second report as being our current assets. He noted that there were some outstanding items in the accounts receivable category that were going to be paid later in the day. The District has about \$2500 in physical assets in the Harmony Marketplace. He also pointed out the Windsor sendoff escrow account that has \$2427. That account will be cleared and then repopulated in June and July. Chris projected that net earnings in 2018 will be about \$2125.

Chris referenced the text report he had submitted that described things done in 2017. One thing was the closure of all accounts with the Comerica and Citizens banks, and the switch to the PNC bank. There are three accounts: the general account, the QCA account, and the savings account. The latter was populated from the closure of the Security Benefits account started during Larry Parker's tenure. A credit card account started by Robb Smith was also closed. Finally, a long-term liability account held on behalf of QCA (\$1700) was closed. All of the QCA liabilities are now in one account. These actions cleaned up a lot of details in the books. There is now only one long-term liability account.

Chris mentioned that the District's net profit in 2017 was just under \$5000. There was a loss of cash by the closure of the QCA long-term liability account. Also, one of the conferences had higher expenses than expected. Chris noted that the District supported the Harmony Explosion camp, plus the quartets and choruses that went to International (\$6000).

A review of the conventions revealed that the spring convention experienced a \$4000 loss, but the fall convention had a profit of \$7000. The spring loss was due to special venue expenses at Traverse City. Meanwhile, the Harmony Marketplace made a profit of \$350.

Chris acknowledged that events like Bush League, Top Gun, Quartet Boot Camp, and Music Summit had losses amounting to a total of \$3000, but that was expected. Running them as cost-neutral events would require District contributions.

He reported that QCA had a profit of \$2000. That occurred because of the payoff of the long-term liability account, plus the income the QCA got from hosting a convention. QCA expenses to support Top Gun amounted to \$440. After the payoff of the long-term liability in March 2017, and a net profit of \$2074, there is still an amount of \$393.90 that is owed from the QCA to the general account. This is due to the fact that all expenses are paid out of the general account. QCA is just a holding account, i.e., a long-term liability. Therefore, Chris must transfer monies (~\$400) to QCA to cover its expenses.

4. Treasurer's report (cont.):

It was noted that Jim Kunz had completed the 2017 Financial Review, and the 990 tax return for 2017 has been filed with the IRS.

In clarification of the net profit of \$4952 for 2017, Mike Hansen asked if that was after all of the losses. Chris Berry confirmed that was so by referencing to the 2017 Profit and Loss by Class report. He pointed out that QCA has line items that it manages, and everything else is in an unclassified category. The two amounts are then shown as a total. Then he jumped to the bottom of page 2 of that report which showed both the QCA net income of \$2072, the unclassified income of \$4962, and the total of \$7024. He noted that the QCA income is complicated because of the payment of the long-term liability.

Mike asked further about the District's financial position. Chris went back to his text report and emphasized that the \$4962 is the District's income.

Mike's second question was related to the District's year-to-year assets. He concluded that the assets dropped slightly from 2016 to 2017. Chris confirmed that detail. Mike recalled that a downward trend has been occurring over the years, and wondered if that trend would stop. Chris was optimistic that the District would stay neutral in 2018. Mike felt that we could drift down for a while, but could not continue to do so forever. It must be halted, and possibly reversed so we don't eat into our reserves.

Dave Montera mentioned that, at a previous board meeting, it was approved that we set aside about \$50,000 as a fund balance. That would allow us to fund a year without any income.

Roger Lewis chose to comment about some ideas he has been considering for a while. He began with a bit of history. When he was the Society President, he visited every district and attended every board meeting of those districts. He looked at their financial statements, and realized the documents skewed from terrible to really good. Consequently, he and the Society's CFO and its financial committee studied some other non-profit groups, and came up with a formula that said that a district should have 5/12 of its annual expenses in reserve. Pioneer's annual expenses were around \$72,000 at that time, so that would set our reserve at \$30,000. We have, however, worked with \$50,000 instead.

Roger concluded the reason we have a good reserve is due to the fact we don't spend a lot of money on our members on things like education and membership. He noted that the IRS doesn't like to see large balances in non-profits, but we are not considered a risk by the IRS. Roger felt that Pioneer (and the Society) has not developed programs to deal with our declining membership. He had recently talked to Holly Kellar about the possibility of a developing a marketing program to increase membership, and that Pioneer could serve as a beta test for such a program because of our financial status. Such a program should not be offered across the whole Society without first doing a test. He offered this idea as a challenge to the Society that we could "pioneer" since we have the money to do it.

He commented that the history of membership recruitment has been "invite your friends", but that hasn't worked. Meanwhile, we need to learn how to use social media to identify and recruit new members. He felt that we don't know how to do that right now. Roger urged that we make an offer to the Society to create a program in which we can invest. He thought that it wouldn't require expenditure of more than \$30,000. He urged that we use our reserves to improve the District, and subsequently, the Society.

Mike Hansen agreed with Roger's suggestion, and wanted to emphasize that we are a relatively healthy district.

Chris Berry wanted to clarify the history of the District's history of reserves for the years of 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017---which showed numbers of ~\$65,000, ~\$72,000, \$96,593, and \$89,766. He felt the 2016 number needed some explanation. Much of that increase was due to the paying off of a credit card to the amount of \$10,000. If it had been paid off in 2016 when it should have, the balance that year would have been reduced by that amount. More realistic numbers would have been ~\$65,000, ~\$72,000, ~\$86,000, and ~\$89,000. We have actually been increasing slightly each year.

