SMB:
SARATOGA MUSIC BOOSTERS

A 501(c)(3) organization supporting music programs in the Saratoga Union School District and Saratoga High School

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Regular Meeting in-person on June 2nd, 2026

Attendance: total number of attendees = 16

Attendees

Executive Board

Name	Role
Alicia de Fuentes	President
Mridula Prashant	Co-VP Donations
Sneha Melkote	Treasurer
Tina Pao	Co-Recording Secretary

Music Directors

Name	School
Shelley Durbin	SHS
Jon Jow	RMS
Isabel McPherson	RMS
Jason Shiuan	SHS

Booster Members

Name	Role
Richard Aochi	Controller
Michelle Bessonov	SMB Student Webmaster
Dongni Chen	Member
Suzie Kim	Member
Joyce Koh-Fernandez	RMS Orchestra Liaison
Beryl Liu	Publicity Chair
Vivian Liu	SMB Student Webmaster
Oliver Su	SMB Student Webmaster

Alicia calls the meeting to order at **7:05 pm**

Welcome, Introductions and Approval of Minutes

Alicia: Welcomed everyone and invited introductions, beginning with Michelle Bessonov, new student webmaster.

Michelle: Stated that she redesigned the website for the Saratoga museum, noting she builds websites independently for fun and has a coding background.

Vivian: Introduced herself as Student Webmaster and remarked that the group was very lucky to have her.

Richard: Stated that he handles taxes, bank reconciliations, and coordination with the auditors.

Mrudula: Introduced herself as Co-VP of Donations alongside Tista, noting they manage incoming donations and coordinate receipts and matching with the volunteer who processes them.

Shelley Durbin: Introduced herself as the point person for Choir, noting she also teaches Band, Orchestra, and AP Music Theory.

Sneha: Introduced herself as SMB Treasurer and thanked the group for their work.

Quorum was confirmed.

Alicia: Noted the minutes had been circulated the previous weekend and asked whether there were any comments or questions; none were raised.

- **Motion to approve the May meeting minutes**: Tina Pao
- **Seconded:** Mrudula Prashant

May meeting minutes approved.

Financial Reports

May Balance Sheet

Sneha: Reviewed the balance sheet as of 5/31, reporting total assets of $523K, with current assets making up $518K, primarily held across the organization's bank accounts. She noted that the level of current assets indicated some outstanding debt still to be cleared, and that equity matched total assets at $523K, with total liabilities equal to total assets. She explained that the report showed negative revenue because May PayPal income (approximately $36K) and matching funds (approximately $20K) had not yet been captured before the meeting, for a combined total of roughly $56K expected to post soon.

Alicia: Added that some Japan trip-related payments were still trickling in.

Sneha: Noted that the full month of June remained open for matching contributions.

May Budget vs. Actual

Sneha: Stated that May was the final reporting month for this cycle but one more month remained; once June closes, the board would know what each program raised, used, and carried forward, information that Mr. Shiuan and Mr. Boitz had requested.

Alicia: Asked whether families who wanted to prepay now, without the funds counting toward the current year, could do so.

Sneha: Confirmed an account had been created for that purpose, allowing funds to be received for next year without affecting current-year figures, with allocation to begin in July.

Alicia: Asked whether that account was currently reflected in the reporting.

Sneha: Explained it would appear once it had accumulated a balance.

Alicia: Noted that a zero balance would not display, meaning some future-year funds still needed to be moved into that account.

Sneha: Asked whether Japan trip collections were mostly complete.

Alicia: Confirmed most Japan-related payments were in, with only minor amounts still trickling in tied to the fuel surcharge and some parent confusion over the final installment payment.

April Transaction List # 1843-1881

May Transaction List #1882–1933

Alicia: Asked for questions or comments on the transactions; none were raised.

- **Motion to approve April Transactions & May financials**: Tina Pao
- **Seconded:** Mrudula Prashant

May financials approved as well as the April transaction list.

