

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 April 16th, 2024, for 02 Hours 11 Minutes
 Attendance: total number of attendees = 14

Attendees

Executive Board

Name	Role
Alicia de Fuentes	President / Pancake Breakfast co-chair
Mrudula Prashant	Co-VP Donations / Pancake Breakfast co-chair
Nisha Hebbalae	Co-Recording Secretary
Bharti Ramaswamy	Co-Recording Secretary
Revathi Koteeswaran	Treasurer
Ramyra Vasu	Parliamentarian / SUSD & RMS Program Donations Chair

Music Directors

Name	School
Isabel McPherson	RMS
Jon Jow	RMS
Beth Nitzan	SHS

Booster Members

Name	Role
Richard Aochi	Controller
Rashi Sanghi	Publicity
Sneha Melkote	Pancake Breakfast Treasurer
Joyce Fernandez	Member
Josh Rupert	RMS Choir

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

March Meeting Minutes Approval

(presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

Alicia: Welcome everybody, I hope everyone has returned from a nice break. Looking forward to hearing updates from everybody.

Any comments on the March minutes? Motion to approve?

Nisha approves, Mrudula seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

SoCal Trip Update

(presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

Alicia: I just want to give an update with respect to donations - we are ahead, we not only made the estimated amount, but we went over with parents wanting to send their kids off to these things. We are in the green. As of March, these are the numbers.

171 RMS Students & 19 chaperones
 Total expected: **\$185,618**
 Current amount received as of end of March: **\$188,487**
 Conclusion parents love sending their kids: **\$2,869.**

Alicia: Nisha, do you want to give an update about the fraud e-vote that we had?

Update on e-vote to approve BofA checking account.

(presented by Nisha Hebbalae)

Nisha: As the members are aware our Bank of America checking account was hit by a check fraud. The bank advised us to open a new account and have new checks issued. We conducted an e-vote to approve the opening of the new checking account. Thank you to all the board members who voted.

E-vote results:

NAME	VOTE (HIDDEN)
Josh Rupert	Made the motion (YES)
Richard Aochi	Seconded (YES)
Alicia de Fuentes (E)	
Mrudula Prashant (E)	
Thea Widmer	
Tista Kapoor (E)	
Vrinda Gopal	
Arnita Profitt	
Ramya Vasu (E)	
Nisha Hebbalae (E)	
Suzie Kim	
Beth Kingsley	
Revathi Koteeswaran (E)	
Total number of votes	13
Executive board members to vote YES	6
Number of YES votes	13
Number of NO votes	0

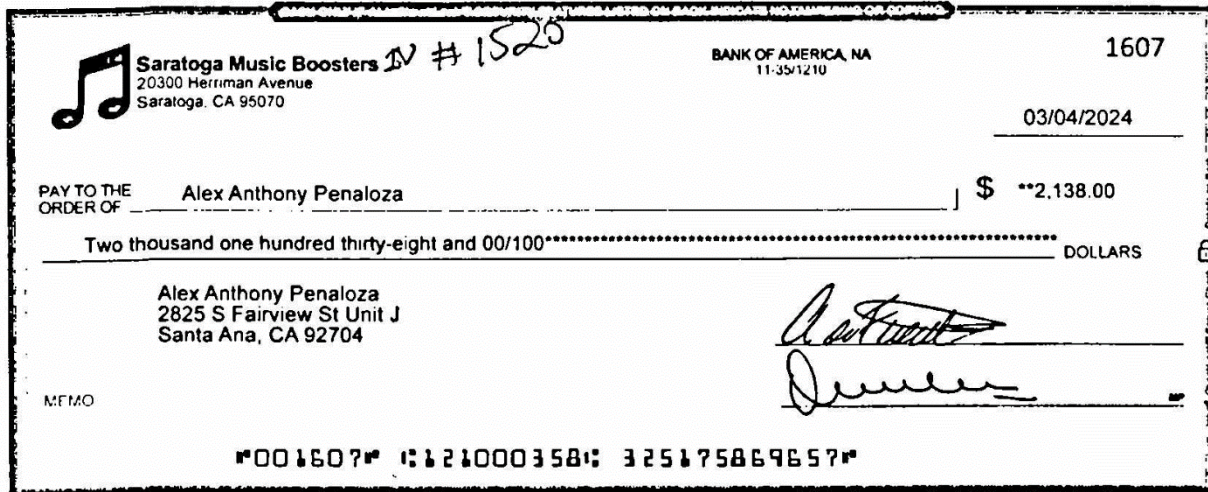
The motion was approved unanimously by a vote of 13-0.

