

WMSHC, Inc. Annual Meeting November 6, 2005 Minutes

The meeting was held at the First Congregational Church, Amherst Mass.

The meeting was convened at 4:45 p.m. by Kate Richardson, presiding in place of Kelly House who was unable to attend the meeting.

In attendance were 21 members including 3 Board members (see Appendix A)

Hymn 159 "Wondrous Love" was sung.

1. Minutes of the Dec. 5, 2004 Annual Meeting

After some study by the members present, a motion was made and seconded that the minutes of the Dec. 5, 2004 annual meeting be approved as printed.

The motion carried.

There was some discussion about a piece of old business mentioned in the 2004 annual meeting minutes. Communication between the Board and the membership of WMSHC, Inc. was discussed as needing improvement. This communication issue still seems to be a problem and Peter Irvine spoke raised it as an issue. Paul Butler reminded us that the minutes are posted on the website. Jenna Strizak suggested that in addition to continuing the practice of posting Board meeting minutes to the web site, the membership could be sent an e-mail with a link to the web site so that members could click the link and read the minutes. Sheila Kelly suggested that printed copies of the Board meeting minutes could be distributed at local sings.

Another item of old business, relations with Helen Hills Hills Chapel, was also discussed. Jenna Strizak is now acting as Tuesday coordinator and is pursuing the strengthening of our relationship with Smith College. Allison Schofield led a successful singing school at the chapel and Allison plans to re-poster the Smith campus with Sacred Harp-related posters.

2. Reports (see Appendix B)

President's Report - in the absence of President Kelly House, Kate Richardson asked the assembled membership to read the handout of Kelly's report. Kate thanked Peter Irvine for his generous donation of time and energy towards the successful completion of WMSHC, Inc.'s application for non-profit status.

Clerk's Report - In the absence of Rosie Wojcik, Kate Richardson asked the

assembled members to read the handout of the Clerk's Report. Kate commended Rosie for her many efforts as Clerk this year and for the great job she did in this capacity. The membership discussed Rosie's suggestion for an on-line discussion forum. Sheldon Finlay would be willing to help construct this feature.

Treasurer's Report - Paul Butler presented the Treasurer's Report through 9/30/2005. Significant items to note were these: The actual revenue was far below the budgeted revenue, however expenses were also far below the budgeted expenses so the net for the year was less than \$300 below the budget. However, the net for the year constituted a loss of -\$1,100. This was in part due to the fact that CD sales were highest after the issue with the 2001 WMSHC CD and had trailed off each year since the release of the CD. The Board has undertaken the re-release of the 1999 CD and a new CD project initiative could be undertaken by the membership in 2006 to serve as a source of future revenue. Also, a generous anonymous donor had given \$1,000 towards travel grants in each of the previous two years, but we were without the benefit of this gift in 2005 although we granted \$1,050 in travel grants so far this year.

Another item of note is that the revenue in donations at the WMSHC annual convention barely covers the expenses of holding the convention in the current location. It may be desirable to find a new location for the convention where the cost of rentals and other expenses could be reduced, as is the case with the Pioneer Valley All-Day Singing (PVAD). However, using a church property as a location for the annual convention may not be an option (as it is with the PVAD) because the WMSHC convention is held on both Saturday and Sunday and a church property might not be available for both days of a weekend.

Peter Irvine expressed the opinion that WMSHC, Inc. shouldn't count on generating a lot of revenue from the 1999 CD re-release. There was a great deal of public interest surrounding the release of the 2001 CD which led to significant sales of that CD. However, the 1999 re-release should be expected to have a much more limited audience. Peter suggested some options for an upcoming CD project, either to focus on less familiar material, or to focus on non-Sacred Harp material such as the Harp of Ages songs, some of which have been recorded already.

Eliza Cavanaugh expressed the opinion that the 1999 CD reissue would at least break even, and that internet sales through CD Baby (where most of the buyers that found our 2001 CD were browsing, not going to the site explicitly to purchase the WMSHC CD) could be significant.

