

Minutes of the meeting of the House of Delegates of the Pioneer District of SPEBSQSA, Inc.
held on October 3, 2020, as a virtual meeting using ZOOM technology

Before the meeting officially began, Joe McDonald asked the delegates to mute themselves unless they needed to do an unmute when they had something to say. He noted that he would be using Small Board Rules for most of the approvals rather than using motions. Traditional rules would be used only if there was opposition to some action, or a special situation existed. Otherwise, items would be considered approved.

[NOTE: Before the meeting began, District Secretary Jim McMahan had determined that a quorum (30% of authorized delegates) was present. He had identified which BOD members were present, and also which HOD attendee was serving as the delegate for his/her chapter (or second delegate in the case of three chapters). This information was entered onto sign-in sheets which were attached to the original hard copy of these minutes.]

1. Call to Order:

District President Joe McDonald called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. He asked Aaron Pollard to lead the virtual singing of "The Old Songs".

Joe asked Aaron Pollard to read the District's new Mission statement (as shown in the agenda). That was followed by a reading by Paul Ellinger of the District's new Vision statement (also shown in the agenda).

Joe noted that both statements were developed earlier in the year by a committee, and approved by the BOD at its April meeting, and by a Consent Agenda e-vote taken in June.

2. Approval of Agenda:

Joe McDonald asked if there were any additions or corrections to the proposed agenda. This document had been provided in advance to a list of designated chapter contacts. Those persons are presumably present for this meeting, or forwarded the agenda to those who are present.

The agenda was approved under Small Board Rules.

3. Approval of Minutes from Fall 2019 HOD Meeting:

Joe McDonald asked for approval of the minutes from the meeting held on October 18, 2019. He apologized for the lack of lead time for the delegates to have read them in advance.

Dave Montera mentioned that he had informed the secretary of an error in Item 6 (HFI rep report, para. 6). John Miller was listed as the EVP for HFI, but he is actually the EVP for BHS.

The minutes were approved under Small Board Rules.

[NOTE: Chris Berry informed the secretary of the arrival of the delegate for the Monroe North chapter.]

4. Financial Report:

a. 2020 Year to Date:

Joe McDonald noted that the treasurer's reports have been shown as slides on a screen at previous HOD meetings. He didn't know if Chris Berry was planning to display anything on the ZOOM screen. For now, the focus will be on the balance sheet and the profit and loss statement.

On the Balance sheet, Chris noted that we did not have two major conventions this year, so he was able to give a report that was current as of September 27. He cited the checking accounts, the QCA account, and the savings account---all of which look good. He noted we still have our Harmony Marketplace inventory. There is an overpayment on the credit card account. Money is still being held for the Windsor Sendoff.

Chris moved on to the Profit and Loss sheet. He indicated there were four headers---QCA, Spirit Chorus, Unclassified, and Total. At the bottom of page 2, there was a net income shown of \$3706.17.

4. Financial Report (cont.):

a. 2020 Year to Date (cont.):

Even though the District hasn't done much this year, we did gain some income. Also, we haven't spent very much.

Joe McDonald reminded the delegates that this info can be shared with their chapters. He noted that normal practice is to receive these reports at the HOD meeting. He asked for that action.

The reports were received under Small Board Rules.

b. 2021 Proposed Budget:

Joe indicated that normal practice is to propose and approve a budget for the coming year at the fall HOD meeting. This time, it will be proposed at this meeting, but not approved until the next meeting in December. He invited Chris to display the document.

Chris Berry stated that his plan was to continue what was planned for 2020 into 2021. He used the 2020 numbers, but made some minor changes. One of those was an expectation that we will not have as much income at conventions in 2021. Some people may choose to stay home. The income for those events was reduced by 10-15%. The expenses, however, were left unchanged. He noted that a loss of \$9600 had been budgeted for 2020, but a larger amount (\$26,450) is expected for 2021. Chris has not reviewed the numbers yet with Roger Lewis. He knew that Roger thought some expenses might be greater next year.