I would like to add that per our bylaws, your vote is by secret ballot and must come only to me. Some of you did a reply-all with your e-vote. Our parliamentarian Ramya and I discussed this and agreed that the votes can still be counted, since our bylaws do not explicitly stop us from counting such votes.

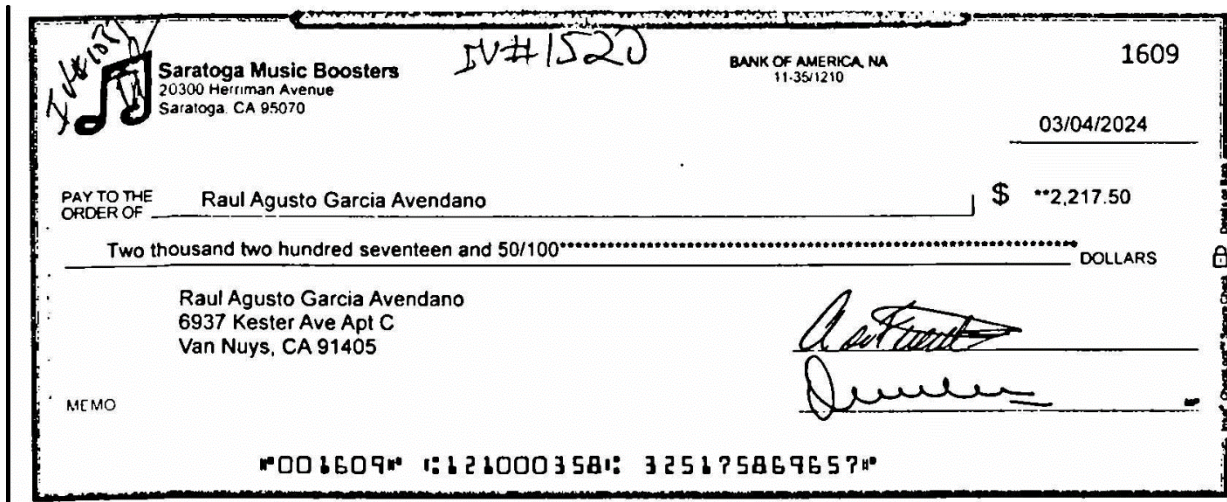
Update on BofA check fraud.

(presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

Alicia: This started when our treasurer Rev noticed something unusual in QuickBooks and sent a note to me asking if this was a fraud. This was the bad check:



I sent it to the directors and asked them if this person was someone in their world. They were not. So, I pulled up the next check that she [Rev] had mentioned.



Next person was also unknown. I was in the worst outfit possible and raced to the bank. They could have done really bad stuff and quickly. I reported it to the bank. At this point both good and bad checks with the SAME check number had been cashed. The bank did show me this on their screen.

Correct cheque #1607 03/04/2024 was for Homestead HS Music Boosters for \$335

Correct cheque #1609 03/04/2024 was for Royal Coach Tours for \$5024

As you can see, everything is the same – except the amount and the payee. These were duplicate checks. Same situation with check #1607 too. The bank was surprised how they did not catch it.

Josh: How did we catch it?

Alicia: Rev caught it when updating the information in QuickBooks.

Sneha: QuickBooks flags it for you since the same check has come again.

Alicia: Yes, but QuickBooks does not know how to handle it, it did not know how to process that information. So, I reported the fraudulent activity to Bank of America's fraud department – They recommended we close the account. I mentioned that we still had many business checks that have yet to be cashed, so they assured me our account would be watched closely.