Mike Hansen returned to his observation about our financial health to note that we should be looking not just to spend money, but how to be strategic on how and where we want to invest.

4. Treasurer's report (cont.):

Roger Lewis asserted that we should look again at our mission and vision---which may point us toward these kinds of investments.

Jamie Carey remarked that he had talked to almost every director in the District, and they are all concerned about our declining and aging membership. He urged that our surplus be devoted toward fixing that problem. Failure to do so may ultimately cause a decline in our convention income. The number participating will continue to decline. Long term, it will affect our financial picture. We may save as much as we want, but if we don't fix the problem, we won't have to worry about it.

Another area of concern that Roger Lewis addressed was our support of quartets and choruses. He noted that we spent about \$5000 for quartets. He thought there might be districts that spend a lot more for quartets and choruses---like \$10,000. He knew that the board has talked about giving more support for choruses.

Dave Montera mentioned that the light-of-sight document for support of choruses revealed that Pioneer is at the upper level of chorus support on a per capita basis. Some districts spend a higher amount for support of choruses, but they send more than one chorus.

Mike Hansen changed to the subject of the Traverse City convention. He noted that we lost money there, and we tend to do so routinely. Roger Lewis agreed, and said that he was working not to do so. He admitted that we got caught in a contract detail at the last one, and he hopes to avoid that in spring 2019. He did note that the hotel rates will go up \$5 then. That is due to a cost of living clause in the contracts. He is hoping to break even this time.

Mike wondered if we should continue using Traverse City---compared to our other options. He also observed that there can still be snow there in April. Roger Lewis confirmed that Traverse City was so far out on future bids. Brian Duncel noted the increased cost to the members for rooms. Mike observed that travel costs are also higher because of the distance. Roger acknowledged that room costs got out of sight---\$165 in the tower, and \$125 in the hotel. The spring 2019 convention is part of a 3-year deal---which kept costs down somewhat. Chris Berry mentioned surprises like curtain costs and other things that were required in order to use the facility. Doug Weaver thought that spring 2019 would be the last convention in Traverse City, but Roger Lewis indicated that spring 2022 would be the last.

Marty Monson spoke to the idea of developing membership recruitment campaigns. He noted that, while they are important, retention is where the value of money spent translates into numbers. This is why some membership campaigns have failed. He emphasized that resources must be spent, and volunteer hours must be spent in the best places they can be. He liked the comments about experimentation and pilot programs.

Returning to the costs of the last Traverse City convention, Roger Lewis added that judges' costs were abnormally high.

Jamie Carey asked Chris Berry about his comment about things that had to be worked out regarding the costs of Top Gun and other programs. Dave Montera felt that this is related to discussions that should occur between the District and QCA. These are matters of allocation---and not a review of the validity of the expenses.

Chris observed that he reports every item as either a profit or a loss. Making or losing money is a given. He wasn't thinking that we should charge higher per-person fees. He thought that we must accept the fact that the District will cover some losses as administrative expenses. The committees that run these events will have to assume that some programs will run at a loss within their cost centers. Otherwise, Chris could look at events as needing to be net neutral, and this would define a cost to the District of those programs. However, he felt that it could be handled with a simple profit and loss statement, and the loss on certain events was absorbed.

4. Treasurer's report (cont.):

Chris knew that the accounting could be handled by either approach. He preferred the present way as being the easiest. Dave Montera added that loss is a financial issue, but not the total outcome. Sending three quartets to International indicates that things like Top Gun have another upside beyond just the financial.

Marty Monson observed that, when the District puts together its plan, there is an agreement that certain programs will be subsidized. He noted that it should be clear where things are subsidized, and where things are intended to produce revenue that will cover those losses. He felt that was a great story to tell to the membership. Joe McDonald added that this is a tool that weighs the expense against the value of what is generated. Marty asserted that it answers one of the most common questions from members: "What do I get for my dues?" We are subsidizing some programs to help improve the efforts of other programs. He added that we have to keep telling that story.

Chris Berry moved to a review of 2018 to date. Currently we are at \$2970 in income. There was an additional charge for a 2017 venue for which the billing was finally received---\$4000 for the school in Battle Creek. The reason for the delay was the retirement of the person who normally did it, and the item got dropped.

Chris cited the \$2100 loss previously noted incurred for Top Gun, but which is being supported by the District. He also noted an \$845 loss that QCA had on its side for Top Gun. He emphasized that he reads nothing into profit and loss. That is what the numbers tell him. He summarized that he felt the District was in a good place. He foresaw a continued upward trend. He appreciated the discussion that Mike Hansen raised about the high cash reserves in 2016 and 2017. He thought that would help him to answer that question to the HOD. He was glad that we were trending upward nicely

During his prior service on the BOD, Joe McDonald recalled there were some uncertainty and grey areas a few years ago in the balance sheet. He asked Chris if he went back and did an assessment of past history. Chris declared that he had decided---when he took over the DT job---to "rip through all of the books". He spent the first quarter after he took over in reviewing every account. He organized all of the charted accounts in high ranking order. By going to each committee, one can see each of its projects. Previously, things like Top Gun might be called out in 6-7 different ways, and conventions might be done in 3 or 4 different ways. Now, each of the conventions is set out as one entity.

