

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 September 9, 2025

Attendance: total number of attendees = 29

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
Josh Rupert	Parliamentarian

Music Directors

Name	School
Michael Boitz	SHS
Sean Clark	SHS
Shelley Durbin	SHS
Jon Jow	RMS
Isabel McPherson	RMS

Booster Members

Name	Role
Richard Aochi	Controller
Dongni Chen	SHS Band / Publicity
Eva Fan	SHS Orchestra
Lan Kan	Member
Vrinda Gopal	SHS Band
Jiyoon Hwang	RMS Band
Jason Huie	Member
Suzie Kim	SHS Orchestra
Joyce Koh-Fernandez	RMS Orchestra / RMS Colorguard
Beryl Liu	SHS Band / Publicity
Oliver Su	Student Webmaster
Thea Widmer	Parent Webmaster
Noemi Widmer	Student Member
Eunjoo/Emily Yi	SHS Band

Other

Name	Role
Heath Rocha	LGSUHSD Superintendent
Snehali Marimuthu	Community Member / STA Member
Jen Vanderberg	Community Member / STA President

Alicia calls the meeting to order at **7:03pm**

Welcome & Non-Agendized Items

Alicia: I actually want to briefly deviate from the agenda. I have 2 communications I really want to share. I have this beautiful communication to the SMB Board and members. If you don't mind, I would like to read it for you because it frames what SMB is all about. <Reads aloud> [<Card Dr. John Zarco>](#)

Alicia: This means a lot to me. This is from a teacher thanking us and I think it frames SMB very well. We support our students, we support our teachers, and we support our great community. If anyone thinks otherwise, you've got it wrong.

Michael Boitz: A round of applause for Dr. Zarco. So everybody knows, John Zarco was here teaching for 4 years at Saratoga High. He left in 2009. He's Director of Bands at UT San Antonio. He's the only college band director who comes back to teach at his old high school. He literally comes back to teach our band out of the goodness of his heart every year, so it's pretty awesome. Jason Shiuan, who is at the SC Band Director's Association meeting tonight had Dr. Zarco, I think, for at least 1 year.

Isabel: Jason had him for 2 years.

Michael Boitz: Jason had him for 2 years, you [Isabel] had him for 1 year. Very special guy.

Alicia: And then I'd like to follow up with a student. <Reads aloud> [<Thank You Card from Ryan Sanders>](#)

Alicia: So, I think this is why we all come here, right? We're all here with the right mindset. We're here to support everybody. We give opportunities to everybody. We respect everybody. And it shows in these beautiful acknowledgements and support from the community.

Alicia: Um. I think I'm going to go out of the order of the meeting agenda because as you see, we have attending here tonight Ms. Marimuthu and Ms. Vandenberg. So there's a place holder here for an update regarding SUSD Board comments made by Jen Vandenberg, STA president. So I guess I'll give you the word first

Jen Vanderberg: I'm just here to support my colleagues and to hear more about what you guys do.

Alicia: Okay. So then, I'll continue, alright? Last meeting, I asked the Board if I can speak on the behalf of SMB in upcoming SUSD board meetings as a response to the comments Jen made against SMB. I don't speak in SMB's name unless I ask the SMB Board first, which is technically not required as I am the president but I feel the weight of speaking as an organization and I seek their support for each instance, I won't speak otherwise. That said, I'm not planning to speak on behalf of the group as President in the upcoming SUSD board meeting. I'm going to speak on Thursday as myself.

Alicia: So, you had made some allegations, Jen, saying we are some external group. We're not. We're a school connected organization and have been for over 50 years. The allegations that we use aggressive tactics to get our way is incorrect. What we do here is listen to the report of the

teachers, and if they have a concern that they feel was ignored by SUSD leadership I bring back their worries to Superintendent Geisick and Asst. Super Moira Barker. That has been my modus operandi for the past 2 years. If a solution is found that may affect the wider teaching community I ask if the change will be okay with the teachers. Fact: I don't push. I'm not aggressive. I'm not a bully. If you had looked at the history of how I operate you will see, I have always been in lockstep with the teachers. I've been with you when you were coming out of the sunshine period - the recession - remember, when you forgo a salary increase because of the hard times and when things picked up again your salaries were not considered for an appropriate raise? This occurred back in the day when Lane Weiss was the SUSD Superintendent and yet I was there and spoke up for our teachers.

Alicia: I was also there when the teachers drew up a proposed block schedule with Principal Hamm and the idea was to present it to the trustees for approval. However, dirty politics played a role and district leadership presented something totally different to the trustees. It was a misrepresentation of everyone's advocacy. I spoke up and I said to district leadership, "What are you doing?" How is this possible that a gross and blatantly obvious misrepresentation is being portrayed, and the trustees are hearing everyone say this during the comment session emphasizing they are being misled but not one trustee on the board had the honesty to say Let's revisit this next meeting because we clearly have something wrong. This was a shameful night!