2026–2027 SHS Marching Band Trip Destination

Shiuan: Reported that the fall marching band season trip destination had not yet been finalized. He explained that as the NFL schedule was not yet released, despite following up with the venue (SOFI Stadium) multiple times over several weeks, the venue repeatedly cited ongoing budget review and scheduling uncertainty. He noted the outlook had grown less favorable for the originally preferred venue, with San Diego emerging as the more likely destination, though he felt the Los Angeles experience would be preferable.

Shiuan: Clarified that the response was not a firm no, but also not yet a comfortable yes, so he had held off on distributing trip forms until there was more clarity.

SUSD Music Budgets Approval

Alicia: Noted the budgets had been circulated over the weekend and invited Mr. Jow to begin.

Jow: Reported there would be no marching band for the coming year, explaining that as the program restarts, the district's current policy requiring students to opt into all performances needs careful review to ensure accessibility. Winter Guard, Winter Percussion, and marching arts would continue in the meantime, with a hope to relaunch marching band the following year. He presented the band budget, noting the figures matched the prior year and were built as a skeleton budget pending final enrollment numbers, with student counts marked as placeholders and donation asks to be finalized once enrollment is known.

Isabel: Confirmed the orchestra budget matched last year's, with the same projected student count, noting that chamber coaches cannot be shared across programs since they cannot be in two places at once, and that some details remained to be finalized.

Jow: Presented the Color Guard budget, also built as a skeleton budget pending enrollment, with figures largely unchanged from the prior year. He noted the Winter Percussion budget was expected by the September meeting and the Choir budget remained pending, with current placeholder figures reflecting last year's numbers.

Alicia: Noted that no fundraising had been conducted for choir this year, and that while awards had been offered to choir students, no funds had been raised for the program.

Shelley: Asked whether any donation was made for RMS choir.

Alicia: Said she did not believe one had been made.

Jow: Confirmed no formal choir budget had been proposed.

Alicia: Asked for further questions on the budgets presented, describing them as placeholders to allow the music directors to move forward, to be revisited once enrollment figures were clearer.

- **Motion to approve the budgets**: Mrudula Prashant
- **Seconded:** Richard Aochi

SUSD music budgets approved.

Midwest Clinic Opportunity for RMS Orchestra Students

Isabel: Reported that she had attended the school board meeting, as board approval is required to apply for the out-of-state trips; the application seeks permission to apply, with the understanding that acceptance would mean a firm commitment to attend. She noted the board had raised questions regarding financials Mr. Shiuan had provided cost figures from the high school along with lingering questions about educational merit and financial aspects. She expected further questions over the summer, with the topic to be revisited at the August board meeting, and expressed confidence the trip would ultimately be approved.

Alicia: Offered SMB's support in fundraising to relieve any financial burden associated with the trip.

Isabel: Noted a broader question had arisen regarding SUSD's interest in bringing field-trip fundraising under district oversight.

Alicia: Asked who was proposing to take on that role.

Isabel: Explained the district had been seeking a meeting on field-trip processes and fundraising procedures, since such trips occur during school days and fall under district purview; the group wanted to understand the district's rationale and whether it would offer any liability benefit. She noted that under a district-led fundraising model, if fundraising fell short, the district rather than the booster club would be responsible for the shortfall, whereas booster-led fundraising had historically been sufficient to fund trips.

Alicia: Noted her understanding that corporate matching programs may not apply to district-run field trips, since typically only 501(c)(3) organizations qualify.

Shelley: Shared her experience leading a trip of over 100 students to New York City, where funds were deposited into school accounts and school attorneys served as the vendor interface; she said the model was workable if the district was committed to making it succeed. She asked whether the proposed change might be a means for the district to limit the group's planned activities.She added that once a trip is approved under a given structure, the district would be bound to honor it.

Isabel: Said further clarity from the district was still needed.

Alicia: Said she had no objection to the district serving as the vendor-facing party.

Isabel: Cited the ASTA trip as an example, where the district office would book services such as buses and bill SMB accordingly; she said that model would be acceptable but noted outstanding questions she could not yet answer without a meeting with the principal and CBO.

Alicia: Said she wanted to remove financial fear as a barrier and welcomed any approach that worked for the students.

Shiuan: Noted an example in which the district pays vendors directly for transportation and then bills SMB.

