

Minutes of the Meeting of the Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention December 13, 1998

Attendees: Eliza Cavanaugh, Laura Clawson, Jeff Colby, Tim Eriksen, Kelly House, Peter Irvine, Kitty Kagay, Minja Lausevic, Catherine Oss, Allison Schofield, Duncan Vinson, Bradford West

Purpose of Meeting

5 To prepare for the Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention to be held March 13-14, 1999. This was the first meeting of the group.

The following goals were identified:

- Establish the convention as an entity
- Discuss upcoming singing schools
- 10 • Elect officers for the convention
- Appoint committee members as necessary

Establishment of Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention

15 Those in attendance agreed to form an entity called "Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention" (WMSHC). It was agreed that WMSHC would elect officers, adopt by-laws, and open a bank account.

20 *(The relationship between the WMSHC and Amherst monthly sing was not specifically defined. It was agreed that they are separate but related. A related topic that was not addressed was the mechanism for becoming a member of the Western Massachusetts Sacred Harp Convention.)*

Officers

The officers of the WMSHC are:

- 25 • Chairman – Appoints committees and coordinates committee members' activities. Acts as communications center for convention. Chairs meetings of the WMSHC. Chairs the convention.
- Vice-chairman – Supports the activities of the Chairman. Acts as Chairman if the Chairman is absent. May chair a portion of the convention. Could be considered Chairman-elect.

- 30
- Secretary – Records minutes of meetings of the WMSHC. Records minutes of the convention. Submits minutes of convention to the Sacred Harp Directory published by the Alabama State Convention.
 - Treasurer – Maintains records of the financial transactions of the WMSHC. Reports on financial matters to meetings of the WMSHC.
- 35 Gives a financial report during the business meeting at the convention.

By-laws

During discussion of the by-laws, the following questions were raised but not answered:

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- What is the mechanism for adopting and amending by-laws?
 - Should the WMSHC use Robert's Rules of Order?

Discussion of the by-laws was tabled. Members of the group will work together to draft by-laws based on these minutes. The by-laws will be presented at a business meeting at the next Amherst monthly sing.

Appointment of Chaplain

45 Tim raised a discussion about appointing a Chaplain for the convention. He observed (and it was agreed) that the Chaplain should have time to prepare for his/her role (as opposed to being recruited at the last minute) and that it should be someone who is appropriate for the role. He suggested Dwight Diller as a candidate, with the reservation that Dwight may not be able to come. Kelly suggested that if George Seiler were planning to attend, he would be a good candidate.

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It was agreed that the Chaplain should be comfortable leading prayers, sincere about prayers, not pointedly denominational, but also not no non-denominational as to descend into "therapy-speak".

55

Kelly asked if anyone present was interested in being Chaplain or could suggest anyone from the Amherst sing who might be interested. Eliza and Duncan both expressed interest.

60 Laura pointed out that it is common for more than one person to give prayers during a convention.

Making sure the convention is welcome, open and clear

65 Peter stated a desire to establish a welcoming, open and clear mood at the convention. He elaborated that thought should be given to these points with regard both to regular members of the Amherst sing and to guests at the singing schools and conventions.

Singing Schools

70 Tim and Cath outlined a brief plan for a series of singing schools to be held in the area between now and the convention. Cath stated that she has received some grant money for the schools and the convention. These singing schools will help prepare area people for the convention. Kelly pointed out that there is also a singing school incorporated into the convention that should help to get newcomers oriented.

75 Minja pointed out that an individual coming into an established group is more easily assimilated than a large group of newcomers in a new situation. She suggested that the singing schools themselves should have clarity of purpose and scope.

Orientation Hand-out and Welcoming Committee

80 Peter had two specific suggestions for encouraging a welcoming atmosphere:

- 1) a brief published description of the convention with a seating diagram, description of parts and shapes, and schedule of activities
 - 2) A Welcoming Committee should be appointed and scheduled so that there are always several members of the convention greeting people and making sure everyone is getting the information they need.
- 85

The group agreed to both suggestions.

90 *(These minutes contain further mention of possible contents of the orientation hand-out. It was implied but not explicitly stated that this document would be formulated later and would be the responsibility of the Welcoming Committee.)*

It was agreed that the Welcoming Committee should have at least a dozen people and that we would ask for volunteers at the next Amherst monthly sing.

95 ***Singing schools for members of Amherst monthly sing***
Cath suggested conducting a "convention school" within the Amherst monthly sing in order to make sure that local singers who don't have a lot of experience with conventions will know what to expect.

100 Kelly suggested a specific emphasis on leading at conventions, observing that local singers should be comfortable with leading so that they don't feel overwhelmed or embarrassed at their own convention.

