

# 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 October 14, 2025

Attendance: total number of attendees = 21

## Attendees

### Executive Board

| Name              | Role                                   |
|-------------------|--|
| Alicia de Fuentes | President                              |
| Mrudula Prashant  | Co-VP Donations                        |
| Sri Balakrishnan  | Co-Recording Secretary                 |
| Tina Pao          | Co-Recording Secretary                 |
| Sneha Melkote     | Treasurer/ Pancake Breakfast Treasurer |

### Music Directors

| Name             | School |
|------------------|--------|
| Michael Boitz    | SHS    |
| Sean Clark       | SHS    |
| Shelley Durbin   | SHS    |
| Jon Jow          | RMS    |
| Isabel McPherson | RMS    |
| Jason Shiuan     | SHS    |

### Booster Members

| Name                | Role                           |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Richard Aochi       | Controller                     |
| Dongni Chen         | SHS Band / Publicity           |
| Lily Chow           | Cookie Dough Co-Chair          |
| Lan Kan             | Member                         |
| Suzie Kim           | SHS Orchestra                  |
| Joyce Koh-Fernandez | RMS Orchestra / RMS Colorguard |
| Beryl Liu           | SHS Band / Publicity           |
| Thea Widmer         | Parent Webmaster               |
| Noemi Widmer        | Student Member                 |
| Eunjoo/Emily Yi     | SHS Band                       |

Alicia calls the meeting to order at **7:08pm**

# September Minutes Approval

(presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

**Alicia:** September meeting minutes were circulated on Monday prior to the meeting. Any comments/ questions? Corrections?

**Dongni Chen** makes a motion to approve the September 2025 SMB meeting minutes, **Mrudula Prashant** seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

# Year End Financials

(presented by Alicia de Fuentes, Sneha Melkote & Richard Aochi)

**Sneha:** We submitted end of year financials to our tax person, I had to close the financials for the last fiscal year and I realized there are some retained earnings I had to zero out so had to update EOY financials. So that changed the #s for EOY financials that we gave to the tax person so we have to relook at that again.

**Richard:** Yes. There were some changes to reserves but nothing material that impacted operating expense, etc.

Due to revisions needed, will review at next month's meeting.

# July Financials

(Presented by Sneha Melkote)

**Sneha:** July cash flows are still missing some items and I had some questions. We are carrying some funds forward but I need the budgets .The expenses are given to me via the budget but the expected 95% of participation. I promise to have that done by next month's meeting. For today, here is the August Balance Sheet and Budget vs Actuals.

[July Balance Sheet](#)

[July Budget vs Actual](#)

July Financials tabled until next month until End of Year financials have been revised fully.

# September Financials

(Presented by Sneha Melkote)

**Sneha:** This is business as usual in Sept. The only thing for matching, we have 100k sitting in that account bc that needs to be allocated. And the rest is money coming in from Japan trip. The orchestra budget from RMS was updated with the SoCal and SF Symphony trip. Choir got updated and that's it. Japan budget is not yet out.

## September Budget vs Actual

SMB Scholarship amount determined to be reset to \$2k with agreement from Mr. Shiuan.

## September Transactions # 1613-1642

September Financials approval tabled until next month's meeting.

## **Tax Filings Update for SMB**

(presented by Richard Aochi)

Tabled until next month pending revised submission to the accountant.

## **STA President Comments Update**

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

**Alicia:** All of you know that I have been working very hard to try and get a sit down meeting with all the key players. There was a one time offer from the STA president to have a sit down meeting with just Ken, herself and music teachers, to which I said, 'I'd love to do that too, but we need to have a Phase A meeting because we need to stop this fragmented method of communication'. I have now lost trust in leadership because there is no way under the sun that the slander from the STA president could've come out unless someone from district leadership is playing dirty politics. And I wrote to Ken Gesick to say, 'I have also lost my trust in you because of these events.'. So sitting down with Ken, STA President, music teachers and myself is a deal breaker because if it's him who's playing dirty politics, then he will be able to spin the narrative however he wishes. So yes, let's have that meeting, but first we have to have Phase A which is for the key players involved, right? So we can establish what our goals are. What are our differences? What went wrong? And they are trying to spin it and say that SMB is not interested in having any meeting, which is incorrect. I have, to this day, been wanting to have a meeting with all the key players, out of respect for the leadership roles. What I'm not seeing is leadership from the district level or even governance. I think that the success of the school and all its programs and all its organizations can only be better if there's a solid leadership in governance that is done with honesty, professionally, seriously and respectfully. Playing the silent game when someone says, let's sit down and meet, is not professional. It's not ethical, and it's not respectful. It's not respectful for teachers. It's not respectful for the organizations. It's selfish to not act for the direct benefit of the students, teachers and larger community, and it's not as respectful even for the governors, who are the trustees that hope district leadership is doing their job right. But they should stop hoping, and they should start participating, because I think district leadership is coming up short to their expectations. I will be going to many, many SUSD meetings. I do not like going to SUSD meetings because it is my preference to always discuss issues behind doors and over a table, humanely, as opposed to speaking in three minute segments trying to convey the importance of coming together and convey the serious breakdown in district leadership. But I will do it. I will do it for as many meetings I need because things have to be made right. And I want someone to be responsible in the district realm. I don't know who that person is going to be, but I want someone to be responsible.

