Vancouver Master Chorale
Board of Directors Meeting
13 August 2026

Members Present: Lula Hiigel, Philip Denton, Valerie Winkle, Andrew McCaffrey, Mark Congdon, Susan Pautz, Tom Paulu, Jonathan Bowman, Dennis Haberkamp, Robin Patton, Robert Eddy
Members Absent: None
Guests: Dan Warner, Beverly Rice, Jaz Bielby

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM.

The minutes from the June 6 board meeting were presented for review and approval. It was pointed out that Robin was inadvertently left off from the list of attendees. This will be corrected.

A motion to approve the minutes from the April 14 board meeting as amended was made by Lula Hiigel and seconded by Dennis Haberkamp. Motion passed.

The agenda for tonight's meeting was presented for approval.

A motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting was made by Lula Hiigel and seconded by Dennis Haberkamp. Motion passed.

<u>Director's Report</u> (Philip Denton)

Philip gave his report remotely since he was attending an off-site rehearsal and was not able to attend the meeting in person. He reported that he is excited about the upcoming season. There will be three main concerts including:

1. **December 5-6: The Most Wonderful Time.** Featuring Daniel Pinkham's Christmas Cantata, with brass. Christmas old and Christmas new, with music that takes us on a journey of love and connection. Old familiar songs, traditional songs seen in new ways and brand new music not yet recorded, to cheer the spirit for the winter holiday season.
2. **March 20-21: Imaginary Creatures.** A family-oriented show for the kids, designed to attract new audience members, featuring "The Reluctant Dragon" by John Rutter, a small operetta with orchestra, costumes and staging. We'll also sing about animals, trains, boats and imaginary creatures, and teach about how a choir works.
3. **June 5-6: A Lovely Day.** Pop and musical theater music to take us on a journey of self-discovery. Twisting and turning from the dreams of youth though the hardships of adulthood, to the job of moving forward with those we love, these concerts will be filled with deep and meaningful songs.

Philip stated that links to rehearsal videos and audio tracks will be posted on the members' website shortly.

Jumpstart rehearsals will be conducted differently this year than in past years. Instead of sectionals, the entire chorale will rehearse together in the sanctuary and a clinician will be in attendance to provide critiques and guidance to the chorale members. The clinicians will include Dr. Jake Funk, Director of Choirs, Clark College, Dr. Danielle Warner, Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities, George Fox University, and Dr. Scott Toomey from Forest Grove.

Auditions for new chorale members will begin on August 17. There are currently 12 singers who will be auditioning: 4 sopranos, 4 altos, 2 tenors, and 2 basses. As soon as the auditions are complete and the choir membership is set, Philip will update the email and section lists.

Starting this year, the first rehearsal of each month will begin at 6:00 PM rather than 6:30 PM. This will enable extended break periods in those weeks. The breaks will be 30 minutes in length, with the various choral sections providing hospitality snack items on a rotating schedule. The intent is to facilitate increased socializing between chorale members.

Treasurer's Report (Andrew McCaffrey)

Since there wasn't a Board meeting in July, Andrew presented the fiscal year-end financial report, including June and July figures. In summary, the VMC ended the 2025-26 fiscal year, which ended June 30, with total assets amounting to $113.6K ($64.9K in cash plus $48.7K in investments). Investment income (dividends) for the year totaled $2.9K. Net change in value over last fiscal year was $5,972.

Total income for the year available for operations was $91.9K ($120.9K total income minus $29K in restricted income consisting of the Cowlitz grant of $25K and funds restricted for the youth scholarship program of $4K). Total expenses for the year amounted to $86.9K resulting in an operational surplus of $5.1K, which was better than the estimated surplus reflected in the budget by $3.9K. Ticket income for the year totaled $38.7K. All of these totals were closely in line with budget expectations and there were no significant surprises.

Beginning with the July financial reports, Andrew has transitioned to using QuickBooks Online as the chorale's financial recording and reporting tool. Total assets for the month amounted to $112.7K ($63.9K in cash and $48.8K in investments). Income ($2,746) minus expenses ($3,790) resulted in a net operating loss of -$1,044 for the month, which is typical of preseason spending.

FY 2026-27 Budget (Andrew McCaaffrey)

Andrew presented the FY 2026-27 Budget to the Board for consideration and approval. The budget, as presented, is a balanced budget. He pointed out that expected expenses are predictable while expected income is less predictable. The biggest unknown is ticket income for the March concert, which will use a new pay-what-you-can model. The income reflected in the budget for the March concert is 60% of the amount earned at last March's concert. This will be offset by funds received in the Cowlitz grant. Income for the December and June concerts reflect expected increases of 7.5% over last year's amounts.