I was now feeling more comfortable after this bank action was taken but as soon as the pending checks clear, we will close that affected account. Thanks to you all for the quick e-voting, we were able to create the new checking account very quickly and helped us continue with our normal day of business with tranquility.

We are now getting reports of checks that never made it to their destination – so for the other checks that are yet to be cashed we have left approximately \$13K – once paid we will close the account. Each day that comes along, it is my feeling that we were robbed at the point of origin. We have been voiding the checks that did not get cashed and issue a check with the good account. It is shocking how these people can manipulate checks.

Josh: When you contacted the police, were they able to check the addresses on the bad checks?

Alicia: The police haven't gotten back yet. We provided all the information requested. They know that we have reported it to the bank. The Fraud department said if they are going to return the money, it will take up to 90 days. I am still waiting for their verdict.

Josh: Will they refund it because they did not catch the fraud?

Alicia: They are still processing it, I am waiting.

Ramya: How much is it going to cost us for the new checks, with the 3 layers of protection?

Alicia: Rev did share with Richard and I. Richard, do you remember?

Richard: I think it is \$70 or something. One thing we might want to think about is changing how we do disbursement – maybe we go like a business credit card equivalent. That goes directly to the person.

Sneha: What about Zelle or some such EFT?

Alicia: Yes, Zelle might work. But we must be careful about how we authorize it. We have 2 signees for a check.

Sneha: We can have two authorizations.

Ramya: You can sign it and send it to a second person to sign. You can do this with a business account.

Alicia: I need to check if non-profits can do that, because we are not exactly a business.

Ramya: Have you alerted other members of the community?

Alicia: Yes, I have alerted them. I have also asked folks to go into the post office instead of dropping checks in the drop box.

Rashi: I really want to thank Alicia and Rev for this. I saw Alicia the day she was mismatched and went to the bank. I don't know if she had eaten the whole day, but kudos to all the steps that she was taking. She still came to the graduation meeting despite all this.

Alicia: I am really invested in the donor money, for me it is something to be treasured. The trust the donor families have in us is so important.

Any updates from the Parliamentarian?

Ramya: No updates since the last time.

Alicia: Okay, there is a lot going on with Pancake Breakfast. Rashi, do you want to start?

Pancake Breakfast Update

(Presented by Rashi Sanghi)

Alicia: I want to start by saying thank you to all our generous donors right here. I have a Target gift card of \$100 we are setting this up as a raffle or silent-auction item.

We are still working on the silent-auction items as well as generating receipts for some of the donors.

Ramya: Nothing came from SHS?

Alicia: Yes, we have 49ers tickets. We know who gave them. We also have a lot of local honey. We are going to do our traditional setting up of gift baskets this weekend.

Rashi: One new thing this year is that we have mascots from all elementary, middle, and high schools. Mrs. Lockhart was kind enough to make available all the mascots. We would love to take pictures of the music directors with the mascots, but we could not promise this because we don't know if there is room for that in the performance schedule. But that is going to be exciting, nevertheless. For high school, we still need 2 students to wear the mascot outfits from 8 to 9am at least, possibly continuing later. I hear that you can get hot in these costumes. We will need a dedicated photographer to be around them.

Other than that, there are some exciting items in the silent auction. We are advertising and promoting them; we are still accepting items, for example we got 4 seats to the Earthquakes. The banners are up, hopefully you are seeing the street-side banners. I don't know if they've been put up yet at high school.

Alicia: We took the opportunity to run another small fundraiser for the 50th anniversary of SMB. We are selling T-shirts. There is a limited supply, and available for pickup during Pancake Breakfast. I know that Mr. Shiuan has planned for some tentative program – is this confirmed? Publicity would love to start sharing the program.

Isabel: I made a small change to it.

Beth: I don't think it is finalized yet. I will ask for confirmation.

Alicia: Sponsoring a teacher is coming along nicely.

Nisha: We have 2 elementary school teachers sponsored.

Rashi: What I can get from you [the directors] is how many band, orchestra and choir kids are participating, and we'll try to do a post just on Redwood Middle students participating.