Alicia: I was there supporting our SHS teachers/staff when the teachers at the High School recently had a problem with their superintendent and their salaries. I was there and the community was there. The community is mainly SMB parents, only because music is one of the popular electives at our schools, and we are in lockstep with the teachers every step of the way. So when you say we come with tactical or abusive tactics, I don't know who is feeding you that information because this is so foreign to how we are and how the teaching community in LGSUHSD feel about us. But I do know this: the greatest strategy of a keen politician is to pit two formidable organizations against each other because they see the strength when we're together. If you fall for that after what I've told you, and you believe that still, then we have a different issue. BUT if you believe what I'm telling you, then we have to find out who that person is, and ask for accountability because I am honest to the core. I don't speak out of two sides of my mouth - I'm a straight shooter and there is no other way around it for me but straight out honesty. That's me to the core.

Any comments? Any questions?

No change of heart, no reflection?

Jen Vandenberg: I'd be more than happy to schedule a time to talk to you.

Alicia: Love to have the meeting but it has to be with all the key players present. I think I know who it is and that person / persons have to be held accountable. I cannot have leadership playing dirty. It's against my nature and I will not have anyone insinuate that SMB plays aggressive politics and is against the teachers. This is not the spirit of SMB. We are for the community and for the district. I have pride in that. And our mission is to make the music program better in our schools.

Michael Boitz: I hate to interrupt but I want to piggy back on Alicia's comments. This is my 28th year at Saratoga High. This organization is arguably the most selfless group of people and the most teacher supportive group we have on campus. When we were dealing with the high school district superintendent and the issue with raises, etc, every member of the SMB board and many SMB parents were there on behalf of and supporting the teachers. We teachers on our campus receive out of the blue baked goods and gifts of good nature from people in this room and that's not just in the music dept. It's across the board. We had some struggles with district leadership and now we have a superintendent who is fabulous, Heath, who we have known for 9 or 10 years,

and as long as Jason has been in the district and I would trust my 5 year old children with Heath and his leadership because you're always going to get the truth and the full honest truth from Heath and that's just who he is a person. And that's how Alicia rolls as well and sometimes we're going to agree and sometimes we'll disagree, but as my father says, that friction keeps us warmer.

Alicia: We need to find out what is going on. There is bad politics going on and bad information being given out. Concerningly bad.

Michael: That is just not how we roll. Greg as our principal is professional and transparent. And Heath is the same. In my 30 years as an educator - my 28th year here - we've had the privilege of working with some of the finest administrators. Greg and Heath roll that same way. We're surrounded by selfless people in this room.

Alicia: You can tell when leadership loves the school because it'll never try to divide. It will try to bring people together. I've been asking for an old fashioned meeting since June.

Michael: Sounds like there's some awareness now. I read the transcript from the meeting. I was really disappointed and disheartened with regards to the comments made towards SMB. I couldn't find anything further from the truth in terms of the accusation that was made. It was very inaccurate and I was blown away from it. I would like to know where the info is coming from as well.

Alicia: This has been going on for 2 years. I have seen the district leadership trying to hack away at the music program. Principal Hamm came up with the idea, "You can choose band, but not orchestra", meaning you can not choose both electives as your first and second choice during my first year. Then the next thing was dividing classes which would have a significant economic impact for families and SMB. When I showed the budget proposal that would be needed to compensate the lack of education due to the class division to Ken and Moira, they immediately understood the economics and the impact - it seems only money talks and paints a very clear picture apparently. But for my 2 years as president I know first hand that Isabel McPherson and Jon Jow had been talking to Hamm, sharing with him what would be beneficial to the program. I just recently learned this May through Moira Barker, that Hamm didn't ever draw up the schedules himself. Which explains why every input our music teachers offered for Hamm for scheduling fell on deaf ears. Our teachers have been continually disappointed and demoralized. It also explains Moira's sharing with me that our music teachers have never spoken up for their needs in time and now this fact explains why our teachers have been so upset for so long and they always felt they were never heard. The truth is, they were NOT heard by the people who are responsible for drawing up the schedule. Let me be very clear, the responsibility of drawing up the school schedule falls on the principal and no else. This is just negligence of leadership and abdication of his main duties. It is my opinion alone that he is the sole creator of all this chaos.

Snehali Marimuthu: There is definitely a need for a meeting. My personal point of view - last year was a tough year for all of us. There were classes that were very large in numbers - 32 or 33. And then I had one class that was 15. Our class sizes were insane bc while 15 is fine, 32 is a very large class. I don't know if you can see our #s but we have a 48 min class, I barely get to talk to 1 student per minute with 32 or 33 students in a class. So we had issues with distribution and it was a lot to do with the electives. I think all the programs are important. I don't know how you feel about Mr. Hamm, but I personally really like him. He has been listening to us, he has been listening to what we need. Some years we've had administration that is not receptive to what we say. He's much more receptive to us. There are sacrifices that were made. I think it's important to talk to the right people, but I do think that slandering Mr. Hamm is wrong.

Alicia: It is not slander. It's a fact.

Snehali Marimuthu: I don't agree with that.