At one time when the books were structured by profit centers, income might appear as \$12,000, and expenses might appear as (-)\$58,000. Chris chose to move the books to profit and loss centers. This required that all of the accounts be rewritten. Now, one can go back ten years, and everything will look like the statements of today. It is now possible to look at anything that was recorded through Quick-Books, and it will look like the books of today. It is possible to compare year to year to year. Where there were multiple Top Gun accounts, for example, they got combined into one account. Ambiguity is gone.

Finally, Chris is generating a text report that gives a big picture of the finances, or one can read the numerical report.

Joe McDonald commended Chris on the appearance of his report.

Roger Lewis mentioned that some unknown things were in past records. One of those was times when contracts were signed for future conventions, and deposits had to be made years in advance. No one at the time knew how to handle those situations. Chris also was mystified why we had a long-term liability with ourselves.

Roger Lewis moved that the treasurer's report be received, and Joe McDonald made the second. **Motion approved.**

Dave Montera referred to the Financial Review that was made by Jim Kunz, who is a former CPA. It was noted that Jim also did the review for 2016. A "good, clean" report had been provided to the secretary for archiving. The secretary indicated that he still needs the Financial Review Form (Rev. 01-2018) from Chris Berry that must be attached to it.

4. Treasurer's report (cont.):

Because Jim Kunz has the mindset of a CPA, he also provided a management review letter that was distributed to board members. He praised the work that Chris has done---like closing out the Chase Bank account and cleaning out the QCA accounts. He expressed a concern about having an outside review of bank statements since Chris is the only person who normally sees them. Dave Montera has acquired on-line access to those accounts now to allay that concern.

Brian Dunckel added a comment about the District's sponsorship of the Youth Chorus Festival. He noted that was a \$10,000 expenditure that has now disappeared. Doug Weaver observed that some of that \$10,000 was offset with donations from members.

5. Harmony Foundation International report

No representative of the Foundation was scheduled to attend this meeting, so Lynn Weaver was invited to be present in her role as the chairperson of HFI. Dave Montera thanked her for coming to give a report to the board and to the HOD.

Lynn began by explaining that she was serving her last and sixth year on the HFI board. She said that her time of service has been a very heartening and satisfying experience. She was complimentary of the membership of the HFI board. She admitted that she was enjoying her role as president because she wasn't on any committees.

She extended thanks to all of the HFI donors in the room whose charitable contributions enable a lot of wonderful programs.

Lynn articulated the mission and vision statements of HFI:

Mission: "To connect people to charitable giving to enrich lives through singing."

Vision: "To be the premier international agent through which individuals and organizations invest in the lifelong benefits of singing."

She noted that HFI funds programs and training opportunities for students in middle schools through college. Singing and training opportunities are offered to singing directors and singing educators. Support is provided to communities of singers and their leaders.

She identified specific programs that fulfill HFI's funding guidelines. The first one was the Youth Chorus Festival. Other ones were the Healthy Chapter Initiative and Harmony University. She acknowledged those present who have attended H/U. She admitted that Tennessee in late July is not an ideal time for comfort. Finally, she referred to outreach grants that are made.

She referenced the two ways of donating to HFI---"Ambassadors of Song", who are the sources of annual funds, and "Presidents Council", who provide major funding.

Lynn thought that the Donors Choice option was a really great way to fund larger programs and also bring money back to chapters and districts. She felt it was a wonderful way to help locally. She pointed out that over \$400,000 was given back in 2017.

Legacy planning is another giving option which utilizes estate planning through insurance policies and bequests from wills. Lynn cited the work of the HFI staff person who is organizing that program.

Another program that is available is "Keep the Melody Ringing". This is an opportunity for donations to be made in memory of a deceased barbershopper. When the donations exceed \$1000, the name of the individual goes on a plaque in Harmony Hall.

Lynn declared that the program that she and Doug like the best is the Youth Chorus Festival. The first YCF she attended was when the chorus from Cleveland Heights participated for the first time. Those twelve boys were scared, but they did a great job without a formal director, and they've grown since then.

5. Harmony Foundation International report (cont.):

Lynn asserted that the growth of groups like this one is where the future is. When they get out of high school and into college, they will look for places to sing for the rest of their lives.

She referred to the research being done in neuroscience about the health and cognitive benefits of music. The best thing about barbershop is that one only needs a pitchpipe.

Lynn noted that the standing ovations that the youth choruses receive are life-changing experiences. She also felt the experience of seeing these groups is life-changing for the audience.

Lynn saw the support of the YCF as a unique opportunity to support an artform that is worldwide. You can bring joy to your self, and to others who hear you. She quoted a phrase that is said in her family: "If we all do just what we can do, there is more singing in the world."

Lynn concluded by thanking everyone for the opportunity to represent HFI. She felt that the staff is very enthused, and they believe in the mission of HFI.

Mike Hansen referred back to earlier comments from Marty Monson about not just getting people in the door, but keeping them. He felt that we are doing a great thing with the youth, and are getting them excited. But when they go to local chapters, they find their experience not as rewarding. Mike asserted that, if we can spend the money to get them in the door, we should be spending it to keep them. Marty suggested that the Healthy Chapter Initiative is part of the solution. We're just many years behind on that task.

Roger Lewis referred to Lynn's comments about "Keep the Memory Ringing", and noted that donations in memory of Johnny Wearing and Larry Parker have already exceeded \$1000.