Joe McDonald acknowledged that a budget is a forecast, and it will be difficult to project what will happen in uncertain times. He hoped the picture will be clearer by the time of the December HOD meeting.

Doug Weaver reported that he and Roger had begun meeting with hotel representatives in the convention cities. The hotels are being informed about how the number of attendees at the conventions may be different. He said they had met with the Kalamazoo reps, and have a meeting scheduled in Grand Rapids. He had met with a Traverse City rep. Meanwhile, "Battle Creek is a mess".

Joe reiterated that the budget will be considered for approval on December 6.

5. Consent Calendar/Directors Reports:

Joe McDonald indicated that the link in the agenda went to a collection of reports that had been reviewed at the BOD meeting that morning. He didn't think it was necessary to cover the reports at this time. Some of the topics will be considered later in this meeting. For those who had questions about anything, he invited them to contact him.

6. Old/New Business:

1. Riser acquisition:

Joe reported that this item was removed that morning from inactive status. It was suggested that there might be an economic advantage to buying risers at this time. The first step will be to solicit offers from chapters that are interested in being the custodial chapter. He noted that there is a document that outlines the expectations of that role. Another document allows a chapter to propose how it wants to hold that role---either by paying for the privilege of providing the service, or being paid to provide it. The forms will be sent electronically to chapters. The topic will also be covered at an upcoming meeting of the chapter communications agents.

Doug Weaver indicated that the Grand Rapids chapter had submitted a grant application for \$15,000 to acquire new risers and a trailer. The chapter is expecting a response soon on that application. Feedback has been positive so far. The chapter has gotten bids from two manufacturers---including Michigan-based Stageright. As soon as the grant is approved, Grand Rapids plans to make the purchase. Doug thought this option might make it easier for the District.

6. Old/New Business (cont.):

1. Riser acquisition (cont.):

Joe McDonald wondered that, if Grand Rapids and the District could coordinate on the purchases, we might get an even better deal. Doug suggested that might be unnecessary. Do we need two sets?

Since a decision on the grant to the Grand Rapids chapter may be close, Joe decided to delay sending out the District's documents for a few weeks.

2. Policy manual update:

Joe mentioned that this activity was a major District focus for 2020, but will carry over into 2021. The existing document has been modified enough over the years that it has developed inconsistencies in its organization. It also needed to be made gender-neutral as per the requirements of the SDB.

One of the areas in the manual that has been addressed was the one about the District Hall of Fame. Aaron Pollard has been working on this area, and now has a proposal that needs approval.

Aaron began by identifying the committee that worked on this project---himself, Sherry Knight, Paul Ellinger, and Brandon Smith.

The first goal of the project was to make the award gender-neutral. Any person is eligible to be nominated for it. Specifically, this now includes women who are members of the Society and the District.

The second goal was an update of the rules and regulations for the nomination and election process. Those details were shown in a document that Aaron had submitted for the meetings being held today.

The third goal was to gain more District awareness of the nomination process. Aaron admitted that he was not previously aware of the process, and felt that many other persons did not know it.

A fourth goal was to increase District knowledge of who the inductees are or have been, and to ensure that inductees get timely notification. Aaron felt that the award needs to have more prestige attached to it, and more preparation should be made for the time when the honor is bestowed.

The final goal was to have consistent recognition of the process. It was noted that, in the prior ten years, there was a seven-year gap in which no awards were made.

With these goals in mind, the first thing the committee did was to create a mission statement. This was the wording they chose:

"The Pioneer District of the Barbershop Harmony Society uses its Hall of Fame to recognize those who go above and beyond to promote barbershop over a sustained period of time. Hall of Fame members inspire us to engage as active members of the barbershop community and go beyond our comfort zones to push our own abilities and contributions to the world of barbershop."

The committee chose to maintain consistency with the language that has been used historically in the nomination process for the types of things that are necessary to be considered for nomination. However, the committee wanted to encapsulate in the mission statement what it means to be a Hall of Fame member. Hopefully, those who believe that they know someone who embodies this mission statement and is worthy of nomination will do so.