Michael: Let me reframe the issue for a moment. A math teacher doesn't need to do this when you have 15 vs 30 kids in a class. But when you split a class in music, you have to change the standard. It's not the same argument. Class #s are not #s when it comes to us. We can't actually have a band concert when we don't have a band that plays together.

Ms. Marimuthu: I'm not denying your reality. Middle school has such small #s and our balances are very difficult to handle. We have 4 math teachers now and we don't have the flexibility as we get smaller, and I don't understand the economics honestly, bc Saratoga runs on basic aid meaning we run on property taxes, so we should have small class sizes. There's so much there that I don't understand and I'm not saying I'm the expert. I'm not saying music should be run this way or that way. I do know what I need as a teacher. But I think there's a balance and I don't know who decides that balance.

Alicia: Good leadership decides that balance. I never crossed that line to specify what other teachers need. That is why I asked Are the teachers happy? when Moira and Ken came back with a very workable solution Moira said, "No". Ken added "However it's still within their contract class size of 30 max". I cannot argue with that. I understand every voice is important but I do also say, since I pay property taxes that great schools benefit from smaller class sizes. That's a decision that school leadership makes, but to hold music hostage because you're having a situation you can't resolve today is wrong. The situation is easy, hire the teachers you need today and stop using declining enrollment as a justification to not act in benefit of the teachers and students.

Michael: SMB is not a parent community we want to throw under the bus like that.

Michael: Jon & Isabel. Did you ask for the comments to be made at the board meeting?

Isabel: No. But not everyone has every piece of the puzzle and that's very normal. When Jon and I communicated, there was no mention of the effect on the other teachers or making other classes more uneven. And when that came to light - I didn't know that was the case - it was a surprise. We would never say yes to making our own lives easier but to make everyone else's lives harder. We're very appreciative to this group and the support and the most we can do is to advocate for all our needs.

Alicia: And trust when you advocate that leadership is looking for a solution where everyone feels heard and respected. I'm not going to cherry coat my outreach at the next SUSD board meeting. I'm going to make clear that having a teachers union go against a non profit like SMB – doesn't sound right and it is to the detriment of the teacher's union especially if they should ever need a solid source of support. Something is very very wrong right now. And Jen I'm always accessible. You know how to reach me. All the time, at any time. Please don't slander SMB without a true understanding first. It is an attack on your own community.

Alicia: Okay. Moving on.

August Minutes Approval

(presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

Alicia: August meeting minutes were circulated over the weekend prior to the meeting. Any comments/ questions? Corrections?

Mrudula Prashant makes a motion to approve the August 2025 SMB meeting minutes, **Josh Rupert** seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Tax Filings Update for SMB

(presented by Richard Aochi)

Richard: We got the draft of the tax stuff completed and posted for Sneha and you (Alicia) to review. We have until the end of the month.

August 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.

August Balance Sheet

[August Budget vs Actual](#)

August Budget vs Actual:

[August Balance Sheet](#)

Sneha: Alicia had some questions. It's how I've entered the budget in Quickbooks and how programs are going to be under 1 umbrella so you'll see some changes. 2 or 3 more people still have to give me their budgets and we will fill in the blank as they do.

Alicia: Regarding colorguard – is that branching from the budget of the Marching Band? That is, there is no separate budget but donations are coming in from MB?

Michael: Colorguard is part of the Marching Band.

Sneha: Concert Band trip recognized income came through via a matching.

Alicia: Interesting. Corporate matching can take a long time.

Josh: Recognized income is from parents going to the SMB website?

Sneha: Yes, it is.

Sneha: Alicia, about the SMB scholarship?

Alicia: For some reason SMB has a 50k scholarship but we don't know from what time / place?

Sneha: In 2021-22, Mr. Boitz. You may have heard this in a meeting. At that time in 2021 it was changed from 5k to 50k. It says Rainy Day Fund, should we increase to 50k? And that's how it changed to 50k? So either we go into those minutes as to why it was changed. I need to get a process to bring it down.

Alicia: Wish list is seen as a rainy day fund. Scholarship is not.

Sneha: This is definitely during Dave's time but someone approved it.

Michael: It would've been pre Dave but that might have been the Spring before he started.

Alicia: We'll fix it.

Michael: Just trying to think who we can ask.

Sneha: We asked Tim. He saw it but wasn't sure how it happened.

Alicia: I was recording secretary 2021-23.

Sneha: So it was in June 2021.

Michael: Could've been program grant money.

Alicia: But it's under SMB scholarship.

Michael: I don't recall getting a donation for a scholarship or anything like that.

Alicia: Any questions/ Comments?

Sneha: There are some uncleared checks from last fiscal year. There's a list. I will coordinate with Mrs. Hasegawa because these checks can come back in 4 years and haunt us.

Alicia: Mr. Clark, you're up there. In Feb.

Sneha: Next up is August Transactions.

August Transactions

[August Transactions](#)

Transaction list 1596 - 1612 reviewed.