Joe McDonald tagged onto the YCF discussion by noting that the Harmony Explosion youth camp is Pioneer's opportunity to offer music experiences. He had with him 2000 copies of the H-Ex promo card that will be distributed at the HOD meeting. He reiterated that music camps change the lives of youth. He noted that they come back with statements that say so, and bring friends. He appreciated the help for the H-Ex camp that is received from the District.

6. Barbershop Harmony Society report:

Dave Montera mentioned that he had told Marty Monson's assistant that the meeting would be about 1½ hours, and observed that we are about 50 minutes into it. Marty assured everyone that he would be brief.

Marty asked if those present had seen the latest 12-minute video about the Strategic Plan, the road map, and the milestones during the next 20 years that lead up to the 100th anniversary. He urged those who had not seen it to do so. He will make this same plea to the HOD. Those milestones are the things to which we are committed. He and the Society board are expected to achieve those pretty big milestones. He invited everyone to come to his listening session that afternoon to learn more about the Plan.

Dave Montera thanked Marty for coming to this convention. He felt it was important that Society staff see what the districts do.

The secretary thanked Marty's assistant for being the second "best" staff member to get his bio and photo submitted for the program. Others concurred with effectiveness of her work.

7. Consent calendar reports:

Dave Montera noted that all reports have been received. The evening before, he and the secretary concluded that this is first time in their memories that all of them have been provided on time. Joe McDonald suggested that board members might be motivated by Dave's status as an attorney. Dave thought it might be due to his prior experience in law enforcement. He emphasized that Consent Calendar reports save time by avoiding the need for discussion of each area of business.

7. Consent calendar reports (cont.):

Dan Bezaire moved that the reports be approved, and Joe McDonald made the second.

Roger Lewis asked if this would be a good time to talk about hotels for future conventions. Dave Montera felt that should be addressed under New Business. Jamie Carey asked a similar question about three topics he wanted to discuss. Again, it was suggested that they be considered under New Business.

In reference to his EVP report, Joe McDonald asked if there were any questions that board members wanted to direct to chapters. He is building a survey, but has only heard from a couple of members. It was talked about at our January planning meeting, but he will send another e-mail as a reminder. If there is an issue or idea where board members need to get feedback, they should be in the survey. Roger Lewis suggested that the questions already submitted be identified in his reminder e-mail.

Action was taken on the motion pending. **Motion approved.**

8. Old Business:a. Senior chorus festival:

Dave Montera announced that he was stepping back from its planning, and Mike Hansen will organize it. Roger Lewis will also assist in the planning. Jamie Carey and Doug Weaver are also interested. At this convention, there are interest sheets on the tables that indicate that those who want to participate can provide some info---name, chapter, voice part, and what the individual's age will be as of 2020. That is the year when Pioneer can compete. This will allow the development of a database.

Joe McDonald offered the use of the GoogleDocs program that the District has. He is using it to create the survey he previously mentioned. He suggested the creation of a solicitation form for this topic. The GoogleDocs will build a spreadsheet from the responses. He advocated that we develop an expectation among our District members that this is how info will be solicited. He offered to build the survey.

Dave Montera mentioned that this was related to the three questions he submitted:

- (1) Are you interested in singing in the senior chorus?
- (2) Are you interested in assisting with its administration?
- (3) What is your contact info?

Joe thought that we may end up with two separate surveys depending on how they evolve.

b. District planning timeline:

Dave Montera asked Chris Berry to display the timeline spreadsheet that has been created so far. As Chris was searching for it, Dave indicated he wanted to send it to everyone as a working document so that members can add to it. The secretary admitted that some of the dates he supplied were estimates, and needed to be more specific. Dave wanted the document to become a living thing in which general plans can become more concrete as they evolve.

It was not recalled if the date of the joint meeting with the district boards of JAD and CAR was even put into the original document. The date of May 20 should be added.

When Chris found the document, it was noted that it was in his GoogleDocs account, but it can be shared. Because Chris was not at the January meeting, he did not know about the brainstorming session about the things identified that each board member manages. They were listed on a very long sheet of paper---to which times were added. It was considered to be a project sheet.

Dave Montera reiterated that he will insure that the link is sent out so that details can be added. He asked that e-mails be sent to board members if changes are made. Otherwise, those changes will not be evident.

8. Old Business (cont.):

b. District planning timeline (cont.):

Joe McDonald asked Chris Berry how his GoogleDocs account was defined. He pointed out that if someone messes something up, it is essentially gone forever. Dave Montera had raised that same issue earlier with a member of the district president's council. He noted that transfer of a document to another district's account, and subsequent change, might change it in the original. Joe suggested that everything route through one person.

Marty Monson thought there was a version history that shows who has made changes and when. He acknowledged that still must be a management decision on who has what rights. He felt that "comments" might be a better option.

Dave Montera asked the board to look at the document again after Chris sends out the link. As details are defined, make sure that any new info is correct. If things need to be added or changed, copy everybody.

c. Joint board meeting with JAD and CAR:

Dave confirmed that the date of this event is May 20, 2018. He had sent out an e-mail about the location near Fort Wayne (IN). He knew that CAR would be sending 10 reps and JAD will have 8-10. He needed a count of PIO attendees. It was determined that we would have 6-8.

Jamie Carey asked for more into about the agenda of the meeting. Dave stated that there would be a focus on things the three districts can investigate. Among them were:

(1), Joint youth festivals with choruses from all three districts, to include evaluations and coaching. It has been noted that we just don't have enough time at regular conventions to do this.

