

Minutes of the Pioneer District Board of Directors of SPEBSQSA, Inc.
held on October 18, 2013, in the Fields Room of the Kalamazoo Radisson Hotel

Attendees:

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

Doug Weaver (President)
Dan Bezaire (Executive vice-president)
Jim McMahan (Secretary)
Larry Parker (Treasurer)
Brian Dunckel (Immediate past president, and also Director of Financial Development)
Cliff Dake (Director of Music & Performance)
Paul Ellinger (Director of Membership)
Ron Eubank (Director of C&J)
Roger Lewis (Director of Events)
Rob Pettigrew (Director of CDD)

Joe McDonald (Director of CSLT) (late arrival)
Evan Boegehold (Director of YIH) (late arrival)
James O'Dell (Director of Mktg. & PR) (late arrival)

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

-----Guests: Gary Plaag (representative from Society Board) and Ev Nau (member of the judging panel)

I. Call To Order:

President Doug Weaver began the meeting at 10:04 a.m. He noted that James O'Dell was on his way, but was stuck in traffic. He also knew that Joe McDonald and Evan Boegehold were somewhere in the hotel.

II. Minutes of the BOD and MT meetings on April 19, 2013:

These two sets of minutes had been previously distributed by the District Secretary. Roger Lewis asked if an extra long motion for approval of the minutes would be befitting their length, but noted he was moving that action. Cliff Dake expressed his appreciation for the details, and made the second. **Motion approved.**

[Arrival of Joe McDonald and Evan Boegehold noted.]

III. Financial Report:

Larry Parker distributed a balance sheet report for the period ending October 16. Larry pointed out that the District has two checking accounts. The Comerica amount is where all of our credit card income goes; that's why its balance is so large. The Flagstar account is used for payment of bills. He also noted that there are two savings accounts on his report. The "2666" account is the District account, and it earns 1.1% interest per month. The "2773" account is held for the QCA, and it earns the same interest rate. That translates into about \$5/month on the QCA account and about \$15/month on the District account.

Roger Lewis noted that 1.1% per month was equivalent to 13% per year. He contrasted that figure with the current situation where most accounts are earning 1% per year!

Larry reported that a Flagstar CD matured on 9/27/13. The staff at Flagstar recommended that he convert the value of that CD into a new five-year CD with Security Benefit Insurance that offered a rate of 2.35%. This new CD would produce a \$3000 gain on the investment.

III. Financial Report (cont.):

Larry announced that the liquid assets of the District were \$89,394.59 as of October 16, but the total assets of the District were listed in his report as \$90,836.79. This difference is due to the inclusion of an entry of \$1489.88 of prepaid expenses for "convention future year". Larry got these numbers from previous reports, and does not know what they are. He must consult with Robb Smith to determine that. Roger Lewis wondered if they were pre-payments for expenses for past conventions that had not been reconciled when the actual expenses were reported. He also wondered if prepayments had been made for the Muskegon convention. He didn't think that any were made for the next Grand Rapids convention.

It was clarified that the "Total Other Current Assets" figure is the "convention future year" expense ---minus a "clearing account" entry.

Roger Lewis observed that the District has some hard assets---such as flags and a cash register. He thought there might be other things that get passed along from convention to convention. He felt it would be appropriate to show those items somewhere---but not necessarily in the treasurer's report. Roger proposed that maintaining such a record would make it easier for the treasurer to know where those items are, and what their value might be.

[Larry was interrupted by a call from the registration desk regarding a problem.]

Larry asked if the District still owned risers (No). He did note that he had purchased a shredder. It was recalled that we may now own radios, even though we have used borrowed ones in the past. The lamps used on the judges' tables were also identified as hard assets. Don Kill should know what all of these items are.

Cliff Dake asked why the District has two checking accounts. Larry re-iterated that the Comerica account was used for the receipt of credit monies, while the Flagstar account is used for the payments of bills. He indicated that this was the way the system had been established by Robb Smith. There seemed to be no reason to consolidate everything into one account since neither bank charges any fees---except for some that are incurred on payments made by the Canadian chapters.

Roger Lewis moved that the treasurer's report be received. A second to the motion was made, but the secretary did not recognize the voice of that person. **Motion approved.**

IV. Electronic Votes:

Doug Weaver noted that the biggest problem that has developed since the expansion of the voting board had been getting responses on this type of voting. Therefore, Doug asked that whenever board members get a request for an electronic vote---please respond. If nothing else, say "I don't know". That way, it will be evident which members have seen the message. He suggested that the first one to respond could move to do an electronic vote and also move to take the action. The next person can second the motion to do the electronic vote and cast his vote on the motion (yea or nay). After that, all subsequent votes would be two-part---"yea" on the electronic vote, and "yea" or "nay" on the motion.

Doug observed that the two times since last April when we tried to take electronic votes, confusion was rampant. The secretary had concluded that the only vote that was successfully completed was the vote to pay for District name tags for members of the Troubadour staff. **[NOTE: A confirmation of that action should have been a Consent Agenda item for this meeting in order to document it in the minutes.]**

Roger Lewis hypothesized a situation when discussion on a motion might be desirable. He said that he liked the idea of the first person making both a motion to do an electronic vote and a motion to take the action. The second person could then vote to do the electronic vote, but say that he wanted to discuss it further before voting. Rob Pettigrew pointed out that the process was asynchronous because we're using e-mail. He asked if a person who replied after a second was moved in favor of the action could override further voting until the issue could be discussed. Roger Lewis affirmed that a motion should be placed on the floor by being made and seconded before any discussion begins.

IV. Electronic Votes (cont.):

Doug Weaver emphasized that electronic votes should be limited to actions that are routine. This procedure should be avoided on topics that require a lot of discussion. Otherwise, the process gets “messy”. Doug urged that we use the process not as a “rubberstamp”, but to address things that have to be done.

