

From: Robert J Snelling, MemberID 272002

**To: BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BARBERSHOP HARMONY SOCIETY**

Date: January 6th, 2019

**Ref: Ethics Committee report of October 15, 2019 re:
Lars Grevstad
Clayton Hine
Austin Harris**

Gentlemen:

I have been informed by John Schneider of the findings in the above referenced ethics complaints. The purpose of this letter is to ask that either the Ethics Review Committee, or the Board of Directors of the Society review those findings. Reasoning follows. First, there is new information germane to the complaints that was not previously considered or is incorrect. Second, although a legal proceeding convicted a former BHS member, the ethical behavior of the three members who testified on his behalf was inadequately addressed. The BHS code of ethics was violated, specifically articles 2, 3, 4, & 5, Thirdly, and this may be most impactful; the emotional effects on the victims and families involved cannot be exaggerated. I appeal to the board to think about what the board might do if one of its own members was the victim. For these reasons, I believe a careful and detailed review will reveal a flaw in the committee's findings.

First, while a letter from the defense attorney claims that a subpoena was issued for the character witness testimony, there is no record where a subpoena was officially recorded. That means any issued subpoena had no teeth, could not be enforced. Therefore, the testimony of the three men was voluntary, not required.

My understanding of the finding is that the **Ethics** Review Committee found that the actions of these three men were **legal**, and therefore, not actionable by the Barbershop Harmony Society. The flaw in the committee's judgment is that it was a **legal** finding, not an **ethical** one. A quick internet search found the following:

“Legal standards are those standards that are set forth in governmental **laws**. **Ethical** standards are based on the human principles of right and wrong. The **differences** between them are these: ... **Legal** standards are written by government officials, while **ethical** standards are written by societal norms.....it is possible that an action may be legal but not ethical”.

Evidence shows that, whether or not their actions were legal, the three men violated the above noted articles of the BHS Code of Ethics and the Youth Policy. In looking at the Committee's finding, there is no reference to the Society Code or Policy nor, in fact, any discussion at all about why the behavior of the defendants is within the ethical standards of the Barbershop Harmony Society.

Those who support or give succor to sexual predators are called “enablers.” That describes perfectly the actions of these three men. I believe the committee’s finding is tantamount to the BHS saying, “It’s ethically OK to be an enabler of sexual predators!”

My fourteen-year-old grandson was sexually abused for over a year by a 56-year-old BHS member who had a high profile in the Society. In demonstrating the courage to fight a three-year legal battle to ensure justice for the sexual predator my grandson stopped performing in high school, has yet to graduate, has no further interest in Barbershop Harmony, and was treated extensively for mental illness, but was yet willing to endure through the court proceedings. He and his family were further damaged by the surprise appearance in court of the three men and the egregious phone call made by one of them on the eve of the sentencing hearing. He has yet to recover. He will be impacted for his lifetime not only by the predator but by the appearance of the three men in court in defense of the sexual predator.

I am the first to admit that my perspective is colored by the fact that my grandson was the primary victim here (again, imagine your own feelings if it were your grandson), and you can see that I am very sorely disappointed that the BHS, which I have loved off and on for 50+ years, has chosen to take a path that, rather than protecting our young men at every turn, shows cowardice and “tone-deafness” to the issue.

Referring to the Code of Ethics the three men clearly violated the following (words directly from the Code): “conform to the bylaws of the Barbershop Harmony Society and any other rules” <Youth Policy>; “deport ourselves...in such manner to reflect credit upon the Barbershop Harmony Society”; members are “congenial persons of good character”; and more but I’ll stop here.

I am asking humbly that the Board remand this finding back to the Ethics Review Committee so that it can conduct a full ethical review of the ethics complaints that have been presented. Neither you, nor I, would want the BHS to be known as “enablers” of a pedophile. As the finding now stands, that is the mantel the Society has taken on.

As I’m sure you understand, this whole series of events has been a devastating catastrophe to my family, to the Big Chicken Chorus, and to the Society. To date, ten (10) singers have been lost from the Big Chicken Chorus and most of them from the Society. My family is devastated by these events, both in the family at large, and by mental health issues for several family members. It is my belief that an appropriate finding from the Committee will help to salve a situation from which there will never be real healing.

There are some facts that have come to light since I filed my complaints which are germane to the Committee’s review. I will share them if your hearing is reopened. I hope to work with you in the future from my unique perspective to find ways to help prevent such an offence from ever happening again within the membership of the BHS.

Thank you for your serious attention to this matter. I look forward to your affirmative reply.

Sincerely,

Robert J Snelling

Cc: Dick Powell, President
John Miller, Executive VP
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