Aaron then addressed the options of involvement in the actual nomination process. The committee wanted everyone to be able to participate. They knew of persons that they felt should be nominated, and knew of others who felt the same way. However, people don't know the process. The existing process is quite limited. The new process opens the opportunity for everyone to be able to nominate.

6. Old/New Business (cont.):

2. Policy manual update (cont.)

There will be a nomination form. It will be a simple paper form that says who is making the nomination and tells about the person being nominated and why. Alternatively, one can make a video or audio recording that gives the same info. Also, one can write a formal letter or make a PowerPoint presentation. The latter options are simply uploaded to the Google form. Another technique that can be used is to go in front of a video camera that will be set up at the spring convention.

The awareness and recognition part of the award process is the last big piece. The goal is to make it a big deal. Late on the Friday afternoon of a fall convention weekend, there will be a formal gathering. The inductees, and those who nominated them, will be especially invited to this convention kickoff.

The preparation for this event will have begun in the period of January through the end of May when the nominations are made. Four members of the Board of Directors (chosen by the District President), plus the three most recent HOF inductees, will meet in June or July to review the nominations. A maximum of two inductees will be selected. The goal is to avoid having a huge group of inductees, and to give the award a prestigious character. The awardees will be notified in August so they can prepare for the event.

Finally, Aaron referred to a display of the pages of the new policy manual that contain all of the info he had been discussing---plus additional details.

Joe McDonald emphasized that the advance notification to the inductees gives them an opportunity to ensure that friends and family can plan to attend the induction ceremony. If the inductee is caught by surprise by his/her selection, friends and family might not present.

He noted that the action for today is to approve the revision of this portion of the policy manual.

In the interim, he indicated that the process for the award for this year was managed under the old procedures. Two inductees for 2020 have been selected. Their names have not yet been announced. The process for doing that task will be covered later in this meeting.

Joe announced that we will have a special event yet this year. It will be virtual. The details will be covered under the virtual convention topic later in the agenda.

Joe invited questions or comments regarding this part of the policy manual prior to it being considered for approval. William Stutts, Jr. asked if the definition of who could be nominated said "any person" or "any entity". He was thinking specifically of quartets such as "Chordiology". Aaron Pollard clarified that the rules allow for the nomination of both individuals and quartets. Paul Ellinger noted that "Chordiology" is not in the HOF, but it did receive the Glenn Van Tassel award. He explained that the GVT award is for members of the QCA only. Joe McDonald observed that one quartet is in the HOF---"Powerplay".

The update of this portion of the policy manual was approved under Small Board Rules.

Joe McDonald thanked the committee for its work. He was excited that we will be able to give this award in a larger way at future conventions. He recognized that some traditional private Friday night events may have to be discontinued. He acknowledged that details---like whether the cost of the awards dinner will be included in the convention registration fee---are yet to be determined.

3. Smartphone Showcase update:

Joe noted that this program has been discussed previously. Its intent was to give something for members to do because of the cancellation of the spring convention. He admitted that we have not yet gotten into a situation where we are comfortable with members gathering. Therefore, we are still sitting on the project. He did not know if it would have any future.

6. Old/New Business (cont.):

4, Chapter Communications Agent update:

Joe offered a reminder that this program was established early in the year, and we got great response from chapters to define who would serve as their agent(s). Of course, we didn't know then that the communication tool would be ZOOM. Paul Ellinger has taken control of the program, and will continue to do so for the time being.

Paul urged that anyone not familiar with the program to learn about it. He felt the meetings were a great way to become connected, or more fully connected with the District and the things that are happening. It is a way to get information, and then share it with the members of one's chapter. It is a way to interact, and to be interactive in a conversational (vs. informational) way.

He noted that the first session was mostly presentational, but is now more conversational. In the last session, 6-8 topics were covered. Those included the Hall of Fame and the BHS/HFI relationship. He added that the second topic will be covered further later in this meeting.

Paul stated that the goals are to obtain information, to share information, and then take it back to the chapters so that members are informed. This process shrinks the size and complexity of the distribution of info across the District. He invited those who were not into the program to let him know so they could become connected.