Alicia: If there are no questions, does anybody want to mass approval of the August Financials including transactions 1596-1612.

Mrudula Prashant makes a motion to approve August 2025 Financials & Transactions #1596-1612. **Thea Widmer** seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Parent to Shadow Donations Team Update

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes & Mrudula Prashant)

Lan Kan will be shadowing Mrudula and Tista on the Donations team.

Lan and Eva have signed up to help Tista on the Band Food meals.

Two Parents to sign up as additional Band Event Meals Organizers

SMB Domain Transfer Update

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

Alicia: Just a reminder - SMB is fully transitioning to the SMB domain. If you're not in it, get on it because you are going to be missing out.

Middle School / Elementary Liaisons - Do you need access to anything? Come reach me and talk to me. Let's get you fully on board.

SHS Hall of Fame Update

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

Alicia: Whoooo. This is a great one. Publicity - Thank you Beryl for spreading the word of the Hall of Fame. Today is the last day to get your Early Bird prices. We have an inductee among us, so we are happy to honor that inductee among others. I sent a mass mailer to current and past music families.

Any questions regarding the Hall of Fame?

There'll be choir, jazz. I think it'll be a very nice evening showcasing the best of Saratoga High School.

Michael: If you don't know Jim Axline he's the guy helping at the Pancake Breakfast. His youngest graduated in 2007 and he's still volunteering for the Pancake Breakfast and is one of SMB's greatest champions and supporters. Super super selfless generous guy.

Choir Budget Update

(Presented by Shelly Durbin & Alicia de Fuentes)

[SHS Choir Budget](#)

Alicia: Any questions or comments regarding the high school choir budget?

Richard Aochi moves to approve the Saratoga High Choir Budget as presented. **Mrudula Prashant** seconds. **Motion passes unanimously.**

SUSD Music Budget for Winter Percussion

(Presented by Jon Jow)

Josh: Can I make one comment? In the future, can we get that before the meeting?

Alicia: Yes.

Jon: Going back to the beginning of the meeting..... Just because I tend to be the type of person to think a lot before I speak about the initial half an hour of this meeting. I really appreciate everyone's support. I think to me the biggest thing that I've experienced that I feel like is lacking is all of our communications seem to be very fragmented between all the key players so I appreciate Alicia bringing up the desire to get a bunch of the key players in the room to knock through all of these concerns. Because I just remember the one year that I wasn't teaching at Redwood full time, that was the year we really pushed to get Orchestra into Redwood as an actual in-school class. And from what I was aware of, that was the last time that we really had all the folks in the

same room - district office, redwood administration, the music booster folks, music directors, and I think the HS people were involved. From what I understand, there were initial misconceptions and disagreements and we were able to hash them out all at the same time. And that would be a huge solution if not to find the perfect answer then at least people understand them. I'm not honestly sure why it hasn't happened yet because I know it has been brought up in a number of different contexts at different times but I'm appreciative that our colleagues came here for whatever reason because they thought we needed support. But I think we get support from both sides. And there's just misunderstanding on both sides because nobody is willing to get into the same room with one another to talk through concerns and to really hear things out and be willing to listen to challenges and talk through things. Anyway, that's my biggest wish - for folks to get in a room and figure out what's possible and get to the same page, whatever that solution is.

Alicia When you have a Teacher's Union President speak in a formal SUSD Board Meeting it is my understanding that she's speaking on behalf of the body she represents and I would expect she would be speaking with first hand knowledge of things and with the blessing of all her teachers. She did not say, "I'm saying this just for myself" which would have had a different weight in my books. She did not make that clarification. So when a body pushes against an organization with such certainty then it is evident that someone is feeding her the wrong information. I invited all key players to come and meet the very next day after the public slander, the date of my email June 5th, because responsible leadership awards leading figures the opportunity to clear up any false assumptions in a private and respectful nature instead of playing it out in a public space. It was and still is my intention to reveal where this misinformation is coming from and ensure appropriate actions are taken.

Jon Jow: Regardless, we're appreciative of the support and like I said, if we can just bring everyone into the same room like we did with bringing Orchestra into the school day, clear the air and get on the right path together. It's rarely going to be the perfect solution but we'll all be on the same page.

Alicia: Sometimes the journey is rocky but as the sails adjust we will navigate to smoother waters. We'll work together as a team but we must all do so honestly.

Isabel: We didn't ask them to come. We had a union meeting earlier and it didn't come up at all.

Jon: I'm appreciative more people are willing to come into the same space.

Alicia: I invite everyone to attend our SMB meetings. I invited Heath. I have no issues with openness and transparency, we have zero secrets in our meetings and that is why we are a solid booster organization.

Joyce: I wish I had said this earlier but as a parent with 3 kids, I'm not paid to be here because I want to be here. I've been part of the PTA and many different communities, but I'm staying away from them by choice. But this group just keeps me coming back and keeps me wanting to help more and more for a reason. Sincerely I vouch for Alicia - for her character, for what she stands for. That's why I respect her. Thank you for speaking up for us and doing it so well. Alicia, you have my support.