John Holbrook inquired about the timing of the 501(c)(3) application and whether donations to WMSHC could be deducted in the 2005 tax year. Peter Irvine replied that there is every expectation that nonprofit status will be granted, and that it will be retroactive to the founding of the corporation in January 2004.

Linda Shea expressed the opinion that for the Board, presenting a budget with a projected deficit was not inappropriate because WMSHC, Inc. has built up a surplus from CD sales after the CD release and that we should expect to spend this over the course of subsequent years as the CD sales trailed off. Linda also suggested the community identify our goals when it comes to money and determine whether or not having a balanced budget was one of them. Linda suggested identifying a monetary threshold for our account which we were not willing to go below, but not worry about a balanced budget before that. This would allow us more financial freedom and allow us to continue to give out travel grants, etc.

The group discussed several different CD projects to make some more money. Linda Shea, Eliza Cavanaugh, and Peter Irvine volunteered to work on this. Projects included the re-release of the 1999 CD, a CD with less familiar material, or a CD with songs from the Harp of Ages or Cooper Book.

Convention Officers' Report - Printed handouts of the report were read. Kelsey Wessels noted that there have been major changes at the Northampton Center for the Arts; unlike previous years, the management is now a delight to work with instead of being a nightmare. Kelsey also noted that the fire code issues with the CFA space had been addressed by renting fewer chairs so as to not exceed the fire code limit with the number of seats. The Saturday singing school was also eliminated this year which resulted in a saving of money and in leaving more time to get all of the leaders in who had registered. The issue of whether a singing school is warranted or not would merit further discussion in 2006. The plan that Kelsey and Lisa Palumbo (the food coordinator) created concerning where singers should put food, how it should be prepared and labeled and how to keep it warm worked well to prevent the lack of a kitchen at the CFA location from being a problem.

3. Voting

A motion was made and seconded to consider the election for Convention Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary as separate matters. This would allow a successful candidate who had also been placed on the slate for another office to withdraw from consideration for the other office in a subsequent vote.

A motion was made and seconded to use instant-runoff balloting to conduct the votes.

Both motions passed unanimously.

Paul Butler gave a brief summary of the by-law changes that were proposed. Current by-laws require that the recipients of e-mail notification of membership meetings and e-mail notification of the termination of membership send a reply to the Board or to the Clerk within 24 hours of receiving the e-mail notification, to

acknowledge the receipt of the notice. Generally members, including Board members, fail to comply with sending the acknowledgment within 24 hours or at all. The new by-law provisions would eliminate the requirement to send the reply. They would instead require the Board or the Clerk to determine whether any of the e-mail notifications came back as undeliverable, and only in those cases would notification by conventional means be required to be made.

Anna Maria Irvine summed it up this way: If your e-mail is a "black hole", this is your problem. However, if your e-mail address is closed and the e-mail bounces back, then it is WMSHC's problem to notify you by other means.

Allison Schofield was elected Convention Chair, Kelsey Wessels as Vice Chair and Joanne Fuller as Secretary. New Board members are Jenna Strizak, John Holbrook, and Sheldon Finlay.

4. Tuesday Night Sing Business

Anna Maria Irvine reported on her work concerning the Tuesday night sing and our relationship with the Helen Hills Hills Chapel. She spoke with various singers to piece together a history of our relationship with the chapel. Jenna Strizak is our contact person for that sing and she has been in communication with the people at the chapel. She filled out a request at the beginning of the summer to renew our request for ongoing use of the space. The group agreed that we should continue to strengthen our relationship with Smith students with singing schools and student-targeted publicity. Allison Schofield would like to continue to post fliers about our sing and chalk on campus to remind people that it still happens. Caitlin Caulfield says she and Katherine Thompson are willing to help with this.