Discussion by Board members resulted in general agreement that the 60% estimate for the March concert income was reasonable and realistic. The online ticket portal will likely include a "suggested" ticket price and may also display a range of ticket prices for attendees to pay what they can (less or more than the suggested amount) based on their ability. It was recognized that

this is a pilot plan and we will closely track the results to see how it goes. In any case, it was generally felt that this model should generate significant good will among concert attendees.

Income assumptions in the budget include $36K (ticket sales), $21.7 (donations), $14K (member dues based on 85 singers), and $2K (other revenue, such as raffle receipts, etc.). Other potential revenue sources would include any new grants we receive. The Cowlitz grant is the only one currently in the budget.

Expense assumptions include $54.1K (increased Artistic Director compensation and outside musician costs, music scores and licensing), $24.4K (concert and event costs, including costumes and microphone rental for the March concert, printed program costs, venue costs, and recording/production costs), $10.3K (advertising and development costs), $10.3K (organizational support), and $3.6K (general operations, fees, and compliance costs).

Further discussion disclosed that the Artistic Director compensation of $11.7K is based on an increased compensation of $3K per concert, plus a potential year-end supplement of $1.5K dependent on VMC financial standing at the end of the season and subject to Board approval, and $1.2K to be spent at the Artistic Director's discretion to compensate for 2 days of outreach activity, if performed, including travel expenses and any necessary compensation to substitute teachers.

After conclusion of the budget discussion, questions and answers, approval of the budget was voted on.

A motion to approve the VMC FY 2026-27 Budget as presented was made by Lula Hiigel and seconded by Jonathan Bowman. Motion passed.

<u>Rental Agreement with First Presbyterian Church</u> (Dennis Haberkamp)

The new rental agreement with First Presbyterian Church for the 2026-27 season was reviewed by Dennis Haberkamp. The agreement, which needs to be approved by the Board, is similar to previous agreements with a few exceptions. The charge for using the sanctuary projection system during dress rehearsals and concert performances has been raised to $75 per night. The fee for the riser storage room, which has remained constant since 2015, was raised to $1200 per year. There was discussion regarding the usage fee for the sanctuary sound system ($100 per rehearsal and performance, if used). It was recognized that VMC typically provides their own sound equipment and will likely never use the church's sound equipment since it is not suitable for our needs.

A motion to approves the Rental Agreement between VMC and First Presbyterian Church for the 2026-27 season as presented was made by Lula Hiigel and seconded by Jonathan Bowman. Motion passed.

<u>VMC Three-Year Strategic Plan</u> (Lula Hiigel)

The VMC Three-Year Strategic Plan, which had been submitted to the Board members for review prior to the meeting, was reviewed in detail by Lula Hiigel. Lula reported that the plan is the result of a multi-month effort by the Strategic Planning Committee, which was comprised of 8 members drawn from the Board, various standing committees, and the general chorale membership: Robin Patton, Andrew McCaffrey, Cherie Kearney, Doug Friend, Philip Denton, Lula Hiigel, Tom Paulu, and Susan Pautz.

She reviewed the methodology and approach that was followed in creating the plan. The methodology consisted of assembling the committee, listening to feedback from chorale members, defining a new draft mission, vision, and values statement, setting three-year priorities and goals, drafting detailed priorities, action plans, and timeline goals, and finalizing the plan for presentation to the Board.

The mission, vision, and values statement was intended to define what we do, how we see our place in the community, what we see as our organizational role, and what our values are. The final statement reads as follows:

Mission: We perform and promote choral music to inspire, uplift, and connect community.

Vision: We are a community shaped by the beauty of shared song, where all people experience belonging, joy, and deeper connection with one another.

Values:

Artistry: We pursue musical excellence with passion and discipline.

Connection: We believe music connects all generations and cultures.

Belonging: We welcome singers and audiences of all ages and backgrounds and nurture an atmosphere that gives everybody the understanding that they are included and understood.

Creativity: We present a wide range of musical styles and traditions from classical to contemporary. Our concerts delight, move, and educate.

Five strategic Priorities were defined which reinforce one another along with the team that focused on each priority. Lula discussed each priority in detail. Answering questions as they arose.