(2), Synergy of doing contests together that might save money through economy of scale. This would involve a cost of larger judging panels. There would a logistical challenge because of different schedules of conventions.

(3), Hosting of mixed harmony festivals. Again, this is something for which we don't have adequate time at our current conventions.

(4), Sharing of ideas between one's counterparts within the three districts. This would be simple brainstorming, and also a sharing of problems and successes. This would allow face-to-face communications rather than through Basecamp.

Dave admitted this would be a lot to cover in a mere four-hour meeting. Nevertheless, it will be the focus.

Jamie Carey compared what was planned with his experience at the first Music Summit. It wasn't certain then what the roadmap would be. He admitted they didn't do everything that they wanted to do, but it was a great start. He heard a comment from one director who thought that most of our chapters have a "silo mentality" where each chapter works individually. Jamie saw this joint meeting as a chance for three districts in proximity to get away from seeing themselves individually. He felt that we can't have anything but good result from this joint meeting, and was excited about it.

Dave Montera identified the creator of the joint meeting idea as being Doug Smeltz---the DP for JAD. He started the idea at a district president's council meeting by organizing meetings of districts that were geographically close. At the most recent DPC, there was an allocation of 1½ hours to do this activity again.

Brian Dunckel observed that historically there have been joint district activities for youth, and quartets have gone down for quartet camps.

9. New Business:

a. Budget requests:

Dave Montera indicated that Jamie Carey had two budget items. One is for Music Summits, and the other is for a CDWI.

Jamie reported that the Summit held last fall went very well. There were 32 attendees, and 12 chapters represented. Jamie is organizing two for this year. The first one will be in Canton for the east side of the state on May 19. There is info published about the event. The second one will be on the west side in September. Two events are the most that can be scheduled, even though quarterly events have been requested.

He explained that the May 19 event will be held at Paul Ellinger's house. That will keep the cost down. He noted that he wanted to do some bigger things at the fall event---including the invitation of some outside guests. He has budgeted for extra cost for that one.

Jamie declared that his goal was to get out of the "silo mentality". He wanted to see the sharing of best ideas. At the May event, there will be a focus on talking about best practices.

Jamie has also been talking with Doug Schmelz and Donny Rose about the CDWI program. Donny indicated that CDWI is not been used quite as widely as in the past. There have been some difficulties. Jamie has communicated to Donny what he wants to do specifically---who he wants as coaches, and what types of things will be covered.

Jamie hopes to get five directors, but if gets more than five, he is considering the option of running a Saturday event in Grand Rapids with five, and repeating it on Sunday in the Detroit area the others. Both events might include Outstanding in Front participants. The only extra cost would be for the coaches to stay overnight.

Jamie thinks that a lot of the interest will be generated by who we obtain as coaches. He has learned that someone who has studied the CDWI book, but hasn't accomplished a lot, is not a strong draw. Getting "A-level" directors is the key.

Because Jamie has been talking with Doug Smeltz, there is a possibility that this CDWI might be done jointly with JAD. He wants to re-vitalize the program.

Jamie has been focusing his conversations with directors of existing chapters. He has talked some with Aaron Pollard about the re-activation of the Motor City Metro chapter, but that group is dealing with different questions.

All of the chapters with which Jamie has communicated are concerned about the question of aging. It is a huge problem. He asked many chapters about their convention attendance, and developed a master sheet of which chapters attend, and how often. One reason for lack of attendance is that their snowbirds have not returned yet. Another reason is illness, or death of a spouse. Most every cause was age-related.

Dave Montera stated that he wanted to get the budget items resolved for the Summits and the CDWI. He noted that they were not specifically included in the existing budget, so these would be budget supplements.

For the May 19 Summit, there will be a small deficit since there will be offers for multiple attendees from a chapter. Paul Ellinger is arranging for free housing for attendees from Marquette and Traverse City so they will avoid that cost. Jamie is guessing there will be attendees from 12 chapters, plus 14 additional members---for a total of 26. That estimate was exceeded at the last Summit. He also hopes to exceed it at the September Summit. If those increases occur, food costs will go up slightly. However, Paul Ellinger has some ideas to cut food costs further.

9. New Business (cont.):

a. Budget requests (cont.):

Roger Lewis moved for approval of the budget amendment for the May 19 Summit. Joe McDonald made the second. **Motion approved.**

Dave Montera directed attention to the other budget amendment for the fall Summit. He confirmed with Jamie Carey that this one might involve speakers like David Zimmerman and Theo Hicks. Another person under consideration is Don Campbell. The purpose of the May event is to encourage chapters to communicate with each other. In contrast, the fall event will be more of a speaker presentation. Jamie expected it to be a bit more costly.

Chris Berry noted that the motion just approved for the May 19 Summit would result in a negative cost of \$117. The fall Summit would be closer to negative \$500.

Joe McDonald chose to tag onto Jamie's remarks about bringing in attendees with "name presenters". He noted that high attendance at previous Leadership Academies was driven by this factor. Therefore, he suggested that the \$200 budgeted for travel should be bumped up to \$500 to allow for the cost of airfare. This opens up some possibilities, and only increases the bottom line to negative \$800. He saw this as an investment. Jamie observed that, while people like David and Theo would drive, other speakers like Don could involve air travel.