Josh: If I had known they were not formally invited for comments, I would've said something. They seemed very combative and I didn't appreciate the tone.

Alicia: And that's okay. Because they heard something they didn't know. It's about the pieces of the puzzle. This can only be resolved the way I proposed. Let's get everyone to the table. This didn't have to explode the way it did.

Jon: Let's get back to the budget. For Winter Percussion, Mr. Clark has been super helpful. This is the Winter Percussion budget we're proposing. We'll have students show up between now and

next meeting so we'll have a better idea of # students participating. This is unexplored territory for me. There are some additional instructional costs, competition costs, etc.

[RMS Winter Percussion Budget](#)

Sean Clark: This is the 1st time RMS is doing this. So there will be some questions that we need to answer. All these things are uncharted territory, luckily we have great instructors there. But I don't even know what our teacher situation is. We might need to share some items between Saratoga High and RMS. This budget is as close as we can make work for now. I think it'll be really awesome for them to compete and having siblings supporting them at a competition and I think that'll be a game changer for our students. I'm saying there's a lot of factors, we're reimagining this program to make things work and not ask for a lot of \$ from the students.

Alicia: I'm positive the experience you fine educators have in teaching and presenting a class act in the high school will translate to RMS as well.

Alicia: Let's let this circulate for the month and vote next month?

Sean Clark: I'm sure there'll be another round of this.

SUSD Field Trip Budget

(Presented by Jon Jow & Isabel McPherson)

[RMS Symphony Trip Budget](#)

[RMS SoCal Trip Budget](#)

[RMS Orchestra ASTA Trip Budget](#)

Alicia: We will circulate these final budgets via e-vote. Recording secretaries, you will be getting your first e-vote.

Jon: We will try to get those budgets done shortly.

Michael: Another big round of applause for Isabel because you had to apply, and make recordings to get into ASTA, and they have to accept you as a middle school. Last year was the 1st year SHS was accepted to attend and I was super nervous about getting accepted because in the HS competitive division it's uber competitive. The notion that our Middle School got in is pretty herculean, pretty awesome, thanks to Ms. McPherson. So, congratulations!

Recruiting Shadow Student Webmasters Update

(Presented by Alicia de Fuentes)

Alicia: Oliver, do you have an update for us?

Oliver: We have one applicant that we will take on for this semester, but they are a junior. Next semester we will try to recruit a sophomore so we will have more than 1.

Cookie Dough Fundraiser

(Presented by Lily Chow)

Lily: Proposed roll out is Monday, 10/15. Oliver will update the webstore. Tina & I have finalized list of items so by late Monday/early Tuesday we will have order sheets out to the Directors. Kick off sales by Wednesday, October 17th.

Following the same time line as previous years, sales end Sunday Nov 2nd so we always have an extra week to extend sales. Distribution day will follow the same pattern as last year - Friday, November 14th. This will give us the week after to work out any issues or problems for distribution.

Prices have remained the same but cheesecakes will be \$30 but cookie dough will remain \$25. Every year we try to bring in something new, so this year, we have some new flavors for cheesecake - green tea and yuzu.

Directors' Reports

Alicia: Before I start with the music directors, I do want to leave some space for comments. Do you (Heath) have anything you would like to say??

Heath: Just thank you all. The amount of time, energy, effort that you all sacrifice to be here is great. I'm happy to be here to learn all about the great things you do for our students is great.

Isabel McPherson

Isabel: Hello! It's September! So I will go from the bottom up of everything. In 5th grade, we're almost done with the instrument trials and kids will be getting their instruments in 2 weeks. They're clearly very excited. Some kid was talking to me about how much the instruments cost and he asked, "How much money did YOU spend on the instruments?". I said, "Well, I didn't spend anything - I don't have money to buy instruments." Then he went around telling everybody that instruments cost \$50,000 or something. But it's nice to see the appreciation and awareness that they're valuable.

At Redwood, coaching started today - Mr. Shaw came to work with basses. More coaches will be coming soon. Dr. Lynn's coming next week and we're getting set up with upper string coaches. We all have instruments now. It makes a difference that kids have a background on instruments from 5th grade. Intermediate is a lot of fun because we're finally back in the same room. This intermediate class is 50 kids so we have to run things a little differently. For Advanced and Chamber, we're gearing up for ASTA. After the December concert we won't have a lot of time and we basically have Jan + a week and ASTA is the week we come back from February break. So we're trying to get everything performance ready ahead of time. I've been ambitious with the set list because they have longer to prepare it, and we have varying levels of skills in those classes so we're able to handle that. I told the kids our goal is to be OUR best. We can't control other schools, we can only control our own preparation for this. So if you feel like you did your best job, the results don't matter so much. That being said, I was part of a competitive marching band for a number of years so I am a competitive person. It'll be a long lead up to this but I hope it will pay off and I'm very motivated to get things done to a higher level than normal. Feeling fired up.