Alicia: Asked how many students would be involved in the clinic trip.

Isabel: Estimated 40–50 students, representing the top-performing group - chamber orchestra.

Isabel: Noted the proposal had already been presented to other RMS staff as a heads up for potential student absences. RMS staff responded favorably, and the board appreciated the group having engaged directly with staff.

Alicia: Commended the effort as well done.

Shiuan: Asked how the group would respond if the district questioned the trip's educational value relative to, for example, a student attending a national math competition.

Isabel: Noted such absences are currently classified as unexcused.

Jow: Added that even robotics championship trips fall into the same unexcused-absence category, regardless of purpose.

Isabel: Noted the district would need to research the clinic's educational merits specifically, since the conference itself is geared toward educators while the associated performance component is for students.

Alicia: Expressed confidence that the timeline allowed enough time to raise and address the district's questions.

Isabel: Said she hoped to receive a list of the district's outstanding questions so the group could finalize field-trip procedures going forward.

Alicia: Asked how many middle school students typically attend the clinic.

Isabel: Said the number varies year to year, with roughly 5–6 middle schools typically selected per category, noting the highly selective nature of acceptance. She confirmed that once accepted, attendance would be mandatory, with a decision expected in August.

Japan Trip Update

Shiuan: Reported that ANA had imposed an additional surcharge, with a payment deadline of June 1, totaling approximately $43 per traveler across 66 travelers on ANA flights, or $2,877.69 in total; given that families had recently been asked for additional payments, he proposed requesting a program grant to cover the cost rather than billing parents again. He added that Ms. Hasegawa had accidentally broken her foot and would need a seat upgrade to accommodate her mobility during the flight, at a cost of approximately $1,600; spread across roughly 500 travelers, this would amount to about $5 per person rather than requesting family contributions. He noted most other on-the-ground accommodations for her had already been arranged. Confirmed that arrangements had already been made with Mr. Yamada for that upgrade.

Alicia: Asked whether the board was ready to vote given the late circulation of this item, then called for a motion to cover the fuel surcharge and accommodate Ms. Hasegawa's situation.

- **Motion to approve Japan trip grant:** Joyce Koh-Fernandez
- **Seconded:** Richard Aochi

The motion to approve Japan Trip Grant - Fuel surcharge passed.

Mrudula: Asked for updates regarding the Mt. Fuji portion of the trip.

Isabel: Said payment there would likely be cash at the door.

Mrudula: Asked about concert times.

Shiuan: Said students had received their itinerary as of that day, noting Kevin Chen had built a trip app for all travelers, which he offered to demonstrate.

Alicia: Asked whether parents would be able to view the different group chats — students, chaperones, and shadow tour participants.

Shiuan: Confirmed that selecting all group options would allow visibility into all of those communications.

Alicia: Noted excitement was high, with active WhatsApp group activity, and flagged confusion around luggage policy for students and shadow tour participants.

Shiuan: Explained that students are asked to bring one checked bag, with a second checked bag allowed for large instruments, plus a backpack for carry-on (or a small instrument in place of a backpack). He noted the restrictions were intended to prioritize instrument handling during boarding and to accommodate limited luggage storage on the shinkansen trains used for much of the group's transportation. He said the shadow tour group would follow similar luggage guidelines for the same reasons, while noting chaperones would not restrict other travelers' choices. He explained that large luggage would be inaccessible during the group's one night in Mt. Fuji, since luggage trucks need to proceed ahead to Kyoto; travelers would need a foldable or collapsible overnight bag, or a larger backpack as carry-on. He noted concert attire remained a logistical challenge and that he personally planned to bring a garment bag.

Joyce: Suggested students wear white shirts underneath their concert attire to simplify logistics.

Alicia: Asked how Japan entry registration should be handled for traveling families.

Shelley: Clarified that only travelers formally part of the tour group should register as a group; family members should register separately.

Joyce: Asked whether shadow tour participants were covered by travel insurance.

Shiuan: Clarified that medical or Cancel-for-Any-Reason (CFAR) insurance is not included in the tour package and would need to be purchased independently if desired, though claims could be filed for damaged belongings. He noted most trip details would be shared with families by Friday, and that the team was continuing to fine-tune the schedule.