Aaron Pollard moved for approval of the second amendment, with an increase of \$300 for a possible airfare. Chris Berry made the second. **Motion approved.**

b. Member retention programs:

Jamie Carey declared that he agreed with Marty Monson's contention that retention is a problem that every chapter has. He acknowledged that is even a problem for large chapters like Grand Rapids. He compared a picture of the G.R. members who went to Nashville, with those who are going to Orlando, and found a difference of 15. He noted that some younger members must take off time occasionally because of family activities. However, there are others who just disappear.

Jamie expressed a concern for our aging chapters, and the ones we are losing. He cited the Alpena chapter that used to be very active, but has aged out. Gaylord is a similar example. That chapter tried to fight it through sponsorship of Bush League, but couldn't survive. Jamie mentioned Swan Valley---a chapter he used to direct that is now gone. Benton Harbor is another group that is dropping in numbers. Jamie has been approached by Muskegon and Holland that are beginning to drop close to 10 members. He wasn't sure what the District did to try to stop the loss of chapters like Alpena and Gaylord. He was concerned about red flags that are appearing in other chapters.

Jamie cited Paul Ellinger's program which is a compilation of everything that a chapter should be doing on membership---public performances, recognition of people, member follow-up, etc. Jamie praised the efforts that Paul has made in getting chapters to do these things. Unfortunately, if members don't get motivated, it doesn't happen.

Jamie reflected on the thought that getting youth involved in chapters seems to help. He cited the experience of the Mt. Pleasant chapter when it had more college students. He mentioned his experience directing a church choir in Mt. Pleasant while he was a student. When he was hired, he was asked to pick out four CMU students that would be stipended. They were expected to come to rehearsals, and to sing on Sunday. He had forgotten about this experience until he visited a Presbyterian church where the Music Summit was held. That church had a great choir with some students that were also stipended to be the section leaders.

Jamie wondered if it would be possible to select a chapter located in a community where there is a community college or a strong high school music program, and advertise this program as an opportunity. The students would be expected to provide vocal training and help. Because of the need to drive to events, they would have to be at least 16, but could go up to age 26.

9. New Business (cont.):

b. Member retention programs (cont.):

The plan would be for these students to serve as section leaders who would provide vocal training, part learning, music reading, etc. Another role for them would be to serve as a chapter quartet that could demonstrate songs. Jamie anticipated that a side effect of having these students is that they might bring friends. However, the key benefit would be to have someone in each section that everyone can follow.

Because the concept has work successfully for churches, Jamie advocated that it be tried. He didn't feel that they had to be college students; upper level high schoolers might be qualified.

At a rate of \$45 per rehearsal and per performance, four students would cost about \$2400-\$2500. It would be an immediate influx of youth into a chapter that would give the director some help. It would probably result in them singing at their school concerts. Their presence would be infectious.

If it is successful, Jamie felt that after six months we could go to the chapter to see if it would split the cost. He thought that the Grand Rapids chapter would be willing to underwrite the complete cost. He would like to try it also with a small chapter like Monroe North using District support. The intent would be to see if there is a difference in the benefits between a small chapter and a large chapter. He was optimistic that would be successful for even a small chapter if you get the right youth, because they will have fun and feel ownership. He felt it was important to run the test at both ends of the spectrum to see if the technique can save chapters through community involvement of youth.

Aaron Pollard reported that he and Brandon Smith got involved because they were working with a church choir. The person who drove them to that practice brought them to a barbershop rehearsal. Brandon then brought in Cody Harrell. Aaron felt that having experience as a paid section leader is very common. Almost everyone that he knows at EMU has, or has had jobs like that. Jamie concurred with that observation from his experience at CMU.

Dave Montera agreed that this was an idea that should be pursued. He noted, however, that no one has asked the chapters if they want it. It might not be appreciated if the District came in and said they were going to do it. After the footwork has been done, Dave urged that we talk with chapters to see if they are interested. If we get three or four who like the idea, we can then project a cost.

Jamie Carey indicated he had talked with Chris Berry, Aaron Pollard, and Jack Teuber, and he knew that Grand Rapids is interested. He agreed that it should be limited to just a few at the start, and run it for six months. Find out the process. How do you find candidates? How hard is it to do that? What techniques must be used? Jamie especially wanted help from Aaron Pollard and Brandon Smith. He emphasized that it should be run for six months with just two chapters. He wanted to share the concept with directors at the next Music Summit.

Dave Montera was concerned about us doing it with just Monroe North and Grand Rapids, and another chapter complains because they weren't asked. He felt that we have made a good start. He urged that there be more investigation. He didn't think we had to wait until fall to begin it. The info can be shared with the board by e-mail so that approvals can be made if necessary.

Jamie Carey offered to send the plan that he has developed (so far) to Aaron Pollard. He asked him to forward it to Brandon and Cody. After the four of them have refined it, it can be sent to all of the chapter directors/music teams. They can be asked if they have any interest in it.

Roger Lewis was apprehensive about that approach if several chapters say "yes". He would prefer that it be run as a pilot program with selected chapters. He agreed that the program needs to be defined so the board can manage the costs. If the program is wanted by several chapters, then one must "play favorites". Admittedly, we have already identified one "favorite"---Monroe North, and haven't talked to 26 other chapters. Roger felt that it was an easy decision to make, but is a promise of things to come. However, Dave thought that not presenting it early may close off future opportunities.