Doug then directed the discussion to the issue that was not resolved by an electronic vote---the approval of the expenditures that the District would incur by sending five representatives (Dan, Joe, Rob, Paul, and James) to the Mini-Forum in Nashville in November. He indicated that the District must pay for the bulk of the costs for attendees at a Mini-Forum, i.e., their flights and their hotel rooms. The Society does provide the meals on Saturday.

Roger Lewis asked if we would also be charged a fee for each attendee. Gary Plaag confirmed that there will be a fee that is calculated afterward on a per person basis, and the District will get a bill for that expense.

Since our attendees will also be having some meals that are not included (Friday night and Sunday morning), Doug Weaver suggested that we include this expense.

Roger Lewis asked what the Society has as its per diem rate for meals. Gary Plaag quoted those numbers, but Brian Dunckel noted that the District already has an established per diem of \$35/day. It was indicated that we will be getting a bill from the Society for the hotel rooms and fees for the five who will be attending. Doug Weaver noted that we needed to take action to authorize that expenditure.

It was noted that the flights had already been booked, and the person who made the reservations would have to be reimbursed.

As a divergence from the current discussion, the secretary asked if it would be possible to identify the projected costs for attending Mini-Forums in advance, so Larry Parker could put those numbers into a budget. It was also suggested that estimates for flight costs be made in advance for the same purpose.

Doug Weaver observed that each year may be a little different. The projected costs differ between a year when a Forum is held (costs are split between District and Society), and a year when a Mini-Forum is held (no cost splits involved). He also wondered if the format of the event might even change next year to something different. Doug was under the impression that full-Forum years occurred every third year.

Roger Lewis concurred that an even/odd year format may not continue. He suggested that the presence of a new CEO could influence how this event will be defined in the coming years. For now, he felt that the best we can do is to put estimates into our budgets, but anticipate that we may overestimate or underestimate.

Ron Eubank moved that we approve payment for the expenses associated with the Mini-Forum. Dan Bezaire made the second.

Roger Lewis observed that the motion was a “blanket” motion, and it might be well to define what expenses are covered. Cliff Dake concurred with this opinion. Doug Weaver summarized the items that he had heard mentioned---flights, hotel rooms, dinner on Friday night, and breakfast on Sunday morning. The latter two items would be per District policy. It was noted that airport parking should be in the list. Because Paul Ellinger is bringing everyone to the airport, there will be only one car involved.

Ron Eubank asked to modify his motion to include all of the items previously noted. Dan Bezaire concurred with the modification. A vote was taken on the motion pending. **Motion approved.**

Doug Weaver asked if we should make a motion to approve the item that was handled successfully by an electronic vote (the purchase of name tags for the Troubadour staff). The secretary made an error by forgetting that this item was not listed as a Consent Agenda item, and did not ask for such a motion. **[NOTE: The process that occurred was documented earlier in the minutes.]**

V. President's Comments

Before he began his comments, Doug Weaver welcomed Gary Plaag as the representative from the Society Board who was attending the convention. He noted that this was Gary's first visit to Pioneer.

Doug also acknowledged Ev Nau, a member of the judging panel, who was present at the meeting.

Doug indicated that he was very pleased with the direction the District was going. He felt that a lot of great stuff was happening. He expected it to be a good weekend. Doug was looking forward to telling the attendees at the House of Delegates meeting about the things that were happening. He expressed his thanks to all of the members of this board who have been very active in getting those things done.

Some of the year's highlights that Doug cited were the quartet Top Gun event, the quartet harmony boot camp, and Leadership Academy. Doug felt that the District members were noticing the things that have been happening. He concluded that members are excited about what they see, and they are seeing results.

Doug noted that after the quartet Top Gun event, we had three quartets that qualified for Toronto. He observed that it has been a long time since our District has sent three quartets to International. He was anxious to see the chorus scores on Saturday to see if the chorus Top Gun event had any impact. Doug reiterated his thanks to the board members for all of their efforts.

A welcome (and a name badge) was extended to the newest member of the District Board---Evan Boegehold---who is now serving as the District Director for Youth in Harmony.

VI. Directors' Reports:

Doug indicated that he wanted each of the board members to discuss their reports briefly. He was going to take the reports in the order in which they were stacked in front of him.

---Music & Performance:

Cliff Dake began by commenting on the very successful quartet Top Gun event held earlier in the year. The District has organized these events in previous years, but it had been a while since the last one. Cliff thought it was fun to rekindle that program, and have it be so successful.

It was while he, Paul, and Rob were returning of their flight from the Forum last November that the idea of having a chorus Top Gun event was created. There have been District events for choruses in the past, but the association of the name "Top Gun" gave this event a new character. An issue that was also resolved on that same flight was identification of the venue where it could be held. Fortunately, Paul knew that his church in Canton Township was a facility that would be big enough. Cliff did search, however, for facilities that would also work, but might be closer to more chapters. He had hoped to get away from having so many events on the southeast side of the Michigan. There was still an issue of finding a place with a lower cost to be shared by the attending choruses.

Cliff noted that two choruses elected to attend the chorus Top Gun event. Others were invited, but had conflicts with a proposed date that was the same as Bush League. He is hoping to lock in the date quicker for the 2014 event. Since the location of the 2013 event was close for the chapters that came, there was no housing cost for their members. Despite his apprehension about something new being started, Cliff felt that the 2013 event was extremely successful. He was able to bring in two "awesome" coaches. Afterwards, he got feedback from several chorus members that concurred with his assessment.

Cliff affirmed that he plans to repeat the event in 2014, and he hopes that he can get more chapters to participate by virtue of a better date.

Thanks to the work of Al Fisk, Cliff mentioned that the Standing Ovation program has also been rekindled. A lot of that success has occurred because of increased awareness of something that has been around for a while. Publicity on the Pionet, plus Al's evaluation of three performances so far, has contributed to that greater awareness.