105 The question was raised about whether to have separate school events or to incorporate lessons into the regular monthly sing. Eliza suggested meeting early to have schools before the sing. Kelly expressed concern that as many people as possible should be included. The group agreed that both separate schools and lessons within monthly sings would be useful. Tim pointed out that ideas for separate schools could be incorporated into the singing school series.

Discussion of Clarity

110 Eliza observed that the idea of being clear includes establishing goals for what is being communicated (that is, what we're really doing)

115 Tim stated that he feels that differences in intention and approach among singers are actually important to the group activity. The process of overcoming differences to find the common ground in singing is in itself part of the goal of a sing.

Laura pointed out that an ideally structured convention allows people to work around disagreements and that it's not important to try to know what everyone else is getting out of it.

120 There was some more discussion from the group around the idea that structure creates clarity while allowing diversity. Tim felt that the group would agree that diversity among participants is desirable.

Statement of Purpose

125 There was some discussion about how the abstract idea of clarity of purpose might be included in the structure of the convention. Kelly suggested that a statement of purpose be included in the by-laws.

Welcome singers individually

Jeff suggested that the hosts of the convention should make an effort to introduce themselves to as many people as possible and, in general, to practice what we preach about being welcoming and open. The group

130 agreed that this was an important idea to convey to members of the
 monthly sing.

Guidelines for appropriate activities/behavior

135 Duncan suggested that guidelines could be established about what is and is
 not appropriate, citing as a specific example of inappropriate behavior the
 inclusion of unrelated celebrities in the Memorial Lesson. Other examples
 given were excessive talking and speechifying, and passing out songs not
 in the Sacred Harp.

140 Cath pointed out that it is the Memorial Committee's job to figure out
 what is and is not appropriate, including giving clear direction about who
 should be included on the list.

 Kelly suggested including general language in by-laws about who should
 be memorialized.

 Jeff suggested making a form for the Memorial List that includes a
 description of what the Memorial Lesson is for.

145 Peter pointed out that such a description could be included in the
 introductory handout.

150 After some discussion, the group agreed to adopt Tim's suggestion that
 specific times during the convention should be planned during which
 members of the Memorial Committee would be available to take names
 for the list.

Further discussion of Clarity

155 Eliza reiterated her point that clarity needs to be combined with perception
 of individual contributions and that the hosts should avoid being
 judgmental and divisive. She expressed concern that if the ideas of
 individuals in the group are not carefully formulated, valid points of view
 may be overlooked during the convention. She gave as a specific example
 that while committee members may think the inclusion of celebrities on
 the Memorial List is inappropriate, the people who put them there may
 have some valid reason for doing so.

160 Kelly stated her belief that clarity of purpose engenders the freedom to
 exercise flexibility. She said that an individual committee member who is
 confident about the support of the structure and clear in his/her purpose
 will be able to listen to each individual and evaluate suggestions and ideas
 in terms of how they fit into the convention as a whole.

165 Kelly added that the tradition of Sacred Harp singing depends on structure
and rules, and that the reason that there is a continuing tradition is that
singers have continually given thought to structure. She elaborated that it
is the responsibility of this group of people to be concerned less with
170 gratifying momentary desires than establishing a structure for a sing that
will outlive the presence of any particular individual.

Jeff related the story of the Georgia sing that split up in the 19th century
over a disagreement about which books to sing from. That event is the
reason there is a by-law of the Georgia State Convention which specifies
175 that only songs in the Denson revision of The Sacred Harp may be sung at
the Convention. This story illustrates the point that structure can keep a
group together.

Laura stated that the group should be aware that there are many different
aspects of Sacred Harp singing, and that each individual should be
180 encouraged to take what they will and to be considerate of the perspectives
of others

Statement of Purpose

It was suggested that the statement of purpose should use positive
language. Kelly and Jeff suggested that the statement of purpose should be
185 based on the model of a quality policy. That is, it should be a meaningful
but very general statement of the broad goals of the organization.

The group agreed that it would not be able to formulate a statement of
purpose during the meeting. Members of the group will work together to
draft a statement of purpose that will be presented at the next Amherst
monthly sing. Brainstorming produced the following ideas:

190 "promote fellowship through singing"
"community" suggested as an alternative to "fellowship"
"joy of singing"
"music is fun to sing, but also serious"
"welcome"
195 "continue/ participate/ further/ respect tradition of social singing in
Western Mass."
"community"
"non-denominational"
"non-religious"
200 "structure for community singing"

Singing tunes not published in the Sacred Harp

Tim brought up the question of whether or not a separate session should be arranged for songs not in the Sacred Harp.