So that's the update. Have you any questions?

**Tina:** Alicia, how do we support you in this effort?

**Alicia:** Thank you. However you wish. You may come, you may sit, you may tune in remotely. At the last board meeting I attended, a parent used the raised hand option as she signed on remotely hoping to speak but since no one said at the start of the meeting that they would not take raised hands, she drove all the way to the meeting (after waiting for 2 hours), and STILL no one took the opportunity to make the exception and have her speak and she drove off. This is an example of lack of district organization, seriousness and lack of communication skills. Clearly they don't think of the broader community. I think it's time to show up. We don't want anything that we will directly benefit from, we're not doing this for a salary. We're there for the teachers, the students and the broader community. I only have three minutes, but what I want to convey is, tomorrow, it'll be one year when we had a new acting superintendent LGSUHSD, and we didn't achieve this on our own. We did it as a school wide effort, SMB, the teachers, the sports boosters. We all did it together. We all did it for the right reasons. And what I did say to Jen in a personal email is, you're going against 60% of the body of the community that are in your school. 60% of those students are your students too. It makes no sense. Even as a president of the STA for you to attack your community. Why would you go against a community who will be in lock step with you when you need them? Why would you do that? You don't understand what leadership is. If you do that, you're cutting your own wings off. I am just baffled. And as I said to Jon and I said to Isabel, last meeting, I need you guys to advocate too, because it's not okay for them to convey a message, which I truly believe is not what you feel and you have confirmed this too, but if it is that, please speak up here. Ok, moving on. I'm sorry, guys, sometimes SMB Leadership isn't always easy.

## **Cookie Dough Fundraiser Update**

(Presented by Lily Chow)

As of today, sales are slightly over \$3,400, giving us a profit of close to \$1,400. Cheesecakes are the best sellers currently along with the usual hit of Chocolate Chip. 4 weeks to go in sales. Hoping we will at least match last year's sales. Traditionally we always see a big surge the last week of sales.

## **Recruiting volunteers for historical SMB Documents**

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

SMB historical records from 2008-2014 in binders on paper which need to be digitized. Jon Jow volunteered to scan with copiers.

## **Downtown Saratoga Scarecrow Display**

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

SMB has been asked to participate in Downtown Saratoga's scarecrow display for 2026. Perhaps students would be interested in creating a scarecrow on behalf of SMB. Music directors agree.

# Japan Cultural Exchange Update

(Presented by Michael Boitz)

**Michael:** I have some updated numbers sent to me today by Ms. de Fuentes and Mrs. Hasegawa but I'm not sure if that number included staff.

**Alicia:** No, not chaperones nor staff.

**Michael:** We have long past 500 travelers at this point. We're at about 510-515 something like that. It's an invasion of Japan. So there's great news and challenging news with all of that, so what that means is we're now at a point where we will go back to Bravo music and our air vendor and renegotiate our pricing based on that number. Because if you recall the pricing of the previous tour the top # was 409 or something like that. And so pending a number of things, like coaches - when we fill a coach bus that always evenly distributes the expense among the travelers - it will mean more oversized luggage or baggage potentially, but it, more than anything, should lower the price of the trip. Collectively, I'm not sure by how much, but it should lower the price.

Current challenges include uncertainty about instrument rentals in Japan. We need to rehash the budget based on renting instruments and adjusting for oversized luggage if we were to bring our own cellos. Will provide an updated rough estimated budget based on 409 travelers as a placeholder.

# SHS Hall of Fame Gala Update

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

Great time had by all. Student performances were professional and amazing. Performers were also able to sit down at the gala dinner and enjoy the event. Gave students a chance to understand the legacy they are a part of and build additional confidence for them. Waiting on financials to show final numbers but aimed for break even but possibly a little bit of revenue. Hoping to support HOF again next year.

# Music Directors' Reports

**Alicia:** Before I start with the music directors, maybe we should start with the wish list? This has to go to e-voting today. Mr. Boitz or Mr. Shiuan - want to talk about the wish list?