VI. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---Music & Performance (cont.):

Cliff reported that when Al did Standing Ovation reviews at some chapter shows, he was willing to give S-Os to some quartets that appeared in the shows. Cliff felt that the feedback given on the S-Os was very thorough, fair, open, and honest. It was emphasized that the goal of S-Os is to improve the quality of the show that the audience receives. It is not intended to criticize the chorus or quartets. It was Cliff's opinion that the program is working very well.

Since the resumption of the S.O. program, some individuals have mentioned that they had attended the S.O. training and were interested in getting involved again. Because Al is now retired, he is devoting a lot of time to this project and is very enthusiastic.

It has been suggested that some Saturday be designated as a date when interested persons can be trained (or re-trained) by hearing Al describe what he does in his S-Os. There would be no cost to the District for this service. Cliff plans to develop this idea further.

Cliff pointed out that there was a difference between how the quartet Top Gun and the chorus Top Gun events were handled. Both events were completely funded by the participants. There were no costs incurred by the District. However, the quartets were ultimately reimbursed \$100 each because expenses fell below the total of the payments made by them. Cliff wanted to do the same thing for the choruses since the purpose of the activity was education. He felt that a small refund was a show of support to the participants since all expenses were paid by them.

For information it was noted that the choruses paid \$500 each. Cliff recommended that they be given \$100 as a reimbursement.

Since a total of \$1000 was paid by the two chapters, the secretary asked if the total expenses for the event were \$800. For further clarification, Roger Lewis asked if the proposed figure of \$100/chapter was a refund of an excess, or was it based on another calculation. Cliff indicated that it was the latter. By contrast, Doug Weaver observed that for the quartet Top Gun event, quartets were given a refund of the excess. Cliff indicated that the costs of the chorus event were close to the \$1000 figure. Dan Bezaire observed that the \$100/chapter figure includes a token contribution by the District.

Cliff emphasized that he felt his time in organizing events of this type was not enough of a District contribution, but that we should do a little more in support of the chapters.

Roger Lewis moved that we give a rebate of \$100 to each of the two chapters. Cliff Dake made the second.

Joe McDonald asked if the participating chapters left the event with the feeling they got a benefit from the event. Cliff asserted that they did---absolutely! Joe observed that other chapters in the District also arrange for coaching events, but do not receive similar rebates. Doug Weaver countered that the difference was that this was a District-sponsored event.

Rob Pettigrew announced that he would abstain from voting on the motion because his chapter was one of the participating chapters. However, he asserted that his chapter got a fantastic benefit from the experience! He felt that his chorus would not normally spend \$500 on coaching in the next two years. However, the chapter decided to take advantage of this particular opportunity.

Roger Lewis felt that it was fitting for the District to help educate and improve chapter choruses, quartets, and individual singers.

Because he sensed that there might not be unanimous support of the motion, Doug Weaver asked for a vote by show of hands. **The motion was approved---with one abstaining vote.**

The question was asked about which two chapters participated. It was verified that those chapters were Huron Valley and Detroit-Oakland.

VI. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---Membership:

Paul Ellinger referred to the large amount of info in his written report. He pointed out that two things bring people into our membership --- (1), to hear our music, and (2), to be invited. Therefore, one of his objectives for this year is to find new and unique ways to bring our music to the public.

Paul observed that there is a cross-pollination occurring between District directors. An example was Cliff's Top Gun event that became a membership opportunity. The show afterwards identified six possible new members. Similar shows were held after other coaching events.

Dan Bezaire observed that this is consistent with what he has been hearing at Society events like the Forum. The message has been given that an activity is not just for a particular function. It is a project that has implications for every function. Dan declared, "We're not in silos anymore." Paul observed that directors have been having impromptu meetings to support those kinds of interaction.

Paul's next area of interest has been to discern what aspects of membership are "actionable". He noted that there have been constant comments about renewals. Paul had circulated an extensive report of surveys made of non-renewing members which would suggest that a lot of time should be spent on that issue. However, Paul, and also Bart Vandemark (sp-?), have been calling a lot of non-renewing members. They have found that only about 5% of our losses are actionable. The non-actionable losses occur because of job change, college, care of a spouse, and personal health problems----and the ultimate cause (death). Paul felt there was nothing we can do to make a difference about those things.

Paul made reference to Marty Monson's concept of "looking outside the window". Paul concluded that we can't keep thinking about what we like, but instead find what is liked by people who haven't joined yet. Our task is to make it welcoming.

One of Paul's action items is to determine which chapters are willing to work to achieve growth. He noted that we have many wonderful opportunities to help them grow, but many chapters are not taking advantage of them (the horse-to-water dilemma). Paul is hoping that some of them will get thirsty enough to respond.

Paul called for a mindset change in chapters, the District, and the Society that we must bring growth to the forefront in the thinking of chapter leaders. He felt that the main emphasis has been to get better as singing. Consequently, there has been a focus on craft, followed by an aversion to letting in anyone unless "they are as least as good as me". Paul has seen a reaction in chapters that says "we don't want to let everybody in". He reiterated that a mindset change must occur. Roger Lewis and Paul briefly dialogued about an e-mail Paul had sent out about this topic, and to which Roger had said "amen".

Finally, Paul indicated that he will continue to make growth opportunities available. He noted that there are all kinds of things that can be offered: the "Learn to Sing" program, and Singing Valentines.

Paul suggested that we have a misconception about the best venue for people to experience what we do. He made a comparison to doing magic on the street (where it can be exciting), or doing it on stage (where it is less engaging). He reminded everyone of experiences like singing in a restaurant, or while walking around. These offer opportunities to have conversations.

Chapters have called Paul and mentioned that they realized they were doing the wrong venues. After they changed, they started taking off.

As a sidebar to his report, Paul noted that he had been asked about the impact of the Operation Harold Hill program. He reported that the program did have an impact because it caused people to think about the need to have growth. The slightest bit of thinking about it slowed the loss in membership. He acknowledged, however, that the loss resumed when the thinking ceased. He noted that this happened in all of the districts.

