



American Harp Society Annual Membership Meeting
Official Minutes
June 22, 2025, 3:30 PM EDT
Zoom Video Conference

I. Welcome

AHS President Chilali Hugo welcomed all online to the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting and invited members to join AHS in Toronto in 2026 for One Harp World, the international conference shared with the World Harp Congress. In anticipation of the event where attendees will hear Canadian music from Canadian artists, President Hugo introduced A Canadian Preview with Chairman Angela Schwarzkopf performing *Castles in the Sand*, a composition for harp by Canadian composer, Kevin Lau.

II. Items for Action

Approval of the Minutes of the 2024 American Harp Society Annual Membership Meeting as published in *The American Harp Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 4, Winter 2025, pages 61-63. The Minutes were approved by voting within the chat.

Note: In the meeting presentation, AHJ Winter 2024 issue was mistakenly referenced as the location of the minutes instead of AHJ Winter 2025.

III. Items for Information

A. Report of the Treasurer

Jeremy Chesman

Treasurer Jeremy Chesman reported that the AHS fund balances are strong and that the Society is able to meet its financial obligations for the coming year. The balance in the Society's investment accounts, including the Cash Reserve Fund, the Funds Functioning as Endowment (FFE), and the Ruth Wickersham Papalia fund are \$627,172.42. The balance in the checking account is \$15,212.12, and total assets equal \$642,384.54.

Mr. Chesman also reported that the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors determined that an external audit of the Financials was in order this past year, as these are undertaken every few years. Fontana CPA's were hired and acknowledged that AHS' records are well kept and there are no operational concerns. The auditors offered a few suggestions on ways to improve controls, which are currently underway.

Mr. Chesman referenced the Taylor Swift Sweepstakes fundraiser that took place this past year and introduced that there will be another (more harp-themed) sweepstakes that is slated for this year to raise funds for supporting programs and AHS member harpists.

B. Membership Report

Kathryn McManus

Executive Director Kathryn McManus reported there are currently 2,598 active AHS members. Ms. McManus noted that International members can now join at the regular rate and therefore are no longer differentiated in the member statistics. Ms. McManus reminded members that there are group memberships available including studio and student memberships. Group memberships can provide good value to enable more people in a Chapter or studio to be more involved in AHS programs. It is also a great opportunity for teachers in school programs to access the resources of AHS for their students.

Ms. McManus reported there were a few Chapter changes this year. The New Jersey Chapter is now known as the North Jersey Harp Chapter, and the Tulsa and Oklahoma City Chapters merged to form the Oklahoma Harp Society.

Ms. McManus reminded members to visit www.harpsociety.org in order to:

- Learn about AHS benefits & programs
- Find a chapter to join
- Log in for special members-only content, profile updates, and more!
- Choose a \$5 discount for digital delivery only of the American Harp Journal
- International members, when renewing or joining, will pay the standard regular or student rate

C. Marketing and Communications Report

Allison Volk

Allison Volk, Marketing and Communications Manager runs the newsletters, social media and responds to emails at Socialmediamanager@harpsociety.org.

Ms. Volk reported increasing newsletter open rates at 74.5% indicating high member interest. The newsletter contains information and stories including interviews with Board members, competition winners and the Concert Artist, in addition to upcoming events, Chapter spotlights and information just for fun including harp spotting, in which members send in photos and stories of finding harps in unlikely places around the world.

Ms. Volk reports Social media presence has increased on Facebook and Instagram and reminded members to tag AHS on Chapter events and other harp community news. Ms. Volk thanked all who participated in the successful fundraising sweepstakes last year in which the winner received two tickets to the Taylor Swift Eras tour. The sweepstakes was a new idea that raised over \$40,000. Chapters received benefits from the fundraiser--20% of funds raised by each chapter was shared with the chapter. Ms. Volk thanked all who participated and advised that there will be another fundraising sweepstakes in 2025 offering a dream trip to Ireland with a harp component. Chapters will again have the opportunity to earn back a portion of the funds that they are able to raise.

D. Board of Directors Introductions

Angela Schwarzkopf

Chairman of the Board, Angela Schwarzkopf introduced the members of the Board of Directors and expressed appreciation for their volunteer service to the American Harp Society.