Jon Jow

Jon: On the band side, classes are finally settling in. Advanced band's first performance will be on Friday 26th with SHS at the football game. We're getting all that music ready to go. Intermediate Band we're working in our 2nd year band books for the most part. We're working on some band pieces I have found over the summer. We're hoping to get sheet music soon. Beginning Band classes have completed their mouthpiece trials and are starting on their instruments this week.

This is an exciting, a chaotic, very loud week. We had some coaches come in last week and more will be coming next week. CG just had their first 3 meetings. We're letting the rosters settle a bit. We've had 15-20 students each morning so far. This morning we had 21 students. We're hoping to get a little more. Really excited to get an early start to their competitive season in the Spring. I've already talked about field trips so we're excited to get a head start on that as well. A side collaboration with SHS, our MESH leads are coming over tomorrow and band MESH leads are coming in a couple of weeks to talk about the program. This year the band MESH kids are very ambitious and coming during Marching season and want to get a head start. We're grateful to the MESH leadership and MESH mentors are interested in mentoring students again. We hopefully have more updates on that soon.

Alicia: I'm certain the kids that sign up for MESH remember the strong bonds they have in High School from Middle School. They just want to give back. Let's continue that support 100%. It creates such strong bonds and is generous of the kids.

Jon: I think there's some interest from Colorguard members in joining MESH as well to mentor. Hopefully we'll start that soon. Really great stuff.

- Classes have finally settled and we are off to a great start. Advanced Band is hard at working preparing music to join SHS at the football game on Friday, 9/26. Intermediate Band is making progress in our second year band books. We will be having students vote on some music options that they are interested in performing later in the year.
- Beginning Band classes have completed their mouthpiece trials, received their instrument assignments, and are just getting started on their instruments this week! The next few upcoming days will be dedicated toward correct and safe equipment assembly and handling, as well as mouthpiece/tone production. Our coaches will start coming in to work with them next week as well.
- Color guard has had their first three meetings and is awaiting their roster to settle. We have had between 15-20 students each meeting, and are working to recruit a few more participants over the next couple of weeks.
- The SHS MESH leads have already started scheduling times to come over to our classes to present and recruit for this year's MESH program. We're very grateful for their interest, service, and leadership in enriching the music experience of our own students' music education for another year.
- We have our (approximate) final numbers for both our Symphony Field Trip as well as our SoCal trip! We will now begin the next phases of fundraising and finalizing paperwork.

Jemal Ramirez

Jemal: So this year, my assignment at Redwood's a little different. I'm teaching with Mr. Jow again and I don't know if Mr. Jow already gave you the #s on that. But it's like 70 in Advanced Band and 70 in Intermediate band. And then Choir, my 3rd class. In choir, I've been taking a slower pace. I'm not in a rush to teach them things by rote as much as I did last year. I spend a little more time with hand signs, solfege and try to connect that to the written paper. And doing a scaffolded testing - rhythm test, chanting with the rhythm, adding the pitches. I don't know how much you know about choir music, but it could be so much easier to read. Giving a kid who has nearly no experience reading music, a score that sometimes not only has their part, 2-3 parts, but the piano part the percussion part, and for them to weed through all that music - we don't ask that of the violinists. When we give a violinist their music, it doesn't have the cello part, the bass part. It does not help a young choir musician when their eyes have to go to a specific place on the score. Trying to break that down to something that a 6th grader who has never read music before is challenging. We know they can sing because they've been using their voices since probably 1st or 2nd grade. Choir music can be taught through rote but to bring music literacy into their lives is important for

me. I've had a few years teaching choir now and there's always pushback from the kids but I feel like now, this being the 3rd year I've been managing that class, I feel like I've been getting more buy in. So I'm taking my time. We haven't really sung anything by rote yet. I'm going to stretch it as long as I can because I feel like it will pay dividends in the long run.

Sean Clark

Sean: I'll start us off. All this talk about MESH reminded me that about a year ago we had a service project from a couple of percussion students and with Redwood having a Winter Percussion and A class, there's a need for more people to teach our students. I think a lot of students actually want to help. So they had an idea of how we can create this way for students to volunteer at the Middle School and with A Class which a lot of students already have done. When our A class rehearses a lot of juniors and seniors will volunteer their time just to help our staff members. So we are launching a program called TAPS which are like small notes in percussion - it stands for Teaching & Advancing Percussion at Saratoga High. So we're kind of stealing the MESH idea but it's cool because it opens up an opportunity for our students to help any of the percussionists through 6th through 12th. What's cool is they can volunteer in a bunch of different ways. If they want to help design music or choreography or visuals, they can choose to shadow any of our staff members and designers that are all in house through the high school and junior high. Social media is really big - we have lots of representation for World Class but a lot of representation in A class or middle school, so just to have kids doing that - make that graphic, or if they want to teach rehearsals or stuff like that. The kids took my comments and made it their own. We're excited to have the students help the Middle School and be seen as the "teachers". On the other end of Percussion, we have been teaching fundamentals and Chavy and I have been honing in and hit the reset button on some fundamentals. We're building a curriculum book and it's getting bigger by the day to standardize the curriculum and maybe that makes its way to Redwood. We're starting percussion ensemble in a couple of weeks.