VI. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---Membership (cont.):

Paul re-iterated the need for a mindset change. While we may continue to talk about getting better, he was confident that would happen anyway. He asserted that, if growth is important, we should be spending half of our "column inches" talking about how growth can be achieved, and its importance---and less on accomplishments.

---Events:

Roger Lewis advised the board about a situation at a previous convention where a chapter member got a hospitality room directly from the hotel, and the hotel accidentally provided it at a lower rate than had been negotiated for the District. The hotel was embarrassed about the error.

At this convention, therefore, the chapter member contacted the Radisson directly and got a room that was higher than the negotiated rate! By the time he learned about the rooms that were available through Roger, they were gone. The hotel would not reduce the rate on the higher-priced room, so the chapter was stuck with a more expensive room. The chapter member was urged to follow instructions in the future.

Fortunately, the hospitality rooms at the Grand Rapids site will be free, and they are all in the same hall. The important thing is for chapters to put in their requests early.

Roger will be making a change on how rooms for District officers and convention VIPs are handled at future conventions. The reservations will all go through him; no one should contact the hotel directly. However, Roger does need to know for sure when each officer is arriving, and that he will be coming! This will help the District to avoid paying for rooms that would otherwise be reserved. Early before each convention, Roger will send out a notice about this change. There already have been instances where some officers were assigned two rooms because they registered themselves, and Roger also registered them as VIPs.

There were some non-convention events that were offered in connection with this convention. Roger reported that he got zero response on the wine-making program. He did not ask for responses on the planetarium exhibit on the Saturday afternoon since that is an open event anyway. He hoped that he will hear by Sunday if anyone went, and how they liked it.

Roger reminded everyone that an a capella, non-barbershop group is slated to sing on Saturday night before the quartet finals. This was a follow-up from having this kind of group sing at Traverse City. Roger plans to continue seeking outside, non-barbershop, a capella group to do this at each convention. He has discovered that it is usually too difficult to get high school groups in the fall because it is too soon after the start of school. However, Grand Rapids has several incredibly good groups in their schools that may be available.

Doug Weaver suggested that if we start sooner than normal in looking for groups in the Muskegon area, we might also be successful there. If they are asked in the spring, they could be ready for fall. Roger will check with Annette Jurcevic and Nels Carlson.

It was noted that many cities do have non-school-related, non-barbershop, a capella groups. Roger acknowledged that it was fun to find them, and they have members who might join us.

Roger has informed the hotel staff here, and will do so at other conventions held in a hotel, that their employee badge is equivalent to a registration badge, and will get them into any session to listen. This is in addition to encouraging staff to join us in the singing of tags.

Doug Weaver complimented Roger for adding extra items to our events. While not many people may be involved, Doug felt that they add "buzz".

VI. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---Events (cont.):

Roger forgot some items that he was planning to add the Grand Rapids convention. One of them will be on Saturday afternoon when there will be pizza and soft drinks available at the pool. There will a small charge per person to cover the food and a prize.

He is also looking at arranging a tour to Meijer Gardens if the butterfly exhibit is open then.

After learning that Grand Rapids is famous for having many craft beer locations, Roger is exploring the idea of doing a craft beer pub crawl.

Another idea that he is considering is the promotion of a city tour. This would be a six-hour tour that would begin at 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. on Friday. This would require the convention attendees make it a convention weekend by coming in on Thursday night. This concept would have to be tested to see if enough people would respond. It would probably involve a 12-passenger bus.

The fundamental question is whether people would enjoy spending a weekend in a convention city.

Paul Ellinger observed that there is unique difference being introduced by the addition of extra events. Normally, barbershoppers enjoy a convention without their families being present. He noted that the option of visiting a museum caused him to bring his sons. Extra items add things that a family can do. This adds more attendees for the weekend.

Joe McDonald concurred that his wife got more interested in coming to a convention because of the wine tour at Traverse City. Consequently, he noted that she had come for this event.

Paul Ellinger advocated that these extra items contribute to the mindset change he is seeking. He felt that they will grow to a bigger success.

Doug Weaver observed that the concept of having pizza and soft drinks by the Grand Rapids hotel pool was unsettling initially to the hotel staff. They accepted the idea after noticing that the designated area is elevated above the pool.

---C&J:

Ron Eubank decided to link his remarks to the cross-pollination and mindset change concepts. He noted that there is a lot of discussion in the C&J community about supporting events. He mentioned that several functions had joint meetings at the last Forum to talk about how convention weekends could be changed to be more focused on the convention, and less on the contests. If the focus is the latter, you just get members---and not their families.

Ron hoped that the board had heard about a recent rule change that permits districts to have just one convention per year which includes a contest, and one that does not---or some mixture thereof. Pioneer has not had a problem getting decent attendance (and income) from its two conventions. Ron observed that our difficulty has been offering something that is appealing to families.

It was mentioned that some districts have had serious financial problems, and have found this rule change to be beneficial. Ron cited the Land-o-Lakes District convention the following weekend at which he and Gary Plaag will be judges. That district is having their quartet finals on Saturday afternoon. Then on Saturday night, they will have a performance-style show with an outside guest quartet---plus choruses and quartets from the district. Other districts are trying other formats. Ron urged the board to share ideas with Roger about new ways of structuring conventions.

[Arrival of James O'Dell noted.]

VI. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---C&J (cont.):

Ron announced that Kevin Dunckel is the newest judge from Pioneer to be certified (Presentation category). There are three District members who have expressed interest in going through the training to become judges. One of them has submitted letters of recommendation, and one has promised to submit those letters. None of them have submitted applications yet. The window of opportunity exists right now for getting into the judging program.

Doug Weaver asked if the names of the prospective candidates can be announced. Ron indicated that they could be, but we should be cautious about pushing them because they might change their plans. He identified them, but their names were not included in the minutes because of a subsequent comment from Gary Plaag.