Jow: We cannot directly post on ParentSquare anymore.

Ramya: It is added as community news. Can't you share on parent square?

Jow: We can request, but I am not sure.

Josh: Is this something new that you guys are not allowed to post on ParentSquare?

Isabel: No, it has been around for a while.

Rashi: Doesn't PTA send newsletters there?

Alicia: They do, but they also have guidelines.

Rashi: Can you get how many band and orchestra kids are participating?

Jow: Like just the number of students?

Rashi: Yes

Audit Update

(Presented by Revathi and Richard)

Richard: There wasn't any major finding from the audit.

Rev: Main finding was that we need to keep copies of the checks that we write out. We have started doing that.

Sneha: Scanned or physical copies?

Rev: Scanned would do, but due to the recent fraud, we are using triple-protected-checks, which has a copy that you can tear off. It also has a space for putting in the reason for spending. It gives more context on what's been spent.

Alicia: Thank you, Richard, and Rev. You were so busy with this; I am grateful for your attention. Rev, you're up, ready to roll with Financials update.

Financials Update

Cash Flow

There is nothing significant to point out that we have not already covered. We have about \$13500 that is yet to be classified. The amount is not parked in receivables. We will sort it out this month. The reason this happens is because matching funds from employers don't get classified in time to close the books for the month, so we do it the following month. \$62500 in net revenue means our income exceeds expenditure, which is always a good thing.

Meal Cards (SoCal trip)

Josh: I had a question about check 1015, which says "meal card". Do we buy meal cards for staff? What were we accomplishing with this?

Jon: This happened during the RMS SoCal trip. We gave gift cards to the staff volunteers to get their meals at Disney. This way they did not have to submit meal receipts and get reimbursed for expenses. It is a lot less paperwork this way. I traditionally do it like this every year.

Josh: What if they do not spend all that money on meals?

Jon: They get to keep it.

Josh: That is my concern. Is it a bit too much for meals? Perhaps we should get receipts for meals.

Alicia: Would you classify this as a stipend?

Jon: If we have funds leftover after handling all the trip expenses, I give the gift cards to staff members, so they do not have to spend their own money when volunteering on the trip. But for bookkeeping and record keeping purposes, going forward we will ask for receipts and save them.

Alicia: SMB treasurer and controller, do you have any thoughts on this?

Rev: How many meals are we talking about and what is the amount?

Sneha: \$200 per teacher per day. \$1000 in total.

Alicia: Then for the organization record keeping and bookkeeping purposes, let us make it a rule to ask for receipts when we cover meals in this manner. This will be useful when we have an audit.

Ramya: I am thinking about why we need to prove that this was used for the meal? We should be able to say that this money is for their meal, which should be sufficient right?

Richard: We do need some point of reference. During the audit, I was going through a lot of things. Medicines are supplies, versus food, versus gas. It was getting ridiculous.

Josh: And that's what I am saying. Per diem versus what we are giving must be justifiable. We are just stewards of donated money, not questioning anybody's integrity here.

Ramya: Theoretically it is a lot of work to keep all receipts.

Alicia: That is why I am asking if it is like a stipend. You spend it on meals or mickey ears, it is up to you.

Richard: We need a reference piece of paper for audit. This is the general flat rate for meals – have people sign it.

Transactions

Ramya: New checks 1001 to 1016. Old checks from 1571 to 1573, then 1606 to 1633.

Nisha: At the last meeting, we mentioned that the Checks 1571-1573 were deferred from March. They have been submitted this month for approval.

Alicia: Any further questions on transactions? Motion to approve?

Ramya approves, Nisha seconds. Motion passed unanimously.

Music Directors' Reports

Beth Nitzan

It is quite lonely this week at school since most of my colleagues are at the Winter Percussion world championships in Dayton. SHS choir has had a busy month. We went to the SJSU choral invitational event. Our Seattle trip happened a week after that. Everything went well with the trip thanks to our wonderful chaperones and amazing students. Our guest conductor had a medical emergency. So, at the last minute we had [Dr. Giselle Wyers](#) from the University of Washington School of Music replace them and she did a fabulous job. We performed a piece composed by [Katerina Gimon](#) as a world premiere event. Thank you to SMB and all our volunteers who helped process the donation checks and take care of financial logistics. We are interested in planning another trip, maybe for next summer. Before that we would like to get field trip policy clarified by district.