Doug Weaver asked about the timing of the next session. Paul indicated that he schedules them based on the amount of new info that he has to disseminate. He expected that the next one will be on Sunday, October 11. Based on previous experience, he expects that he can cover 6-8 topics in about 30 minutes. He thought the event will be held around 7:30 p.m.

Joe McDonald mentioned that the communications meetings were originally stacked on the third Sunday evening of each month with a subsequent get-together of the District board. After that meeting, he and Paul would then go on to a District Presidents Council meeting. He asserted, however, that particular stacking was not mandatory for the scheduling of the communications meetings.

2. District Presidents Council communique regard the BHS/HFI relationship:

Paul alluded to his reference to this topic in the preceding discussion. When the DPC became aware of this change, it tried to get the two groups to talk together. A task force of five persons was created that tried to serve as neutral moderators. The task force focused on commonalities of the two groups, and tried to get them to work out their differences. Unfortunately, the efforts of the DPC did not come to fruition. Paul was asked to create a "white paper" to go out to all of the districts. He indicated it will appear in the next issue of the Troub. That version will include some tweaks that were suggested to Paul. Members of the DPC will be using the original document to communicate to their districts. Each DP can add to it to fit his personal agendum---but cannot change it.

Paul emphasized that the goal of the communique in the Troub is to give background. At the same time, it encourages members to make their own choices as to how they interact with BHS and HFI.

Joe McDonald thanked Paul for his work, and the work of the DPC to get to this point.

3. Fall Virtual Convention:

Joe indicated that this was a proposal that came from Brandon Smith. The BOD has endorsed the project. He noted that Brandon will outline it momentarily, but gave a forewarning that it will need volunteers from outside of the BOD to assist.

Brandon suggested that the delegates follow along on the display of his report. The goal is to provide an event that District members can anticipate, while accepting that it cannot be a replacement for a real convention. The latter is an in-person event, and a virtual event cannot replace in-person fellowship. For now, however, the intent to offer a positive experience.

6. Old/New Business (cont.):

6. Fall Virtual Convention (cont.):

Brandon observed that several models exist for virtual conventions. Some of those formats are shown on the display. Brandon is looking at a one- or two-day event. The time period will depend on the number of sections that can be offered. The organizers will be able to define what is possible.

The event platform will be ZOOM CONFERENCE. Brandon noted that many people are now becoming familiar with the technology. The other advantage is that it is not financially-inhibitive for usage with a convention. It is easy to manage.

The proposed date is the weekend of November 13-15 (Friday to Sunday). As noted earlier, the actual days used will be based on the number of sessions that can be offered. Brandon alluded to his screen display that showed a list of possible topics he had envisioned. They included: safe singing; HOF recognition; the "roses and thorns" sessions that Chris Berry hosts; discussion circles; and guest performances,

The most important point that Brandon wanted to communicate is that he is looking to the District membership for persons to serve on the planning committee. The committee currently consists of Chris Berry and himself. Members of the BOD have been giving input.

One of the needs of the committee is persons with ZOOM experience. Those individuals will serve as room moderators. A second need is for idea generators, and suggestions for names of persons who could host sessions or offer ideas for topics. A third need is for persons who can serve as coordinators of the activities of the guest presenters.

Brandon urged the delegates to email him or the BOD with offers to volunteer, or to make suggestions.

Joe McDonald indicated that the BOD had decided to explore the project and to make it happen. He asked the delegates for a "thumbs-up" endorsement of it.

7. District Website Build:

Joe asked Chris Berry to give some background on the goal of the project, and where it stands.

Chris stated that the intent was to upgrade the website to current standards so that it can be used more effectively with smartphones and tablets, and to make it more ADA-compliant. The District has contracted with Chris Bateson to do the website development. Chris is currently redesigning the site so we can do content management. That means he is presently doing the background design. He plans to have a design draft completed for committee review by the end of October. After that, he expects to have the completed site ready for review in December. The site should be ready for release in 2021.