A few other names were mentioned of persons who had considered becoming judges, but are not pursuing the idea for now. Info was also shared about a possible job re-location of the spouse of one of the candidates named earlier; this may be causing a delay in his application.

Ron pointed out that there are only have two persons in Pioneer who are certified judges---Al Fisk and himself. Roger Lewis has decided to retire as of this year. Although Kevin Dunckel has become qualified, he is dual member in the Johnny Appleseed District and spends his time in that area.

Gary Plaag suggested that persons who go in the judging training program may prefer to treat it like a pregnant woman who doesn't announce it for a while. This will allow them to avoid embarrassment in case they don't qualify.

---Financial Development:

Brian Dunckel announced that the District has added three new donors to Harmony Foundation since the last convention. Total contributions as of September 30, 2013, equaled \$72,590. This is about half of the total donations made as of this time last year. However, Brian noted that we have the potential for contributing \$30,000 to the Youth Chorus Festival before the end of the year. He observed that the end of the year is also a time when additional contributions may be received. He was optimistic that we will match last year's total by the end of December.

The "Best Seat in the House" program was initiated this fall at all district conventions. Brian was under the impression that no one made a bid at our convention. It was reported, however, that Chris Berry had done so.

Ev Nau provided a piece of info he got from Harmony Foundation. He noted that BSITH proceeds will be split between the foundation and the host district. This policy applies to all conventions except the International and the Mid-Winter.

Roger Lewis observed that the donor choice checks are usually handed out at the convention, but they were mailed this year. Ev indicated that this occurred for our convention due to uncertainty about whether KJ McAleesejergins (our scheduled representative from the Foundation) would get back from Australia in time. Doug Weaver believed the KJ would arrive later in the day.

----CSLT:

Joe McDonald alluded to a discussion at the board meeting in Traverse City about holding our Leadership Academy so close to the New Year's weekend in 2014. As a result, he reported that our event is slated for the second weekend in January. An unintended consequence is that the Okemos site is not available then. Therefore, he has arranged for L/A to be held on January 11, 2014, at the Events Center on the Central Michigan University campus. Some other District events have previously been held at this location. Joe felt the facility was quite adequate, and may be even more conducive to what we do.

VI. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---CSLT (cont.):

The main difference between Okemos and CMU is that there is no on-site housing, so there will be a need to do some traveling. Joe has not yet gotten quotes for rooms from any nearby hotels.

He noted that the curriculum is being developed. Typically, that comes together as the date of the event gets closer.

He reminded the board that last year's L/A budget was minimized by using only District resource personnel. Without being critical of our in-house people, he acknowledged that we did not draw as many attendees as had been sought. He observed that sometimes a person is not recognized as an expert when he is in his own back yard. "You're a lot smarter when you're in another district."

Therefore, Joe is looking at bringing in a few outside resource people to the 2014 L/A. A budget is being developed with that in mind. One specific person he is considering as a marketing expert is Scipio Garling from the Alexandria Harmonizers chorus. Joe cited a recent article in the Harmonizer about the successes of that chapter. Joe Cerutti has said that Scipio is a major driving force behind the chapter's growth. Scipio has confirmed that he is available for our event. In addition to Scipio, another outside person is being considered---but no commitment has been acquired.

Beyond those two outside people, Joe is expecting to build the rest of the faculty from within the District. He reported that Cliff Dake has offered to provide support. Joe noted that most of the board members present were at the Forum last November, and many have given presentations about what they learned. He anticipated that he might draw upon some of that information in the development of topics.

Joe also cited the discussion at Traverse City about changing the concept of how we present L/A. It was suggested then that we offer a full-District program to cover the areas related to the legal requirements that are of concern to chapter presidents, secretaries, and treasurers at the start of the year. That would be followed later in the year by a traveling curriculum that would cover items like music, membership, marketing, etc.

Joe did not get a sense at Traverse City that the concept was being embraced, so he has not worked on developing it. Nevertheless, he pointed to the success that Cliff has had with the Top Gun and boot camp events as a model for how this concept could be implemented in the future. A drawback to the concept is that it eliminates the social aspect of L/A. He urged that we continue to keep an open mind to the concept as we consider its merits and weaknesses.

The secretary noted that he was grateful for Joe's scheduling of L/A on the second weekend of January. It allowed him to accept a request to teach the Secretary Track at the Cardinal District L/A on the weekend before, and get more mileage out of his instructional materials. Joe emphasized that the rescheduling was a mutual decision by the entire board.

Joe expressed his thanks to the District board for its support of the Harmony Explosion camp that was hosted this summer by the Mt. Pleasant chapter. He noted that the camp exceeded its expectations. It was hoped there would be at least 49 attendees, and the final count was 59!

He felt that the clinicians and resource people performed again at a high level. The youth had a stellar experience. A new development this year was efforts by the attendees to get their choral teachers to attend. Four teachers were in attendance at the Saturday night show. Conversations are continuing with those individuals.

Joe announced that the Mt. Pleasant chapter is organizing a second youth event in 2014 to be held on February 22. This will be a one-day workshop. He is still looking for a location where it can be held, but he has secured the "The Allies" as the lead quartet.

VI. Directors' Reports (cont.):

---CSLT (cont.):

Joe is working with Don Slamka because of Don's interest in providing youth programs. Therefore, the event will be held either in Hillsdale or in Mt. Pleasant. Joe anticipated that he will be seeking some financial support from the District and Harmony Foundation. He is not yet ready to make formal requests, but is working on grant applications. He does know that the maximum number of students that can be accommodated will be 120. It will not be limited to students who live close to the venue.

Larry Parker announced that he had recently received a large check from Harmony Foundation to pay for "Harmony Explosion". The Mt. Pleasant chapter had been mystified for some time about the fact that it had not received the grant money that it was supposed to receive for its 2013 H-Ex camp. Larry noted that the check had been made out to Pioneer District!