We completed auditions for placement next year. The chamber choir is healthy, and the enrollment bumped up from this year. Our concert choir unfortunately is small. It is alarming that only three 9th graders signed up for next year. If enrollment continues at this pace the SHS Choir program will not be able to continue in just a few years. We may have to do a little more push to promote the Choir program at RMS and increase enrollment at the middle school, since that feeds directly into the high school program.

Isabel McPherson

Isabel: We survived March. We had CMEA for band and orchestra. It was a very positive experience. Judges gave good feedback. Right after CMEA, it was Disney. I'm very happy with it. We now only have 2 more weeks to prepare a different set of music.

It was a crazy number of kids at Disney. 90 or so kids for orchestra, one of the biggest groups so far for orchestra.

Fun story – the band performed first. There was a little bit of rain, and it was windy. We told the kids that we might have to cancel or cut short the show. I told them – play everything like it's the last piece you get to play, because we may get cut off. It is for safety reasons. But luckily, we got to play everything. The band students were cheering for the orchestra, it was just nice to see them support each other.

Overall, it was a successful trip; we did not lose any children on the trip 😊

Alicia: The school must have been so empty.

Isabel: Now we are getting ready for pancake breakfast. Really exciting. The kids are excited, and I want them to have fun. But they are like – I made 4 mistakes. And I asked them – did you have fun? Your parents must be so proud sitting there and watching you play. All performances will have some mistakes. But it is hard for them because we point out their mistakes at other times, like during class.

Joyce: I attended the CMEA for advanced orchestra, and the compliment from the judge was the best. They said – this is not sight-reading; this is a performance!

Isabel: We usually overprepare for sight reading, I make them practice something harder.

Josh: Were the performances shared by Mr. Hamm?

Isabel: We can suggest it, he might be open to it.

Ramya: I felt that more parents could have come and watched the sight-reading. A lot of seats were empty.

Nisha: The directors do announce after the performance.

Joyce: There was a sign that said, “do not enter,” so it was a little confusing.

Ramya: I do like Josh’s idea of publishing the results.

Isabel: I am also worried about kids saying, “Oh I did better than you,” so we should be careful about publishing scores or results of CMEA.

Josh: That’s true.

Alicia: We can just share words, and not numbers.

Josh: Why wouldn’t we want to publish how we are doing in comparison to other schools?

Isabel: CMEA is a rating and not a ranking. You get a score, but it is not really a competition with anybody but themselves.

Jon Jow

- Our students had a great experience at CMEA last month! Advanced Band had a really strong performance, and Intermediate Band had a very educational experience. Both groups got exactly what they needed from the day.
- The Color Guard field trip to Live Oak was a great time! Saratoga High School were wonderful “hosts” and so welcoming of our 13 students. Redwood saw the final set of performances in the afternoon/evening, then enjoyed a snack provided by SHS volunteers. Students returned home abuzz about the performances and with a better understanding of what the activity is all about.
- Music Trip was a success! Despite the inevitable unplanned surprises, our students were resilient throughout the process. They persevered through their performances despite some challenging weather conditions, and they had a great time exploring LA. We’re incredibly grateful to our chaperones and volunteers, and to our alumni tour guides at UCLA.