205 After some discussion the group decided it should be in the by-laws of the convention that only songs from the Sacred Harp will be sung at the convention.

There seemed to be a general lack of enthusiasm within the group about having an additional session. Laura was concerned that whoever organized such an event be really interested in doing it.

210 **Evening Social**

There was some discussion of the idea of a social. Cath thinks that a local singer might be interested in hosting a social. She suggested that the flyer for next month's singing mention the idea that someone might want to host a social on the Saturday night.

215 **WGBY Community Spot**

220 Tim and Cath brought up the interest of WGBY in bringing a camera crew to the February sing to film a community spot which would air in between shows. This would be a spot about the sing but would be timed to support the convention. Everyone thought it was a good idea and it was decided to bring it up at the next sing.

Convention Finances

225 There was a brief discussion of the finances of the convention. Cath reported that she has received about \$1200 in grant money to pay for local singing schools before the convention and to pay Richard DeLong's airfare and singing school fee. Based on recollection of other conventions and the known cost of the venue, the group estimated that another \$500 would need to be raised to cover the costs of the convention. It was suggested that we ask for contributions at the next monthly sing. Cath pointed out that it would be nice to collect enough in advance so that few expenses would be out of pocket and that if we collected some extra at the convention, it could be carried over as seed money for next year.

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Venues for Singing Schools

235 Tim is looking for places to do singing schools such as churches, or public areas like the Book Mill or The Black Sheep. He also suggested that local singing groups might want to sponsor a singing school. He asked the group to think about potential places.

240 He suggested Historic Northampton, Five College Early Music, Smith College, Amherst College, Marlboro College. Eliza said she has connections with the Hampshire Choral Society and that they might be interested. Cath reported sending out preliminary flyers to a list of local music groups. Allison suggested Old Sturbridge Village, saying that she has a connection there and that they have recently reduced staff so that there are no resident musicians.

Election of WMSHC Officers

245 Nominations for officers were planned. Officers will be elected at the next Amherst monthly sing. After some discussion about the election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the group agreed that the jobs should be held by Tim and Cath, but that they needed to work out who should be what before the sing. The possibility was also discussed that Tim and
250 Cath could be appointed co-chairmen. Kelly will be nominated for Secretary. Jeff will be nominated for Treasurer.

Committees

255 These descriptions of committees will be presented at the next Amherst monthly sing so that people can volunteer for the committees of their choice. Committee heads are responsible for coordinating the activities of their committee and communicating progress to the Chairman.

Housing

260 **Function:** Coordinate local housing for out-of-town singers. Develop a list of local hosts and match them up with people who request housing. Find a convention hotel and obtain a group rate if possible. At convention, make sure that all visitors have accommodation.

Committee head: Cath

Approximate number of members required: 3

Finance

- 265 **Function:** Collect contributions at the convention and report collections to convention.
Committee head: not appointed (NOTE: Paul Gauthier previously volunteered)
of members required: 1-2

270 ***Memorial***

- Function:** Collect the Memorial List and Sick and Shut-In List. Conduct the Memorial Lesson.
Committee: Kelly, Eliza, and Duncan volunteered
of members required: 2-3

275 ***Welcoming***

- Function:** Greet convention attendees at door. Make sure they are registered and oriented. Provide general information.
Committee head: undecided
of members required: 12-16 (Peter and Anna Maria have volunteered)

280 ***Resolutions***

- Function:** Prepare list of people to thank for contributions to the convention. Present report during convention.
Committee head: not appointed
of members required: 2

285 ***Food***

- Function:** Prepare mainstay dishes for potluck. Coordinate food preparations among local singers as required. Coordinate kitchen and dining area set-up and clean-up.
Committee head: Laura
290 **# of members required:** 4-6

Child Care

- Function:** Make sure that parents of young children know what facilities are available to them and have the help they need. (Generally the care itself is the responsibility of parents who bring children to the convention)
295 **Committee:** not appointed
of members required: 1

Arrangements

- Function:** Call leaders at the convention
300 **Committee head:** Kelly
of members required: 4-6

Publicity

Function: Publicize convention to local community and to the Sacred Harp community.

305 **Committee head:** Peter
of members required: 1-2

Location

Function: Find a venue for the convention and any related activities, such as singing for alternate books. Make sure convention has adequate facilities, including dining area, child care area, and parking.

310 **Committee:** Cath and Laura
of members required: 2

Chaplain

Function: Give blessings at the opening and close of each day and before meals.

315 **Not appointed.**
of members required: 1

Minutes prepared and submitted by Kelly House, December 30, 1998