---Events (return to.):

Roger Lewis noted that he'd forgotten the job posting he had made on the Pionet. As he increases the number of extra events offered at a convention, he has discovered that he can set them up, but he needs someone to handle the details. He mentioned that he got no response from the job posting notice. Though not stated in the Pionet announcement, Roger was sure that the person who does this task would get a free registration and room. That fact was not stated because of a concern that many persons might then apply who were not qualified. The holder of the job could be either a Society member or a spouse. The person should be accustomed to being in conferences and knowing how to manage activities.

When it was asked if this person might be a different individual at each convention, Roger indicated that he wanted it to be the same person all of the time so he doesn't have to do constant retraining. This person would be invited to the pre-convention meetings for each event. Doug Weaver suggested that the board should try to identify a person who might be best suited for this task, and could be asked.

---YIH:

Evan Boegehold indicated that he was working on one big project and two smaller ones. The big one was his effort to make a connection with Phi Mu Alpha, a professional music fraternity that is found on college campuses. There are eight Michigan campuses that have chapters of ΦMA: CMU, WMU, UM, Michigan State, Alma, Albion, EMU, and Hillsdale. Evan observed that an examination of the ΦMA website reveals that the legacies and values of the fraternity are almost identical to those of BHS. The members of the fraternity are men between the ages of 18 to 25 who love to sing, and who serenade women constantly. Evan felt that we have a product---singing, and singing well, in a capella style---that can be offered to them. The fraternity is dedicated to getting young men motivated in music---both vocal and instrumental. If this group doesn't know about BHS, Evan felt a connection needs to be made.

Evan does not perceive this project as one that involves a lot of planning. Instead, he needs to have chapter representatives who live close to these campuses to make contact with the ΦMA groups. The goal is to let them know about our mutual interests, and to participate in some shared activities. Evan has experimented with the ΦMA chapter at CMU. He has invited some of its members to come to a Mt. Pleasant chapter meeting. Several had scheduling conflicts, but two individuals did visit. One of them is on the governing board of the ΦMA chapter. He commented later that there was so much of what he learned that they could use. Evan is continuing to invite other ΦMA members to visit rehearsals.

Al Fisk, who is a joint member of ΦMA and BHS, informed Evan that meetings are held at International conventions of those who have these dual memberships. Evan wondered if we could find more persons within Pioneer with dual memberships, and get them to band together to visit ΦMA chapters.

Another idea Evan proposed was to create groups of both ΦMA and BHS members do Singing Valentines. It was noted that most BHS chapters use S/Vs as fund-raisers, so this is an issue that would have to be resolved. However, this would allow both organizations to be ambassadors for their respective groups.

VI. Directors' Reports (cont.):

----YIH (cont.):

We should not be trying to steal members from ΦMA. However, if they come to our rehearsals to learn the songs and style of Singing Valentines, they will learn that they have another new singing option after graduation. The important thing is for us to communicate awareness that we share a mutual interest in reaching out to the community. Evan felt that face-to-face communications or phone calls are more effective than e-mails as a way of doing this.

Evan then remembered that he had also communicated with a ΦMA member at the GVSU campus ---another location where the organization has a chapter. That individual had not gotten back to him. Doug Weaver offered to try to contact that person as well.

Evan observed that his generation tends to see barbershoppers as being members of a much older age group. However, when his age group gets involved, they usually have a very positive experience. They must discover what is in it for them.

The big dilemma for college students is working rehearsals into their busy schedules. It is really difficult for music majors whose schedules are changing constantly. Nevertheless, there are lots of them out there with exceptional full-voice talents. The key is to invite them.

Rob Pettigrew suggested that he and Evan should talk about this topic further, since his chapter is only twenty minutes from the UM campus. Evan urged that one should not just think about music majors, but other students that are active singers. He felt that development of a nucleus of 10-15 students would cause the activity to "recycle itself".

The second YIH project in which Evan is involved is making a connection with choral directors around the state through ACDA. This was mentioned at the last board meeting. There will be a Michigan ACDA convention on the next weekend. Adam Scott (Society music specialist) is speaking at the event. Adam tried to get some younger Pioneer quartets to appear also, but none were available. He is giving copies of the "free and easy" sheet music and learning tracks to the ACDA members who attend.

Because many directors will not be there, Evan was hoping to obtain a list of those not present. He then plans to call or e-mail many of the latter individuals and offer the same materials to them. While many school choirs tend to be mostly female, Evan felt that providing something worthwhile that boys can do will make a big difference. It is his objective to get these materials to many choral directors.

Finally, Evan referred to an announcement that went out on Pionet about the organization of a youth chorus. Aaron Pollard and his father are attempting to get one started next January. During the Harmony Explosion camp this summer at CMU, Aaron mentioned this idea to the boys who were there. Aaron is working with Joe McDonald to get an invitation sent out specifically to those boys about the plan. Having a corps group of boys who have already sung together will help the development of this program. Evan is working with Aaron as a resource person.

Roger Lewis referred to some past discussion at the Society level about developing a liaison with another choral group known as Symphonia. Although nothing came of that idea, Roger was encouraged by the work that Evan is doing with groups like ΦMA and ACDA.

Roger suggested that the ΦMA groups on the six (actually seven) campuses be invited to create one of more quartets to compete at the spring convention. The quartets would be involved in a Michigan intercollegiate competition. The winning quartet(s) would then represent Pioneer at International.

Roger proposed that a special trophy be created that could be taken back to the college campus. Roger was hopeful that a serious intercollegiate competition could be established. He observed that the Society has seen a rather low number of collegiate quartets in spite of the number of youth that we have who are in college in the U.S. He felt that part of the fun of this competition would be experienced by the alumni of Michigan schools who are District members.

VI. Directors' Reports (cont.):

----YIH (cont.):

Evan mentioned that ΦMA has district get-togethers of its leadership. Perhaps this is where this idea could be initiated. Roger then speculated that an intercollegiate competition should maybe be held at their get-together---rather than in our venue.

