

**Newburyport Choral Society
Report on the State of the Society
2019 Annual Meeting**

My Friends and Fellow Members:

It is a true privilege for me to deliver my second report to you all on the State of the Society. The past year has been a challenging one for myself, my fellow Officers, and for all of the Directors who served on the Board. However, unlike the challenges that we weathered during the 2017 – 2018 Season, the challenges of the past season were ones that we needed to wrestle with as we positioned the “business side” of NCS to be much more adaptive, nimble, and productive in a twenty-first century paradigm.

A year ago, I laid before the Membership three goals. I stated quite candidly then that, “My thoughts may be ambitious. My goals might seem lofty. You could [even] chalk it up to the young, Millennial entrepreneur and his flights of fancy.” Notwithstanding any loftiness, we all ambitiously rolled up our sleeves together - Officers, Directors, and Members alike - and doggedly worked to achieve those goals, with assiduousness, alacrity, poise, and grace. And we have made some remarkable progress.

My first goal was, “the creation of an online Member Registration System. This system would allow a Member to register, update their contact information, pay any applicable dues, and purchase needed music before arriving at the first rehearsal.” I am pleased to report that this goal has been met, and met with room to spare! I decided to score our results over the past year, and the judges have given us a 10 out of 10 rating with this goal.

My second goal was, “the development a versatile online payment gateway that will allow for the acceptance of any credit card, debit card, and e-check.” We have successfully implemented such a gateway for Member Registration and Individual Sponsorships, a necessary and pivotal foundation on which to build an extended network of uses, particularly for ad sales and Business Sponsorships. I have even set up my account so that my individual sponsorship donations are made on a recurring basis each month, without any action on my part! And, I get a wonderful e-mail from Mary Dissette each time a donation is automatically made for me. The judges have given us an 8 out of 10 rating with this goal.

My third goal was to work on areas that will position NCS to finally bust through our current income’s resistance level. We have successfully reworked our ads rate card, and have begun monetizing the usage of color printing throughout the concert programs to the tune of a 20% increase in advertising sales dollars compared with last year. We have worked hard to make progress on our goal of increasing our sponsorship and donor base, and we see that progress in a 15% increase from last

year in Individual Sponsorship dollars. Going to the judges one last time, they have given us a 7 out of 10 rating with this goal.

What has allowed us to accomplish so much, and achieve a high level of success, is the Board's laser-like focus on the development of twenty first century, state of the art infrastructure. A team of 9 Directors met through the Summer of 2018, researched over a dozen different customer relationship management systems, put out a Request For Proposal to the top 3 prospective vendors, and ultimately chose Neon, a powerful CRM system specifically designed with local nonprofits in mind. Remember the online registration that we did? That was through Neon. Did you make a donation online? That was through Neon! Ever need a list of donors, business, sponsors, concert goers, or even members of your own section? Those lists came right out of Neon's database. And we have only scratched the surface of what the software can do. And remember our clunky, icky looking News of Notes that we used to get. We dumped our old vendor, and integrated Mailchimp, an electronic marketing platform, right into Neon. Perhaps some of us, or our friends and family, received an electronic reminder or two about purchasing tickets for the Spring Concert? That was Mailchimp starting to learn how to walk for us!

NCS achieved a sizeable panoply of successes this past season. Whenever I speak of the NCS community with my professional colleagues, or amongst my friends, especially after they attend our concerts, I consistently remark that our success comes from the amazing work of our Board of Directors, the exceptional quality and high caliber nature of our musical staff, and the dedication that each of us as Members put on display each time we volunteer to help with a project, or give a donation. Let me share with you all a small sample of those successes:

- We received the \$3,000 Gateway grant funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and engaged in civic advocacy with our local State Representatives and Senate Senators in support of the MCC, and of NCS.
- The Composer-in-Residence Program was a phenomenal success. Our audiences simply loved the music that Andrew Maxfield wrote, Andrew himself was filled with joy over the success that he experienced with his music and NCS, and NCS demonstrated to the community our commitment to bringing the best musical experiences to our community.
- The Assistant Conductor Program has come into its own maturity, growing into a true educational program for young, aspiring choral conductors, who receive meaningful and comprehensive reviews of the work done each semester, complimenting the lessons given by our Music Director. The funding that the Board of Directors has given this program allows us to be competitive in attracting high quality students to the program.
- NCS placed the community first during our Winter Concert with its collaboration with Veterans' Services to bring our local veterans to the Concert.
- The Mayor of Amesbury was a Guest Conductor!

- Our Winter Concert was a blowout hit, with both nights sold out, and over 1150 tickets sold.
- Given the success of the Winter Concert, the Board developed a comprehensive Ticket Sales Policy that balances selling the maximum possible tickets for our concerts while ensuring the safety, comfort, and enjoyment of everyone in our audiences. This document is now required reading for all Board Directors, as it highlights just how much work is done to put on the concerts that we enjoy performing in. I encourage all members to read this document.
- The quality of our Concert Program Books is the best it has ever been, from the content, to the graphics layout, and the quality of the printing. Did you know that there are a dozen Members and Directors who come together to proof the entirety of the program? No wonder it looks so good!

Much of what I have shared with you would not be possible without Beth Rogers. Beth is stepping down from the Board as our Treasurer, and I can say, not just for myself, and not just on behalf of the Board, but on behalf of the entire NCS Community, how thankful we are for your service, and how humbled we are by your unwavering willingness to help NCS whenever called upon to do so. When I began my Presidency in 2017, the Treasurer at the time, quite understandably, needed to step down a month into the summer. To say that we were in a bit of pickle at that moment would be quite an understatement – remember, nearly half of the Board was replaced with new members, and the Summer Sing was having issues of its own. I scrambled to find a new Treasurer, and I called Beth to see if she would help me out by stepping in as Treasurer, thinking in my mind that this ask was a true “Hail Mary.” She didn’t make me beg, plead, or grovel. She didn’t negotiate with me terms of what she would or would not do. She didn’t leave me in some sort of suspense about whether she would assume the position or not. She simply say yes, until a new Treasurer could be appointed. We thought it would be a few months. And yet Beth served for two seasons. I cannot begin to explain what a weight it is off of a President’s shoulders when you know that the checks will be cashed, the books will be reconciled, the bills will be paid on time, and payroll will go out on schedule. Beth took that weight off of my shoulders, so that I could lead this Board, and this community, through our next chapter. Beth, you will forever have the unending thanks of a grateful President, your service honors us, and I ask that you please stand and be recognized.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my fellow Officers. The sheer volume of work that each Officer does, at the caliber at which it is done, could, as they say, “stun a heard of oxen in its tracks.” George and I are able to do what we do best in our respective roles because of the runway that the Officers give us. None of the wonderful moments that we have enjoyed as a community would have come to fruition without the passion and dedication of our Officers. I ask that all three stand and be recognized.

Fellow Members, we continue to flourish as a Society, and establish ourselves as the premier choral performance organization in our area. I thank you for allowing me the high honor and distinct privilege to serve as your President. I will speak briefly later on about some of our plans going forward after our Music Director makes his formal report.