Winter Percussion is planned and we're way ahead and we just finished the Marching Band design so started writing for A class.

Marching Band has been full steam ahead in rehearsing and we're gearing up for the football game on Friday. This is the 1st year we're using props and the props are finished and Vrinda has volunteered to grab a truck and bring it here from Modesto. We're excited to integrate the props and the moving pieces and all the puzzle pieces and logistics that come with it.

The Marching Band and the culture and the work ethic of students has been very positive. This is my 8th year and the MB culture and the work ethic of the students has evolved since I've been here. There's a really big positive energy from the students. The student leadership is killing it and every day that is a highlight of working with the Marching Band. I'm excited to see where they take everything. The show's really fun, please come check out the performance.

Shelley Durbin

Shelley: Hello! I'll start with the choir. We have such really exceptional choir leadership. They are so strong as leadership that I think they would do it without me. I think they would and could but I think we have a great relationship and they come to everything with ideas and I love that. We have leadership meetings regularly and they are very thoughtful and reflective. It's very neat as they planned all the retreat activities and it really was a collaboration. I had to ask, "is there anyway I can help you?". I love it because when we had our leadership meeting yesterday, they sat down and said, "Shall we have a debrief about the retreat? Shall we have a reflection period?" which is so adult and mature. There's an acapella club - the point is that they don't just live within the boundaries of the class, they're thinking on their own. As far as things that are hot off the presses,

we're in the midst of honor choir audition season and we have a number of students doing the Coastal Honor Choir and you have to do that to make it to the next level of All State. We have some 9th graders participating in the Bay Section Honor Choir. This is the time when I offer some help after school, during lunch, tutorial, etc. We'll have a small group performing at the Hall of Fame. Our 1st formal performance will be on October 7th and it's a collaborative concert with 3 other high schools with great choirs at Mountain View HS.

With Orchestra, I want to say during the retreat on Friday and Saturday.

One of the things that is indicative of a strong music program is the philosophy of how music is taught is very unified here. So any of us could take a class and the class runs, and it's not dependent on the teacher. It's not a cult of personality. It's the Saratoga way. So I want to say Thank you to Mike because he had the mass orchestra class while I was being a point person for Choir but then I can come back in and it's like I never left. The kids are respectful and I think that's a great barometer - the students have a very consistent manner of how they learn. We've had coaches come in 6th and 4th period last week and this week so they're getting very specific information. For a public school, every child is going to get for example viola specific instruction. Through this, this is a great way to provide equity to these students so they all have the same advantages. And other voices reinforcing what we're saying. I love their rehearsal manners and we also have great leadership - orchestra leaders can be counted on. In my class, I'm already working on players as conductors. Any time I can, I back off the podium and let a kid lead a scale. There's a lot of democracy there. I'm having a great time and I love working with them.

Michael: Having Shelley is like completing the dream team. What she just said about having students lead the choral or the scale is like she's finishing our sentences. We have the same philosophy, when the students are able to have ownership, they take pride and they grow in confidence from that. It's a little messier sometimes, it's a little riskier sometimes, but as musicians and more important as human beings. This is how in an atmosphere where all unhappiness is caused by comparison we always say to the kids and we're always comparing ourselves bc it's a high achieving campus but this is a place where everyone can be a leader and there's a place for every person in that circumstance. We just finished our retreat and we had our orchestra placements which went longer than I wanted but it's a great problem to have. We have so many kids at SHS so sometimes it takes a little longer to get through everything. But along with that same philosophy, we do three different seating charts in each of our orchestras at the high school. So the kids will be in an A seating chart, a B, and a C seating chart. And so I play 1st violin on 1 piece and 2nd violin on another which is in line with how the National Youth Orchestra does it - the top kids in the country up to age 18. They do the same sort of thing where we had the concertmaster of that group one year and she sat as concertmaster for the 2nd half of the concert and then sat in the back of the 2nds for the 1st half. So the philosophy is empowerment of the kids and empowerment of the students. The theme seems to be student leadership tonight and I'm going to echo that. At the retreat, I was talking with a couple of parent chaperones. All of a sudden, one of the head managers grabs a microphone and instructs the kids, "it's time to start cleaning up". I didn't even get a chance to say that - I didn't have to because this is how we roll. I was so proud at that moment and some freshman parents were really complimenting the behavior of the kids, saying how polite they are. I thought they'd better be because if they're not, then you need to look in the mirror because that's the teacher's fault. And it's a big compliment when your kids are that way because it means that they care about the right kind of things. And as a partnership with parents and teachers and the educational community, it's really cool when people go out of their way to make that kind of comment because that's really what we're all about.