8. Pioneer Academy:

Joe McDonald indicated this topic connects somewhat to the preceding one. It is the District's new umbrella organization for education. It is being developed by Joelle Laginess. The delegates should have seen the first Academy offering this week. It was launched on a virtual platform. That is necessary right now since we can't bring people together physically for education. Joe noted that all of the virtual materials will be available on the new website.

Joelle observed that the first offering was sent out by email just like the Troub. She reported she has been contacting chapters to get ideas on topics that would be helpful if they could be addressed. She plans to send out more sessions on new topics. Right now, her focus is on ZOOM because that is where the greatest need exists. Even after we resume physical rehearsals, she plans to continue an education process.

An auxiliary goal is to have these educational resources available on the new website for years to come.

6. Old/New Business (cont.):

9. "Jamboree" event in 2021:

Joe McDonald indicated this is also a new Pioneer idea that has been developed, and asked Brandon Smith to report on it.

Brandon explained that this is a plan for a Memorial Day weekend event. As background, he noted that the Sunshine District hosts an event called the Labor Day weekend Jamboree (LDJ). The Pioneer event is being modeled after that one. The details for the proposed event are given in a display document identified as "Pioneer Memorial Day weekend event".

The plan is to host a Memorial Day weekend gathering at an up-north location. It would be held at an all-inclusive venue that would be outdoors as much as possible. It would be fellowship-oriented, but not contest- or show-oriented. There would be one show on Saturday evening, but that would not be the primary focus. It will be mostly time for fellowship, tag-singing, and family time. It will be like a retreat.

Brandon has been to similar events in other districts with his quartet. He asserted that Pioneer excels in fellowship at its fall and spring conventions. However, it continues to grow through other fellowship experiences between those conventions. He noted that Pioneer has held specific fellowship events in the past like SlamkaFest. Some of them have disappeared. The goal is to bring them back.

Just like the virtual convention, Brandon indicated there is a need for volunteers to organize this activity. He mentioned that the LDJ has a group of 10-15 people who run it. He felt it is an awesome event. He noted that the scope of our event will be limited at the start. It will not begin with 1000 attendees. Trying to go that big initially will cause it to fizzle. He suggested that a smaller feel at the start will allow the event to grow with time. He alluded to vibe that is found at the Sweet Adeline's event in Harrisville.

The lingering concern about the pandemic is why this proposed event will be mostly outside. However, by limiting the scope of this test run and keeping it outside, it will allow a determination of the desire for the District to do more.

Brandon explained why Memorial Day weekend was selected. There are similar events in other districts. There is an event **[MiddleBack?]** that is held in the middle of August. The LDJ is obviously on Labor Day. The intent was not be compete with those events. Then, if our event grows in the future, people from other districts might choose to attend.

Brandon reiterated the need for volunteers. He indicated that he will be seeking assistance from Roger Lewis on the process of booking a venue. He invited suggestions from the delegates about possible venues, or to let him know if they have a connection with a specific venue. Experience with planning this kind of event would be a valuable contribution.

William Stutts, Jr. reported that he and Joelle Laginess attended the 2018 session of LDJ. He declared that it was an awesome. He acknowledged that the event has grown over the years to the point where it has been able to invite outsiders like the two of them to come. He admitted that is refreshing to attend a barbershop event that doesn't include a competition. He mentioned one thing the LDJ has---that we might want to consider---is a golf outing. Brandon invited William to become the golf coordinator for our event.

Cody Harrell mentioned that a tradition at the LDJ is for the top five medalist quartets to be invited to attend. He understood that the members of those groups do get comp'd tickets, but no comp'd rooms or travel. In that context, he wondered what Brandon envisioned as performers on the Saturday show. Will we limit it to just District groups, or do we hope for a broader representation in the future?

Initially, because of the limitation on size, Brandon expected it would be just District groups that perform. He referred to the "details" in the display document that said such groups would get registrations---which includes rooms. He thought that quartets from the JAD or CAR districts might eventually be good "pulls". He suggested that "Powerplay" might even want to do a reunion at our first Jamboree.