International Trip Update

Alicia: We are not thinking of even considering traveling summer of 2025 because the music directors in both schools were informed on Friday Feb. 2nd, 2024, by the district secretary “These are just not school trips, so you would proceed with the protocol as a non-school sponsored trip.” Since then and much activism LGHS International Music Trip was approved but were warned that it was a onetime approval. All other trips would be non-school sponsored. The reasons have varied from it cannot be a school sponsored trip if it is held in the summer to its a liability issue and we cannot have graduated kids traveling as part of the ensemble which of course is not the problem at all. The district’s own JPA indicated the district has the Ed Code required insurance to travel as specified by Ed Code Law as well as the seniors may take a

background check enabling them to travel as part of the ensemble as they have been doing all school year in preparation for such a prestigious opportunity. To be clear: the district is saying that there is no insurance provider that will cover the possibility of a lawsuit that can be filed in a foreign country. For reference this is the Ed-code law under section 35330 where the district says there is NO CARRIER that offers the following law requirement:

“If travel is to and from a foreign country, liability insurance shall be secured from a carrier licensed to transact insurance business in the foreign country.”

(Link to the section: <https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/education-code/edc-sect-35330/>)

I need to investigate this further. They are barking up the wrong tree with this, if you have any legal minds that can help with this, please refer them to me.

Joyce: *Worldstrides* is a company – we use them when we go to DC. Mrs. Chaykin is taking kids to Italy, she has more info.

Alicia: Thank you for bringing it up. There are two ways to travel – sponsored versus non-sponsored. With sponsored, you get to use school instruments, facilities to practice etc. With non-sponsored you cannot use all that and teachers are not allowed to talk about the trip on school grounds. Teachers are not allowed use school communication channels to organize etc. Instead of the district supporting their schools’ programs they are showing their detachment by encouraging non-school sponsored trips and have a non-for-profit organization take on the responsibility that is theirs alone, in this case they expect SMB to do their job. To be clear SMB supports the music programs in SHS and SUSD and does not support a third party as it is not in their charter. Then the district wishes to receive accolades for this?

Josh: People at school are going to talk about it, if you put that as a caveat, it is ridiculous.

Alicia: The problem is the district is saying that insurance will not cover if a lawsuit happens in a foreign country.

Nisha: Does it mean that Los Gatos High is not going as well?

Alicia: They are going because they had raised the funds and were ready to roll. COVID shut them down. So, they started again the process to apply again requiring just the final authorization. Board members fully approved it under the belief that the trip was not covered. The community united to promote the approval,

Josh: What year are we planning for?

Alicia: 2025, but we need to fix this.

Ramya: What happens to drama or any other event?

Alicia: Drama goes as a non-sponsored trip. 2025 is supposed to be Japan – it is exceedingly difficult to make it happen if we do not move fast to resolve all the misunderstanding at a district level. We are already behind schedule with respect to checking off to-do items for a trip of this magnitude. Presenting a first draft proposal is already a HUGE lift and if the directors from the on-set know it will be denied why would they do the work?

50 Years of SMB Gala

Alicia: It is an important thing; SMB brings a lot of opportunities for the kids. I envision us having a sit-down formal dinner. Food, linen, centerpiece. Place is Campbell Orchard. Mr. Shiuan had mentioned September as the ideal month for this to happen. We have Saturday the 7th, Friday, and Sunday. We must see what day in September we can have this.

The place can hold 400 people max. Cost per person for food is \$95. For 200 people, we are looking at 20K.

Joyce: Does the venue provide tables and chairs?

Alicia: Tables are provided, we will have to rent the chairs. That is the unforeseeable.

Josh: We would want this to be open to the whole community. It can turn out to be expensive.

Alicia: SMB need not always be about the money. It is about the community, cementing bridges. The bonds that these events create are memorable and long-lasting. That to me is a lot of value.

Josh: Do we have to use their caterer?

Alicia: No

Josh: That is something we can save some money on.

Nisha: What if we got the alcohol ourselves? We can save money there.

Alicia: Let us not spend too much time on this, I will talk to Catalina offline.

With that, we say goodnight. (9:16pm)

Summary of Motions

Approval of March meeting minutes	Nisha moves, Ramya seconds, motion carries
Approval of March transactions: New account checks 1001-1016 Old account checks 1571- 1573, 1606-1633	Ramya moves, Nisha seconds, motion carries
Approval of March financials	Ramya moves, Nisha seconds, motion carries

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 pm.

Bharti Ramaswamy/ Nisha Hebbalae
Co-Recording Secretaries