[Wish List Budget](#)

E-vote will circulate post meeting.

## Jason Shiuan

Freshman went to SF Symphony open rehearsal with staff and chaperones. 9th graders dress up to attend a concert. Then Football game where Redwood Advanced Band joined in the stands for Pep Band. Seeing High Schoolers get to know the middle schoolers is a great way to build that bridge and connection across programs. Last week, the music department Fall Showcase and Senior Night where 80 seniors and families were honored. Also, in the midst of all-state auditions. Approx 40 students auditioning for orchestra, 30 for band. Directors have been spending a lot of time listening to and helping students with recordings.

Coming up: Vienna Teng (SHS Alum '96) singer/songwriter will spend all day Thursday and Friday meeting with every single class to present and perform. Other collaborations in the works with Jazz ensembles coming up.

Friday is Homecoming: Marching Band will perform at 6:30 prior to the game. The SHS choir will sing the National Anthem.

October 25th is the Tournament of Bands in Cupertino. Another football game on November 7th, and the last competition of the season is Sacramento State on November 8th. Finally before the next SMB meeting, there will be a Tri-M benefit concert.

First show this last Saturday - FUHSD Expo. Students performed for each other and then for an audience in the evening. Thanks to all the parents who step in to help with the Marching Band. It's a huge relief when we don't have to handle all the little details because so many parents jump in to help.

## Shelley Durbin

**Shelley:** So kind of going in chronological order a couple weeks ago or week or so, somewhere in there, you were notified that 10 of our students that auditioned for the coastal honor choir were selected. We have three students that have been selected to the Bay Section choir. So that means a third of the choir is in some sort of Honor Choir.

Falcon Choir (lunch time choir) is continuing averaging 40 students. Bohemian Rhapsody and Make Them Hear You from Ragtime the musical. The kids enjoyed the HOF performance - they sang "Thank You for Being a Friend". Including them in the actual dinner was super special.

We had the first formal concert. Choirs sing for each other and the 200+ kids sing a song together with literally an hour to rehearse together. We love this event because it's all about unity.

I was really proud, because they had a concert on Tuesday, and then they grew their performance on Friday, and then we actually performed Friday set in a couple weeks, and I feel certain they will grow into that. So they're on a lovely trajectory, and we are singing the national anthem at the game on Friday.

Since so many people made the honor choir, it's turning into a field trip for the group - Nov 6-8. The Bay Section Choir will have their event Nov 21-22.

## Sean Clark

**Sean:** Winter Percussion is full steam ahead. Chavi and team already have about four minutes of audio and source material sketched. Feeling really good about where the show is going to be. We're already in uniform design. We're making final tweaks to all the floor and the prop ideas. So we're super pumped to get auditions started in November and then start making the show come to life. I'm really, really excited to share those things. The percussionists have switched out of learning marching band stuff in the class and skill acquisition that's always happening, but it's less explicit. We're working on the percussion on solid music, we're gonna have eight rehearsals total before our concert, so wish us luck. But I think we have five left, and I think there's gonna be some really awesome music making happening in the percussion ensemble in our concert. We have 9 pure bred percussionists in the top group and 3 of them are music majors.

The jazz band has been welcoming Mike Galisatus who is the Director of Jazz at Stanford. He's been twice so far (and a lot more next semester) has made a big difference in our Band and they're actually sounding quite nice as they prepare for their concert in November.

**Jason:** Jazz band also collaborating with Vienna Teng. Mr. Clark is working with 2 students to actually write out the music for an unrecorded song of hers and eventually the hope is to record it with her.

## Isabel McPherson

**Isabel:** In Orchestra at Redwood, beginners are doing our first concert pieces. To go from playing things to reading music, it's a necessary evil. We talked about it today - they were playing something that's like, four measures long. Some of them just memorized it. And I'm like, No, you can't just memorize it because here's a piece Chamber is playing and it's 150 measures long. Intermediate learning a lot of pieces blending learning out of the book and finding a piece that is specially written to reinforce a scale. Going well so far. For advanced and chamber working on ASTA music which is twice as many pieces as they normally work on. It's stressful to figure out how to keep working on everything consistently. When there's like six pieces, and there's only five days of the week, and you really want to get in depth on something in 40 minutes, then that kind of takes up the whole class. But, slowly, surely, we'll get there and I'm really looking forward to it. The webstore has been updated and emails will be forthcoming soliciting contributions for trips and various program participation. Currently no plans to hold after school rehearsals, but will see how it goes. Considering splitting concerts as the groups get bigger as that would also allow advanced groups to play more pieces.