9. New Business (cont.):b. Member retention programs (cont.):

Joe McDonald was intrigued by the idea, and noted that his chapter spends money on coaching routinely, and could self-fund the program. Since the chapter already has two youth who sing in the chorus, he felt it would be interested in being part of the pilot program. He still felt we have some responsibility to go to a next step during the anticipation of the program---not just while it is being assessed. The District must plan for the funding. If the program will work, it must work at the chapter level, and be chapter-driven. He proposed that it be set up on matching grant basis--with monies received from the chapter, and maybe from other sources.

Jamie Carey thought there might some chapters that are so financially strapped that they would have to get all of the funding from the District. If that issue can be managed, he knew that they would still have to do something. Joe McDonald thought that having to raise some money might be a motivation for them. He saw this as a rallying point. He observed that Hillsdale uses the need to send youth to the Harmony Explosion camp as their rallying point.

Dave Montera suggested that the topic be tabled for now so that Jamie, Aaron, Brandon, and Cody can do some more work. Jamie indicated that he will work with Joe, Chris, and Aaron to get feedback. He urged that the project be addressed fairly quickly. He will send what he has created so far to them. He hoped something could be developed within a few weeks.

Joe McDonald cited several individuals who came through the Mt. Pleasant chapter, and who developed extensive skills through this kind of experience.

Marty Monson reported that he had sent a message to his staff to ask if any chapters are doing this. He did know of situations where students have received scholarships to study vocal pedagogy and to serve as assistant directors. These students then may bring 4-5 of their classmates to help.

Aaron Pollard noted that the Huron Valley chapter is ten minutes from EMU, and he could get several music majors very quickly if they got scholarships.

Mike Hansen did observe that some struggling chapters may have organizational problems in addition to singing skills. He felt that might have to be a "Phase B" of solving problems. Joe McDonald concurred, and noted that this issue must be addressed through Leadership Academy. The key is to determine when and how that can be done.

c. Convention comments:

Roger Lewis indicated that he worked this time with two key people at the hotel who were brand new. He has had a lot of communications with them as they went through a learning mode. At a pre-convention meeting with a larger group of staff, there were only two of the five who had done one of our conventions before. He was complimentary of their efforts to learn and to work hard.

He also noted that this convention was the first one to be co-hosted by two chapters. It has been a learning process. He knew that some other chapters are interested in co-hosting, so we must learn from this experience.

Roger believed that all of the room billings were handled correctly, but asked for feedback if problems are encountered. The hotel was sold out several weeks prior to the convention. There are a few people at outlying hotels.

He pointed out that the hospitality rooms will have a cash bar near them in the hallway. The chapters can bring in soft drinks and cold snacks, but not alcoholic beverages.

That evening the Grand Rapids chapter will hold a fund-raising show in the hotel, and there will again be a cash bar nearby.

9. New Business (cont.):c. Convention comments (cont.):

Roger announced that the QCA will be doing a show at the fall convention. The group had stopped doing one for a while because of a shortage of active quartets. His big announcement was that Power Play will coming to that convention, since it will be the 30th anniversary of their win in Pioneer that took them to winning at International.

Roger asked if there were any questions relative to this convention. Dave Montera indicated that the chairpersons from the two host chapters were concerned that they only received 40 comp'd registrations, but they had 71 workers. The convention matrix calls allows for up to 80, but somehow the number got dragged down. The extras who have paid would like to be reimbursed.

Roger thought the confusion on the number came from a remark that "it takes forty" as a minimum. That size of a group has to work harder. He noted that some of the 80 who are authorized may not be host chapter members, but local people who help with things like picking up judges.

One hypothesis was the number of 40 was stated as a per-host-chapter number! Chris Berry indicated that the allocation of the 80 can be determined by the chapters. Roger wished that this question had been raised earlier. Craig Roney indicated they had gotten the number a long while before, and had worked with it.

d. Coffee maker replacement:

Brian Dunkel mentioned that the coffee maker used for the judges' room had ceased to operate, so he needed to purchase a new one. He moved for approval of this expenditure. Roger Lewis made the second. Brian noted that the cost would be \$80-\$100. He admitted that using a unit only twice a year may cause it to deteriorate quicker. It was established that was a judges'-related expenditure from the budget.

e. Big Screen report:

Joe McDonald mentioned that there were 13 advertisers using the Big Screen, and there would be a total of 60 slides—including District-related slides. He was pleased that submissions came on a more-timely basis.

d. Coffee maker replacement (back to):

**The pending motion was approved.**

e. Harmony Platoon report (return to agenda):

Chris Berry alluded to this event that is scheduled for Saturday afternoon. Seventeen quartets have registered. There are 17 basses, 17 leads, 14 baritones, and 12 tenors. Each of the quartets has no two persons from the same chapter. Fourteen chapters are represented.

The Sault Ste. Marie chapter was almost represented, but the member had a passport problem. However, he is planning to come to Traverse City.

The tenor from one of the out-of-district quartets was also included in a quartet.

"Frontier" is serving as the judging panel for the event. Jamie Carey praised their service in this capacity while attending the convention as a competition quartet.

f. Young non-members on the board:

Dave Montera presented a topic which he had previously shared with the executive team. This was the idea of bringing some younger people onto the board as non-members.