Officers and members of the 2024-2025 Executive Committee:

Chilali Hugo, President and Western Regional Director
Megan Sesma, First Vice President and Director at Large
Rosanna Chiu, Second Vice President and Director at Large
Susie Spiwak, Secretary and Director at Large
Jeremy Chesman, Treasurer and North Central Regional Director
Riza Printup, Director at Large
Carla Siegesmund, Director at Large
Kela Walton, Director at Large

Regional Directors:

Hope Cowan, Regional Director Coordinator, South Central Regional Director
Jennifer Ellis, Pacific Regional Director (outgoing)
Joan Holland, Midcentral Regional Director
Felice Pomeranz, Northeastern Regional Director
Anne Sullivan, Mid Atlantic Regional Director (outgoing)
Rebecca Todaro, Southern Regional Director (outgoing)
Elisa Torres, Southeastern Regional Director

Directors at Large:

Karen Gottlieb
Charles W. Lynch, III (outgoing)
Steve Moss
Amelia Romano
Rebecca Yuille

Welcome to Incoming Board Members:

Catherine Anderson, Southern Regional Director
Stephanie Claussen, Director at Large
Kathryn Harms, Director at Large
Linda-Rose Heimbreiker, Pacific Regional Director
Candace Lark-Masucci, Mid Atlantic Regional Director
Julie Milton Staples, Western Regional Director

Megan Sesma reviewed the Society's recent accomplishments and ongoing efforts through the lens of the new 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. Ms. Sesma thanked the Executive Committee, the Executive Director and the Board of Directors for their ongoing participation. Ms. Sesma reviewed the components of the plan and in summary explained that the initiatives in the Strategic plan will secure AHS' financial future, foster trust and transparency, and will ensure that programs reflect the priorities of the harp community.

Strategic Goal 1: Engage a diverse and inclusive membership

- Highlight adult life-long learners and youth in AHS media
- Digital spotlight series
- Chapter/Regional Lever-harp festival guide, Research a regional lever harp competition
- Database of pre-college harp programs
- Quarterly IDEA reports, annual equity audits and equity checklists

Strategic Goal 2: Advance the knowledge and skills of the harp community

- Develop a new model for national events and member engagement
- AV resources featured in E-news and social media
- International Harp Archives
- Grants program & composers, Young Composers Project
- Offer and expand community discussion opportunities
- Continue offering digital options for printed publications

Strategic Goal 3: Strengthen connections to American Harp Society Chapters

- Regional Director meeting with chapters
- Chapter websites/National website, resource sharing
- Online Chapter Leadership Summit
- Chapter Ambassadors and Collegiate Ambassadors
- Chapter Spotlight and Short "tips"

Strategic Goal 4: Implement accessible technology, communications, and publications

- Establish consistent branding
- Enhance the AHS website and offer "how-to" videos
- AHJ online and digital extras
- Expand social media engagement

Strategic Goal 5: Maintain responsible stewardship of the American Harp Society resources

- Annual fundraising and Gift and Estate planning
- Quarterly financial dashboards
- Increase membership, studio/group memberships
- Membership needs annual survey and national event model

IV. Achievements and Awards

Lifetime Achievement Award

Chilali Hugo and Angela Schwarzkopf

President Chilali Hugo introduced **David Day, Curator of the International Harp Archives at Brigham Young University** since 1998, as the recipient of the 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award. President Hugo provided a brief overview of the history of the International Harp Archives that initially began from a significant donation of harp music and archival materials by Samuel and Rosalie Pratt. The collection grew and the International Harp Archives at Brigham Young University were formally established in 1994. Past AHS president, Lucy Scandrett, said (David Day) "is the heart and soul of our exceptional archives". David has been "an invaluable resource for the harp". University of North Texas Professor, Jaymee Haefner, shared that even before she was a professional, David was willing to guide and help her in her research in the Renie portion of the archive, which eventually led her to meeting the Renie family. Professor Haefner expressed that "David is truly the bridge to living research in our discipline." Thanks to David for being a steadfast shepherd of the IHA. David Day joined the meeting by Zoom and thanked the Society for the honor from such a dynamic and wonderful organization and community.

V. President's and Chairman's Remarks

President Hugo thanked the members for the honor of serving the membership this past year as president and for their participation in the American Harp Society. Chairman Angela Schwarzkopf shared the excitement to welcome and see everyone in Toronto in 2026.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 4:10 PM Eastern Daylight Time

Respectfully Submitted by Susie Spiwak, Secretary