1. **Choral Excellence** (Philip)

   Goal: Build confident, stylistically aware, increasingly independent singers.
   a. Improve Music Reading Skills
   b. Improve Ability to Sing in Appropriate Style with Intent and Consistency
   c. Increased Musical Independence for Choir Members

2. **Audience Growth, Diversity & Community Visibility** (Tom, Robin, Cherie)

   Goal: Increase average audience attendance by 50% over the 2025-26 baseline by broadening community reach.
   a. Increase average audience attendance by 50% over the 2025-2026 baseline through a coordinated marketing strategy.
   b. Increase community awareness of the VMC through an outreach strategy directed toward new and diverse audiences.

3. **Sustainable Financial Growth** (Andrew, Cherie)

   Goal: Create disciplined financial foundations and manageable, diversified revenue.
   a. Establish a reserve, cash management, and investment policy.
   b. Develop and implement a rolling three-year financial planning process.

c. Identify and develop manageable diversified revenue sources.

4. **Organizational Structure & Governance** (Lula, Robin, Mark)

   Goal: Build volunteer capacity, operational continuity, leadership support, and better collaboration.
   a. Establish volunteer recruitment, onboarding, and leadership succession processes.
   b. Strengthen committees' effectiveness, accountability, and operational continuity.
   c. Develop VMC's ability to financially support key leadership positions.
   d. Utilize available technologies to streamline communication and collaboration.

5. **Membership Recruitment & Nurturing** (Susan, Doug)

   Goal: Maintain an artistically appropriate section blend while strengthening feedback, connection, and welcome.
   a. Reach the optimal number and blend of singers.
   b. Develop and implement annual member feedback survey.
   c. Improve opportunities for singers to socialize.
   d. Establish a more welcoming approach to new singers.

Some minor changes were suggested for further refinement by the Board members, but nothing major. Lula finished her presentation by discussing how we will measure success in each of the priority areas. After discussion, questions and answers, the plan was voted on by the Board.

A motion to approve the 2026 VMC Three-Year Strategic Plan as presented was made by Lula Hiigel and seconded by (unintelligible). Motion passed.

Lula announced the soft launch of the GoogleChat application for Board and committee communications (chat.google.com/app/home). This application will create a centralized messaging platform for everyone to see what conversations are happening and have quick back-and-forth interactions outside of existing email threads. The discussions on GoogleChat will be searchable, can be accessed via computers or smart phones. She expects the official rollout of the application by next Board meeting.

<u>Other Committee Reports:</u>

Development:

Dennis Haberkamp reported that two grant applications are in work at present.

- The ArtsFund Accelerator Grant application is due in a week and the committee is almost ready to submit it.
- The Inspire Vancouver Grant application is being worked on and will need to be submitted by Sept. 10.

The committee is also considering other grants. Having the approved Strategic Plan will be very helpful in preparing these future grant applications.

Concerts:

Valerie Winkle reported that she will be recruiting 2 or 3 new committee members for the upcoming season to help with "day of" and concert preparation work for the committee.

Membership:

Susan Pautz reported that 12 singers will be auditioning for the chorale on Monday – 4 sopranos, 4 altos, 2 tenors, and 2 basses.

She also reported that newly revised membership rules are being finalized which will become part of the chorale membership commitment agreement. The Board will have a chance to review the new rules before they are published.

Marketing:

Tom Paulu reported that publicity efforts for the chorale are going well. He is looking into finding a local printer to use for printing programs, etc. in the new season.

He also reported that an advertisement for the VMC will be placed in the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra fall programs. In return, we will be running an ad for them in our programs.

He recently met with the coordinator at All Classical Radio in Portland concerning their "Thursdays @ Three" program, which features live, in-studio concert broadcasts, showcasing local and visiting musicians. We are hoping to set up an invitation to perform on the program in the new year (perhaps in March).

He has also met with April Duvic, artistic director of the Reprise Choir in Vancouver, regarding the possibility of a program advertisement exchange between our two organizations for future events.

Technology:

Mark Congdon reported that he will review access to the Board web pages for all committees and will send the audit to the Board and pertinent committee chairs for review and approval.

He asked that when materials are submitted to him for inclusion on the web site, they include a due date, so he can more efficiently get the web site updated.

He would like to restrict those who are authorized to send "all-choir" emails, primarily to avoid the possibility of spam emails. He would like to initially limit the authority solely to Board members.

A motion to limit the authority to send "all-choir" emails to Board members only was made by Mark Congdon. The motion was seconded by Lula Hiigel. Motion passed.

The next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 8, from 6-8 PM. Going forward, it was suggested that Board meetings typically be scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month.

A motion to schedule future Board meetings on the second Tuesday of each month, from 6-8 PM, starting with the September 8 meeting, was made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Eddy
Secretary, Vancouver Master Chorale