9. New Business (cont.):f. Young non-members on the board (cont.):

Last June, Dave and Mike Hansen talked with Brandon Smith about this idea, and Brandon found it exciting to participate in the board's activities and possibly joining it in the future. Dave wanted to bring in Brandon in a shadowing role. Dave also was interested in getting Zach Schroeder involved. Zach is a former member of The Voice Barbershop Chorus, and serves as the Music & Performance VP for Pontiac-Waterford. He will become active soon with Motor City Metro.

Dave asked for board approval to bring in Brandon and Zach as participants in the board, but not as members. They may become part of our succession plan.

Jamie Carey spoke favorably about both Brandon and Zach becoming involved. He noted that Zach is a teacher/administrator, and Brandon has intensive knowledge.

Dave declared that if the board approves this plan, he will talk to Zach that afternoon. Since he didn't know when he would see Brandon, he asked Aaron Pollard to contact him.

The secretary asked if Brandon and Zach would be around to attend the HOD meeting later in the day. It was unknown if they would be available. Zach is working as a member of one of the host chapters.

Joe McDonald observed that there was consensus about this idea, and asked if a motion was needed. The secretary felt that formal action was unnecessary. Dave Montera agreed.

Roger Lewis asked if any reimbursement should be given to Brandon and Zach. Dave noted that the only perquisite given to Craig Roney in his job shadowing role was an all-events registration---but nothing for housing.

g. Possible District dues increase:

Because Society dues have recently been increased, Chris Berry has been asked if District dues would be increasing. The secretary explained that the Society accepts notices of dues increases in November. Chris asked if we want to make on decision on this topic at this meeting. It was indicated that we can decide now, or wait until October.

Chris stated that he was trying to get an answer to the question he received about our plans. The secretary got the same question (perhaps from the same person), and he stated that there could be no District dues increase---because an increase would have to have been submitted in November 2017.

Dave Montera confirmed that there will be no increase in 2018. The question is whether we want to schedule an increase for 2019. He favored waiting until we see how our finances are after the completion of this convention. He felt that, as long as our funds are stable, we wouldn't need to plan an increase---unless we wanted to enlarge our fund balance. He advocated that the topic be tabled until the October meeting.

h. Service project:

Roger Boyer referenced a report he sent to the board about this topic. He noted that the projects were created by chapters with local charities. Up to now, the host chapter has been the sponsor of the charity. Battle Creek will be the host of the fall 2018 convention, and that chapter has previously selected a charity. He proposed that this opportunity be expanded to a chapter that has not hosted an event. He suggested that it be opened up to other chapters that have not hosted, or may never host a convention.

When Roger has previously proposed this idea to the board, he has gotten no objections. Therefore, he is planning to make the invitation at the HOD meeting later in the day.

9. New Business (cont.):h Service project (cont.):

Joe McDonald noted that, just like requesting to be the host chapter at a future convention, chapters might request to be the charity sponsor for a future one. Dave Montera stated that this was exactly what was intended. Roger said that he wanted to share the opportunity to support other charities. Joe pointed out that the host chapter at a convention has so many logistical responsibilities, and this would separate the service project from everything else that chapter has to do.

Dave Montera saw this to be a special opportunity for Detroit Metro area chapters to have a role, since we will never have a convention in that area. This allows about eight chapters a chance to participate in an important way. The project doesn't have to be a chapter's immediate location. He observed that Detroit-Oakland was one of the host chapters at this event, but its project was in Redford.

Joe McDonald mentioned that the project at the last Traverse City convention was in that city, but the host chapter was Mt. Pleasant.

Roger Boyer listed the duties that the sponsoring chapter must perform:

- Provide a team to coordinate with the selected charity to determine needs;
- Handle the collection and distribution of all donations;
- Maintain communication with the project outreach director during the project period;
- Identify a willing charity with whom it will engage;
- Insure that a charity rep attends the Saturday evening session to make remarks; and,
- Maintain an ongoing relationship with the recipient, and provide engagement information.

He emphasized that there were qualifications that must be met. It is not simply something that a chapter gets. There are guidelines and requirements. Hopefully, the sponsoring chapter will continue to work with the charity afterwards.

Joe McDonald saw this role as a possible benefit to an ailing chapter. If such a chapter serves in this role, it gets local news coverage.

Roger Boyer reiterated that he planned to announce at the HOD meeting the opportunity for being a sponsor at Battle Creek.

i. Death notifications to the Society:

Roger moved on to a concern he has for a mechanism to insure that we learn about barbershoppers who pass away, and that there is a plan for centralized condolences through his role as VP of Outreach. The secretary mentioned that the notification process must start with the chapter secretary, but some secretaries are very lax about doing anything.

Roger cited a case where someone called him from out-of-state to notify him about the passing of the individual's father. In this instance, Roger sent cards to the family on behalf on his chapter and on behalf of the District. Acknowledgements were later received from the family.

Roger stated that he would like to insure that more of our former members get recognized by the Society. Marty Monson reported that the Society does send out letters to the family when it gets informed of a death. There is also an annual summary. The challenge is to get informed. Roger asked to whom notifications should be sent. Marty recommended going to Customer Service. Roger Lewis commented that the Harmony foundation also responds if the individual has been a donor, or a donation has been made in honor of someone.

Joe McDonald referred to a slide that will appear on the Big Screen on Saturday night during a moment of silence. It will scroll a listing of recently deceased members.

10. Adjournment:

At 12:42 p.m., Joe McDonald moved that the meeting be adjourned. Chris Berry made the second. **Motion approved.** Chris Berry was asked to lead the singing of "Keep the Whole World Singing".

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