5. WMSHC Standing Committees

- a. Library Committee - currently Rosie Wojcik and Kelsey Wessels
- b. By-law Committee - currently Rosie Wojcik, Paul Butler and Jenna Strizak
- c. Travel Grant Committee - currently Linda Shea
- d. Singing School Committee
- e. External Event Coordinators
- f. CD Committee - new, volunteers are Peter Irvine, Eliza Cavanaugh, Linda Shea
- g. Locating Committee - it was noted that the Agawam location may be suitable for the annual convention. It was also noted that for Smith singers, the Northampton CFA location is ideal.
- h. Web Site Committee - new, volunteers are Sheldon Finlay and Paul Butler
- i. Hymnal Sales Coordinator - Jenna Strizak volunteered to do this.

Jenna Strizak added that people should feel free to step forward with other ideas and projects and Kate Richardson agrees, encouraging people to get involved.

5. Elaboration on the Library Project

Kelsey Wessels gave an overview of the Library project. The aim is to create a repository of printed matter pertinent to Sacred Harp music, to collect hymn books and academic articles, and to collect other material of interest to singers and to make it available for checkout to interested singers. Suggestions were made that a WMSHC video could be made and that videos of singing schools might be a good addition to the library.

6. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 6:05 p.m. The motion passed unanimously. Hymn 323t "Mullins" was sung.

Respectfully submitted by Paul Butler, Kelsey Wessels, and Jenna Strizak.

Appendix A WMSHC, Inc. members in attendance at November 6, 2005 Annual Meeting

Kelsey Wessels
Sheldon Finlay
Anne Johnson
Lorrie Sabourin
Lydia Vernon-Jones
Linda Shea
Kshama Ananthapura
Paul Butler
John Holbrook
Peter Irvine
Anna Maria Irvine
Deborah Way
Jenna Strizak
Sheila Kelley
Caitlin Caulfield
Amy S. Johnson
Eliza Cavanaugh
Allison Schofield
Kate Richardson
Jeff Colby
Stephanie Sanford

An additional 19 members voted electronically or by proxy.

Appendix B

Annual Reports, 2005

President's Report

It has been my great pleasure and privilege to serve as President of WMSHC for the last two years. As my term as a board member ends, I look around and see a singing community that continues to grow in strength and in commitment to one another and to Sacred Harp.

This year, the singing community hosted yet another terrific Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention, a wonderful Pioneer Valley All Day Sing, and continued to support and grow monthly and weekly sings. The primary role of the board is to conduct the administrative business of the organization so that members of the singing

community are free to get on with the business of singing and to contribute their time and talent to the activities of the group.

The most important job the board undertook this year was completing and submitting the application for tax exempt status to the IRS. The application has been submitted and we are currently waiting to hear from the IRS whether we have been accepted. This is an appropriate place to express gratitude on behalf of the entire group to Peter Irvine for the many hours of free legal work he has done for us. He did the lion's share of the work on the tax exempt application and he has advised the board on many other issues. We are deeply indebted to him.

WMSHC continues to help members of this community travel to sings in other parts of the country through the travel grant program. We were also pleased this year to assist singers from other singing communities traveling to the March convention. This year we also introduced a scholarship to Camp Fasola.

Some of the board's other activities this year included drafting and overseeing the budget, maintaining financial records, consulting with convention officers about budget questions and other issues surrounding the convention, fielding requests for licensing of WMSHC recordings for use in independent films, overseeing CD sales, compiling records of WMSHC history.

The bylaws give a general outline of many of the activities of the organization. The board spent some time this year drafting policies to give specific guidance for how those activities are carried out. This year we drafted or discussed policies related to finances and accounting, travel grants, conflicts of interest, and communications between the board and the convention officers.

The board recently created a bylaws review committee, which is charged with the task of evaluating how the bylaws fit the organization as it is taking shape. Other projects in the works are the development of a local resource library and the reissue of the 1999 convention CD.