This week: we had Scott Lang here yesterday for the band kids for us. We bring Scott in pretty often - almost every year, but not quite every year. He challenges the kids in their existence as an individual within an ensemble, but more importantly, he challenges them to question, "if I could have done something this well the first time, why did it take me three or four times?" And that's sort of a perpetual parent question that when we know the potential of our kids and we know what they're capable of. Scott comes in as and I don't know how else to say it, but he's sometimes kind of a professional mirror holder upper. And basically, the kids start to really like what they see in the

mirror and they start to realize, I am capable of X or Y and that can be transferred to everything in life. You would be shocked that they really are listening and they really are hearing. And as parents, you would be shocked at how often they quote you and how often they brag about mom and dad. And it's vice versa when we sometimes say to a father about his son, I'll say really nice compliments about what I witnessed and the parent will look at me like I'm insane. We're both on the same trajectory to get our kids to feel really confident about themselves and grow with them. It's great that music is the avenue but it really ultimately could be any avenue.

We're so grateful that you as parents volunteer to help our program, to help our school, and to help our kids grow. We can't do the things we do without your help. It simply doesn't happen. But a bigger part of that philosophy is we never want you to feel as parents you have to come in and run something. I feel as parents your job is to support your kids and cheer for them and watch their game and watch their concert and lend a hand when you know when hands are needed. I feel horrible for Alicia feeling like she has to take on a battle that she shouldn't have to take on. And we would never blindsides our principal or superintendent with something. I feel I'm having to defend Alicia as I know her so well and I know this group so well and I'm so proud of its existence. Please don't feel like you ever have to do that. If there's ever a question or ever a problem, you just come right to the teacher and we want to be the ones to help solve it. Like, we'll work with our admin because our admin - they're awesome. They're super reasonable and if we ask something ridiculous they're going to tell us we are asking something ridiculous and we respect and appreciate that. So please don't feel like that this is a common thing because this isn't. It's a one off - we don't want anybody to worry about that.

Alicia: Yeah, it's not a common thing, but again, I think it would have been nice to have people in positions of leadership ask questions before throwing anybody under the bus. Any other comments/ questions?

Meeting adjourned 9:06pm

Summary of Motions

Approval of August SMB Meeting Minutes	Mrudula Prashant moves, Josh Rupert seconds, motion carries
Approval of August 2025 Financials & Transactions 1596-1612 .	Mrudula Prashant moves Thea Widmer seconds, motion carries
Approval of Saratoga High Choir Budget	Richard Aochi moves, Mrudula Prashant seconds, motion carries

Addenda

E-vote results to approve **RMS ASTA Budget**:

NAME	VOTE (HIDDEN)
Beryl Liu	Makes Motion (YES)
Joyce Koh-Fernandez	Seconded (YES)
Dongni Chen	
Alicia de Fuentes (E)	
Vrinda Gopal	
Tista Kapoor (E)	
Sneha Melkote (E)	
Tina Pao (E)	
Mrudula Prashant (E)	
Dorothea Widmer	
Joshua Zhang	
Total number of votes	11

# Exec Board Members YES Votes	5
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Total # YES Votes	11
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Total # NO Votes	0
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The ASTA budget has been approved by the SMB by a vote of 11-0 with 5 executive board members voting a YES.

E-vote results to approve **RMS Orchestra Budget**:

NAME	VOTE (HIDDEN)
Beryl Liu	Makes Motion (YES)
Joyce Koh-Fernandez	Seconded (YES)
Alicia de Fuentes	
Josh Rupert	
Jiyeon Hwang	
Sneha Melkote	

Srividhya Balakrishnan	
Mrudula Prashant	
Richard Aochi	
Tista Kapoor	
Total number of votes	10

# Exec Board Members YES Votes	6
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Total # YES Votes	10
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Total # NO Votes	0
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E-vote results to approve **RMS 2026 SF Symphony Trip:**

NAME	VOTE (HIDDEN)
Beryl Liu	Makes Motion (YES)
Joyce Koh-Fernandez	Seconded (YES)
Alicia de Fuentes	
Josh Rupert	
Jiyoon Hwang	
Sneha Melkote	
Srividhya Balakrishnan	
Mrudula Prashant	
Richard Aochi	
Tista Kapoor	
Total number of votes	10

# Exec Board Members YES Votes	6
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Total # YES Votes	10
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Total # NO Votes	0
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E-vote results to approve **RMS 2026 SoCal Trip:**

NAME	VOTE (HIDDEN)
Beryl Liu	Makes Motion (YES)
Joyce Koh-Fernandez	Seconded (YES)
Alicia de Fuentes	
Josh Rupert	

Jiyoon Hwang	
Sneha Melkote	
Srividhya Balakrishnan	
Mrudula Prashant	
Richard Aochi	
Tista Kapoor	
Total number of votes	10

# Exec Board Members YES Votes	6
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Total # YES Votes	10
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Total # NO Votes	0
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The 3 RMS budgets (RMS Orchestra, RMS 2026 SF Symphony trip & RMS 2026 SoCal trip) were approved by SMB by a vote of 10-0 with 6 executive board members voting a YES.

Sri Balakrishnan / Tina Pao
Co-Recording Secretaries