**Isabel:** Something to bring to the group in general. An on-going issue we're trying to resolve is that the district doesn't have a way to hire someone on as a coach who is a retired teacher. SUSD seems to believe the only way forward is to make MOU or as an independent contractor.

**Michael:** We do it through the district bc that is the safest as it offers the most security when bringing any walk on staff on. It is also not good for a 501c3 non-profit to hire people. We don't have the bandwidth or an HR dept. You want everything to go through the districts bc all the mandated training is all taken care of by the district. That is why it is worthwhile to add a processing fee to it.

**Alicia:** Isabel, your class sizes – how is it for you? Honestly?

**Isabel:** Fine, great!

**Alicia:** Not too much?

**Isabel:** No. Especially not in the intermediate class with 2 adults in the room . The class is about 48-52 ish but by the time they are that level, they know how things work so it's not an issue at all.

**Isabel:** It's just a facilities issue really.

**Alicia:** Are you suffering at all?

**Isabel:** No, don't think so. I'm happier to have everyone together. In a perfect world the room would be bigger but it's not a fire hazard.

**Alicia:** What's the room capacity?

**Isabel:** I don't know. The fire marshal came by while I was teaching one of my bigger classes but didn't say anything. I'm happy

**Alicia:** How big do you think would be the max # for the class.

**Isabel:** I think we're at the max # now. 6<sup>th</sup> grade is smaller and overall student #s are going down.

**Alicia:** If there is a physical limitation we might have to consider breaking up the class.

**Isabel:** The room could potentially be bigger if we removed the steps/level. It would be easier if the room is easier to navigate. Less backpacks getting stepped on, instruments getting stepped on, etc. But I wouldn't say classes needed to be split up because they are too big.

## Jon Jow

- The Color Guard is on their way and making great progress. Our primary instructor Cece will be moving to Atlanta this week, so RMS/SHS alumnus and color guard assistant Ange Delacroix is stepping into the lead role. We are in the process of bringing in another instructor to help Ange for the year!
- Band classes had a visit from SHS MESH leads a few weeks back and students are looking forward to getting started with their mentors once again. We're grateful for the leadership of SHS students for wanting to give back and connect with our students so enthusiastically.
- The Advanced Band had a fantastic time at the SHS Football Game on September 26. It was a festive night that got many students excited about high school and being a part of the SHS spirit, one year early. Thanks also to the SHS parent volunteers who interfaced with our students and managed the hungry line for pizza.
- Bands are already preparing music for December, as well as CMEA in March, and Disney in April. We're ready to start fundraising for our field trips, as well as our yearly program contributions, and also excited to try and gain more participation and traction by bundling the appeal all in set.
- Winter Percussion is off to a great start. We just had our second meeting/workshop today.

**Alicia:** Are you overwhelmed by the class size?

**Jon:** No it feels like pre 2020 again. Classes are together and larger but we can work on things more cohesively. I have 24 band students auditioning for all-state. 32 orchestra students interested in all-state. Interest is really big. Feels like less work in a way because the classes are together. Easier to instruct the students on the daily. It's been helpful.

**Isabel:** My stress level is less than 50% of what it was last year.

**Alicia:** We don't want anyone to be overwhelmed or stressed.

**Meeting adjourned 8:59pm**

# Summary of Motions

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Approval of September SMB Meeting Minutes | <b>Dongni Chen</b> moves, <b>Mrudula Prashant</b> seconds, motion carries |
|---|---|

## Addenda

E-vote results to approve **SHS Instrument Wish List**:

| NAME                         | VOTE               |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Sri Balakrishnan (E)         | Yes                |
| Dongni Chen                  | Yes                |
| Lily Chow                    | Yes                |
| Alicia de Fuentes (E)        | Yes                |
| Vrinda Gopal                 | Yes                |
| Beryl Liu                    | Makes Motion (Yes) |
| Sneha Melkote (E)            | Yes                |
| Tina Pao (E)                 | Yes                |
| Mrudula Prashant (E)         | Seconded           |
| Josh Rupert                  | Yes                |
| <b>Total number of votes</b> | <b>9</b>           |

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b># Exec Board Members<br/>YES Votes</b> | <b>4</b> |
|---|----------|

|                              |          |
|------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Total # YES<br/>Votes</b> | <b>9</b> |
|------------------------------|----------|

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| <b>Total # NO Votes</b> | <b>0</b> |
|-------------------------|----------|

The **SHS Instrument Wish List** was approved by SMB with a vote of 9-0 with 4 executive board members voting YES.

Sri Balakrishnan / Tina Pao  
Co-Recording Secretaries