As this organization grows and develops, it is clear that the board's role in taking the burden of administration off the whole of the community is important and useful. It is also very gratifying for me to see the level of commitment and participation among all the members of this singing community. So many people bring their time and talents to this group in big and small ways: maintaining the website, keeping loaner books, teaching singing schools, organizing local sings, working on the convention in every capacity, and on and on. I think I can speak for the entire board when I say that I feel grateful to have been able to support these activities.

I can't wait to see what happens next!

Respectfully,
Kelly House

Clerk's Annual Report

As of November 4, 2005, there are 64 members for the membership year ending September 30, 2006. At the end of the last membership year (September 30, 2005) there were 69 members. Of last year's members 45 have, so far, renewed their membership for the current year.

Thank you to our members for submitting membership forms with dues this year -- it makes record keeping easier, and hopefully more accurate. I would like to remind all members that if any of their contact information changes in the course of the year they should notify the Clerk so that membership records will remain current and we will be able to contact everyone easily as any new business arises.

One of my aims for this year was to communicate more to the membership about what the board is doing over the course of the year. I am sorry that has not really happened and intend that we will do better next year. Remember, in the meantime, that as members you may inspect and make copies from WMSHC's records, including the list of members and meeting minutes. Begin by sending a request to the Clerk.

To facilitate better communication between the membership and the Board of Directors I have been thinking we could set up an online discussion group (along the lines of what Jenna Strizak set up for discussing the Northampton and Amherst singings and related subjects). What I envision would be a list/board for WMSHC Inc. members where the Board can post updates on its activities, and let members know when we need volunteers for jobs or ask for input on issues under discussion. It could also provide a forum for discussion among members outside of meetings depending on member interest. Regardless, members are always welcome to write to the Board or approach a Board member with suggestions and questions.

I have been working on a new project this year with Kelsey Wessels. We are aiming to collect together Sacred Harp related media and run a resource library, we are still working on how the logistics of loaning items will work. The Board has created a line in WMSHC Inc.'s budget for library materials and so far we have purchased a copy of video made by Bill Windom at our convention last March. We have also collected a few books received as donations, and I plan to include minutes from our local singings that I have been keeping for a couple of years now. If you have items you would be willing to donate for this project (this could include photographs), or if you have suggestions for CDs/Books/Videos/Essays we should consider obtaining/purchasing please let us know.

Respectfully submitted by Rosie Wojcik

Convention Officers' Report

We had a wonderful convention this year thanks to all of you. Everyone helped out by serving on committees, bringing food, lending their voices in song, etc. making my job easy. I think that we are all getting a real handle on the planning and running of convention and I believe that it will continue to get easier every year.

This year, we did a few things differently. We voted to eliminate the Saturday morning singing school. The arguments for this change were that our convention is now a well established one, with singers who do not necessarily need a singing school, and we needed more time to accommodate all of the people who wish to lead at our singing. The welcoming committee worked hard to orient new singers and we all tried to make ourselves accessible to people with questions. This change seemed to work well and had a good response from local and visiting singers alike.

The Center for the Arts was under new management this year, making it much easier to guarantee us a space for singing. We did lose one of the back rooms that we used to use for food preparation, but with some advanced planning, organization, and a food committee that was ready to help direct people Saturday morning, we did just fine. Although the price for the space rental went up slightly, the Center for the Arts remains a wonderful place to have our convention and the staff there were very excited and pleased to have us.

We used a new square configuration this year, using a combination of rental and CFA chairs, which seemed to work very well. This set-up is well documented in diagrams and photos thanks to several diligent singers. Although snow kept many singers away on Saturday morning, we quickly filled the square Saturday afternoon and Sunday, and we had a very strong singing.

On behalf of all of the officers, I would like to thank you all for helping out and for making a wonderful convention once again.

Respectfully submitted by Kelsey Wessels (Convention Chair 2005)