Music Directors' Report

Jason Shiuan

Reflected on the recent concert season, describing it as meaningful for families, with the band concert holding particular personal significance given emotional pieces connected to Mrs. Hasegawa and Mr. Boitz that the group plans to bring to Japan. He thanked attendees for sitting through a long concert evening despite HVAC issues in the auditorium, and noted Jazz and Choir concerts had also taken place the prior week, with Ms. Durbin arranging special surprises for graduating seniors.

Shelley Durbin

Recapped the AP Music Theory concert, describing it as well-attended and creative, with student compositions and awards presented, followed by a class celebration; she credited her teaching assistant for handling event logistics. Described a joint choir fun night and rehearsal with RMS students, noting strong turnout and engagement from both schools.Shared that she had recently been able to visit Redwood more regularly to build relationships with choir students there, and described a positive conversation with the Redwood principal about a potential joint performance, which he suggested developing in collaboration with the Redwood choir.

The most recent joint concert with Jazz, Redwood Choir, and the HS choir as a success, noting her tradition of inviting graduating seniors to perform a song of their choosing, extended this year to include seniors joining the jazz band on stage. Discussed Japan preparation, noting the choir's performances are most impactful without sheet music, requiring significant memorization; she reported six students had reached performance-ready memorization that day. Described a planned performance in Kobe, noting the city's connection to a historic earthquake and a song about a child inheriting his late brother's backpack, with the family expected to be in the audience; she also referenced a planned performance of "Peace I Leave With You" at the Hiroshima memorial during the farewell concert. Expressed confidence in the group's level of preparation and readiness heading into the trip.

Reflected on completing her first year at Saratoga, citing strong student leadership and interest in expanding choir opportunities, describing current planning as a placeholder for future growth. Expressed interest in bringing in a composer-in-residence for a multi-choir collaborative performance, noting students had already worked with visiting composers this year, and shared interest in taking the choir to the American Choral Festival in Anaheim next spring, noting early discussions with Mr. Shiuan.

Redwood Middle Directors Report

Isabel McPherson

Thanked the board for accommodating her early departure from a prior meeting due to a choral performance commitment, which she described as emotionally impactful for the audience. Reported that the year's final concert went well, highlighting strong growth among younger and intermediate students, and noted student interest in preparing chamber music, raising the possibility of a future chamber concert. Shared that a student had requested a custom hat design, noting students' initiative and enthusiasm. Confirmed she and her fiancé would both attend the Japan trip, bringing trumpet and euphonium respectively.

Jon Jow

Expressed gratitude for the music education community, commending Mr. Shiuan's leadership throughout the concert season and Ms. McPherson's work with RMS students. Acknowledged Mrs. Durbin's vision for the high school choir program and expressed excitement about closing out the year with the Japan trip alongside the senior class, thanking the board for its support.

Closing Remarks

Alicia: Thanked the directors for the update and expressed gratitude to all board members, present and absent, for their time, energy, and dedication to the students. She thanked outgoing student volunteers for their contributions and specifically acknowledged Oliver Su, wishing him well as he moves on. Thanked the Treasurer, Controller, Donations team, and Publicity team for continuing in their roles, along with the music directors.

Joyce: Echoed appreciation for the board's leadership, expressing confidence in their ongoing commitment to the community.

Meeting adjourned at **8:31 pm**

Summary of Motions

Approval of May SMB Meeting Minutes	**Tina Pao** moves, **Mrudula Prashant** seconds, motion carries
Approval of May 2026 Balance Sheets, Budget vs. Actuals, and April Transaction List #1843 - 1881 and May Transaction List #1882–#1933	**Tina Pao** moves, **Mrudula Prashant** seconds, motion carries
SUSD School Year 26-27 Music Budgets	**Mrudula Prashant** moves, **Richard Aochi** seconds, motion carries.
Japan Trip - Program Grant for Fuel Surcharge	**Joyce Koh-Fernandez** moves, **Richard Aochi** seconds, motion carries

Thank You,

Sri Balakrishnan / Tina Pao

Co-Recording Secretaries