Joe McDonald also suggested that the competition be structured under the youth chorus model, i.e., three songs, with one on them not in barbershop style. He felt that might open up the process.

Evan acknowledged that we might need groups like ΦMA and ACDA more than they need us. However, he still felt we have a product that is worth offering---since it will change the way they sing. He noted that the CMU chapter of ΦMA is getting coaching on the Wavebox concepts

---Marketing & PR:

James O'Dell acknowledged that he has not had much success in getting chapters to reach out for help on marketing and PR issues. He felt he would have to pursue more personal visits to chapters to encourage the development of marketing plans and advertising campaigns. For now, he has very little to report in this area.

He was excited about the plans to have a presence at the upcoming ACDA convention.

----CDD:

Rob Pettigrew reported that three directors from the District attended Directors College at Harmony University this summer. Two of them are beginning the process of pursuing the certification track. All three of them went on Harmony Foundation scholarships.

It was noted that two other District persons attended Directors College, but did not go on scholarships. One of them was only identified by his last name ("Cooper"). The other one was Charlie Martin from the Lansing chapter.

Rob has been engaged in an effort to make personal contacts with all of the directors in the District. He has now begun his second round of making contacts again. One of the topics he has discussed with them is the idea of offering a CDWI. Rob had talked with Doug Smeltz about planning a CDWI to be held in the Johnny Appleseed District in September 2013. Unfortunately, Rob could not get any takers from Pioneer, and the event will probably be moved to next spring. Rob has also been suggesting a Pioneer-hosted CDWI that to be held in the southeast side of the state in February or March. He would also like to get another one set up next year in the southwest side, but that is still uncertain.

At the House of Delegate meeting later in the day, Rob plans to mention the possible CDWIs, and also talk about the "Outstanding In Front" program. It was noted that it has been a while since we last held an O-I-F in Pioneer. Unlike a CDWI event which is focused on the instruction of directors, an O-I-F program is directed to the Music Team, the assistant directors, and anyone who thinks they might like to be a director.

Rob then donned his hat as director of the Huron Valley chorus in order to thank the District and Cliff Dake in particular, for putting on the chorus Top Gun event. He felt that the session was a huge help for the chapter---in its singing, and in its attitude.

VII. Mini-forum in Nashville:

Although this topic had been mentioned earlier, Doug Weaver wanted to re-cap the background on this event. It came about because of surveys that were made throughout the Society two years earlier. When that data was compiled, four needs were clearly defined. Those needs will be the focus of the Mini-Forum.

VII. Mini-forum in Nashville (cont.):

Consequently, the upcoming Mini-Forum will not be meetings of representatives who have the same functional role in their districts, but will be gatherings of those who will be working on one of the four different tracks.

The four tracks will be:

- (1) Strategies for finding new members; new musical leadership; and new patrons. Paul Ellinger will be involved with this one.
- (2) Strategies for getting more coaching for choruses. Cliff Dake will be involved with this one.
- (3) Strategies for getting more visits by district and Society officers. James O'Dell will do this one.
- (4) Strategies for promoting shared activities. Joe McDonald will pursue this one.

Doug urged the board members to share with these individuals any input on these strategies they have to offer. Communications with our four should be done during the convention weekend or by e-mail before they depart. Doug will also offer this opportunity to the delegates at the HOD meeting later on.

Doug anticipates that this event can be a huge thing if these strategies can be attacked, and some things can be developed that work. He reiterated his invitation that board members share ideas with our four representatives. He noted that attendance at this event was a big investment by the District, but it is something from which we expect big results.

It was noted that our four representatives have been asked to develop presentations that they can give at a general session at Leadership Academy. Doug's goal is for everyone to get an update on what happened at the Mini-Forum, and what direction we are going. He sees these presentations as being an additional incentive for people to attend L/A.

Larry Parker asked if each attendee could submit all of his expenses on one request. However, it was noted that airline expenses have already been charged, so that reimbursement must be paid sooner to avoid credit card fees. It was clarified that everyone's flight had been booked some time ago.

Doug noted that he and Roger would be attending the Mini-Forum as interested observers, but not as representatives. Therefore, the District is not paying for their trips.

Dan Bezaire reported that he recently participated in a computer conference with Marty Monson and others. He saw the agenda that was being developed for the event, but did not forward it to anyone because it was still being tweaked. He indicated that groups will not be given operating team titles, but identified as project managers. That will get us away from the idea that the strategies are "domains", but they are part of a cooperative effort.

Gary Plaag pointed out that there actually five areas of concern that were identified in the surveys done earlier. Four of them are under our control. The one that is not has been identified as "modernizing our music". Since this involves arrangements, it a staff function. It was noted that there will be discussion at the Mini-Forum about this topic, but it won't be done the same way.

It was reported that as part of an effort to create arrangements of more modern repertoire, there was an arrangers' summit in Nashville last year.

Gary also mentioned that he was becoming involved in North Carolina with the Contemporary A Capella Society of America (CASA). CASA has recognized that barbershop has something to offer, so they are holding a class at their next event called "What Can We Learn from Barbershop". CASA has concluded that we do better ear singing, that we have better performance skills, and that we do better vocal production than "closet" a capella singers do. Therefore, CASA is reaching out for a partnership with us to learn what we do---which will help them to get better. Gary noted that this movement fits in with our efforts to learn more about the music of other groups, and to incorporate that into our product. Meanwhile, they want to incorporate our learning skills into the preparations for their performances.

VII. Mini-forum in Nashville (cont.):

Paul Ellinger asked if he could piggy-back onto Gary's comments. He told about his experience a week earlier at the Mackinac Island Music Festival. This event is a gathering of all kinds of performers and songwriters from across the country. Many of these people tour with national artists. Paul served as a faculty member for the event. When asked how he learned so much about music, he mentioned his experience in barbershop. Consequently, the event organizer decided that all of next year's attendees must learn a barbershop song! "Nobody can tune like those guys." Paul observed that rock stars will be learning barbershop because it is now relevant. He concluded that we have something that people don't know about. They say: "wow; better vocal production; understand the lyrics; understand that it is our job to move people".