6. Old/New Business (cont.):

9. "Jamboree" event in 2021 (cont.):

Brandon felt that we will probably NOT be inviting the top five medalists any time soon because the scope of our event is smaller. However, he would love to see the event increase significantly with time. He observed that LDJ began with 100-150 persons, but has evolved into a huge event. He invited those who are interested to contribute their time and leadership.

10. December 2020 HOD meeting:

Joe McDonald announced that Sunday, December 6, 2020, will be the date of the next HOD meeting. It will be a shorter meeting. There will be some action items at that meeting, but there should be no new items.

11. Participation of Dustin Guyton in a future ZOOM meeting (extra item):

Joe indicated that it is planned for Dustin to be involved in a meeting like this one later in the year. Dustin will be reporting on the results of the Legacy Quartet competition. Dustin had informed Joe that there were thousands of views of this event---both of the live event, and many afterwards. Joe noted that much of the content of the competition would never have been seen except for this project. He added that Pioneer, and each of the other 16 districts, contributed \$600 a piece to support it. There were also other sponsors who assisted in the creation of the digital content seen in the competition. Joe observed that taking old films and creating digital content is a specialty.

Joe explained that Dustin recently joined the BHS staff as a liaison to the districts. Dustin uses the DPC as his primary connection, but he does get to district meetings as well.

12. HFI presentation to districts (extra item):

Joe reported that HFI made a presentation to the BOD in August on possible partnership relationships between HFI and districts. He added that Sean Devine had then called earlier in the week with some revisions to that proposal. He expected that HFI will be communicating directly to the membership soon. He asked Doug Weaver if the projected date of that activity was to be October 8. If so, Joe will wait on giving out any info until after that is done. Joe reiterated what Paul Ellinger had said earlier that it is the District board's policy that it will be up to individuals to decide how they want to give financial support for barbershop. The District will facilitate ZOOM connections with either BHS or HFI if anyone wants more info.

Doug Weaver noted that his wife has served on the HFI board for eight years. He affirmed that she would be happy to share HFI information with anyone who wants it. Just contact Doug, and he can put the person who wants info in contact with her by email or phone.

13. Invite to BOD members to comment (extra item);

Joe noted that reports from all of the BOD members were available as links in the agenda. He invited them to mention anything that they thought should be covered.

7. **[Not used in agenda]**

8. **[Not used in agenda]**

9. **[Not used in agenda]**

10. Election of Officers:

Joe had indicated in the agenda document that only two positions need to be filled at this meeting---the one-year positions of the District Secretary and the District Treasurer. The incumbents are willing to continue in their current roles. However, Jim McMahan has stated that he wishes eventually to retire from the D.S. position. Joe reported that he had been talking with some individuals about the possibility of them becoming his replacement. Since those persons have not yet decided, Joe announced that a person is being sought to take on the role.

Barry George (Mt. Pleasant) moved that these persons be elected to these offices for the year 2021:

Jim McMahan
Chris Berry

District Secretary
District Treasurer

Doug Weaver (Grand Rapids) made the second. **The motion was approved by a visual display of hands.**

11. Issues of Concern from the HOD:

Although issues were supposed to have been submitted in advance, Joe McDonald was willing to address any concerns that the delegates had. He also invited them to send him email questions about items that had been discussed earlier.

12. Closing remarks:

Joe McDonald declared that it had been a most impressive meeting. He appreciated the time that the delegates had made to be available. He pledged that the info for the December 6 meeting will be sent out on a more-timely schedule.

He noted that he can't give a big rousing speech under the current conditions. He acknowledged that it is hard to feel right now that one is getting a big return on investment of one's barbershop time. We're still doing all of the work, but we're missing the gratification. He urged everyone to "remain positive", and be the leader that you are at home. "We will sing again!" However, we may meet again in ZOOM environments because they are so productive.

13. Adjournment:

At 2:22 p.m., Joe McDonald adjourned the meeting, and asked Brandon Smith to lead the delegates in the virtual singing of "Keep the Whole World Singing".