Roger Lewis alluded to a quote from CASA-member Deke Sharon: "Barbershop is the black belt of a capella." Deke has been a fan of barbershop for a long time. Roger urged everyone to look at the CASA website, and follow Deke's comments about music, singing, barbershop, etc. Deke has been both critical and complimentary about barbershop.

Joe McDonald reported that he shares some of Deke's articles with students who have attended Harmony Explosion camps. He concluded that the articles give them confidence that barbershop singing is not something they have to do in secret.

Roger referred to a current a capella craze occurring on college campuses. It has been determined that only 10-20% of the students involved in that activity are music students. The rest are pursuing other disciplines. This means that we may get only a small percentage of those who are music students. We must figure out ways to reach the other 80-90%.

VIII. Nominating Committee:

Brian Dunckel reviewed the slate that will go to the House of Delegates meeting later in the day. Dan Bezaire is listed as the nominee for president (two year term). Mike Hansen has been nominated to become the executive vice president. He and all of the other officers (Jim McMahan---secretary, and Larry Parker---treasurer) are nominated for one year terms.

Doug Weaver pointed some proposed changes in the persons holding director positions. Since Ron Eubank is stepping down from Director of C&J position, Brian Dunckel will be moving into that role, and Doug will take over the position of Director of Financial Development.

Cliff Dake asked for an explanation of how the Nominating Committee functions. Brian Dunckel noted that the bylaws define the composition of the committee as being the current president and any past presidents who are still around. In the last few years, that has created a committee of three persons: Doug, Roger Lewis, and Brian. They have met occasionally and discussed possible candidates.

Brian mentioned that Mike Hansen had been considered for board positions before, but could not accept them because of his job. However, his job is changing as he approaches retirement. He is now available. His current job is one of running an association, and being a state lobbyist.

Roger Lewis added an additional detail about the committee by noting that the immediate past president is always the committee's chairperson.

IX. 75th Anniversary:

Although he planned to talk about this topic further at the HOD meeting, Doug indicated that he was thrilled with the efforts of Pioneer chapters to mark this celebration. He did not know of any other Districts that have done more than we have. He felt it was incredible that we had so many joint chapter shows. He hoped that we don't wait for another anniversary to do that again. He also commented about the events that were held on April 11 in Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, and in the Rotunda of the Statehouse in Lansing. He thought that what we did overall was fabulous.

IX. 75th Anniversary (cont.):

Roger Lewis reported that we had six Pioneer chapters that did the Celebration package. This was compared to a total of 40 chapters in the entire Society who did it. It was believed that most chapters did the package individually, and that very few of those shows were joint efforts. Dan Bezaire commented that his chapter was doing an anniversary show in a few weeks, but it would not be the package.

When Roger talks about the package during the show that will be held after the quartet semi-finals later in the evening, he is going to remind everyone that the 75th anniversary goes through April 11 of next year. Therefore, chapters that are doing spring shows can still use the package. Roger was hopeful that there would be about 50 members on stage at the show that evening. This might encourage small chapters to invite many of those on stage to join them and do the package at their next show. He noted that there were 79 persons on stage at the Lansing joint show.

Paul Ellinger suggested that we not wait in our promotion of future joint shows. He mentioned the "Ologycat" songs that were provided for joint learning and singing throughout the District. As that repertoire began to build, it was intended to be a base for joint activities. Paul noted that the availability of the 75th anniversary caused that to happen naturally. He offered those songs as a boilerplate for assembling inter-chapter shows or events.

Doug Weaver proposed to Roger Lewis that he create a committee to pick out 6-7 songs that can be used in joint shows in 2015. The District can then encourage chapters to learn that package and to organize such shows. Meanwhile, we have a plan developed for selection of some songs.

Paul Ellinger offered usage of the songs in the Ologycat package, and he indicated that the name of the package could be changed if it is desirable to do so. All of the legal things related to that group of songs have already been done.

Doug Weaver indicated that he would mention the idea at the HOD meeting to see if something can get rolling with this concept.

Joe McDonald pointed out that the Scavenger Hunt had been designed with the 75th anniversary in mind. He urged that we continue to promote that activity up to the deadline of December 16. Joe still has tee shirts and booklets available.

X. New Considerations:

Doug Weaver reiterated the fact that the ACDA convention will be held on the following weekend. Our plans for it have been put together quickly. As noted earlier, Adam Scott from the Society will be speaking.

This is not a big convention. There may be around 100 attendees. Pioneer will have a booth. In addition to Adam being present, Doug, Joe, and Paul will be there to staff the booth. When Adam is not busy otherwise, he may be around the booth occasionally. Our attendance at this convention is somewhat experimental. Hopefully, we will get a list of ACDA members that we can contact, and to whom we can subsequently provide music. Assistance with the event by other board members who would like to help will be appreciated. It was mentioned that the location of the convention is a church in Flint.

Doug Weaver noted that Gary Plaag would be addressing the House of Delegates later in the day, but asked Gary if he had anything he wanted to say to the board. Gary indicated that he had made a list of things to consider, but he didn't want to take the time then to discuss them. He offered to share them with Doug separately.

XI. Adjournment:

Before he called for an adjournment, Doug Weaver observed that this convention was his last one as president. He wanted to thank all of the board members for their work. He felt that Dan Bezaire was inheriting a very good board. He reiterated his earlier remark that Pioneer has many exciting things that are happening. He will be watching those things evolve in the next few years. He appreciated the efforts of everyone on the board. It had been great to work with everyone, and was sure that Dan would also enjoy working with this board.

At 11:49 a.m., James O'Dell moved that the meeting be adjourned. Paul Ellinger made the second. **Motion approved.**

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