



**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

September 2, 2023

Hibiscus Room, DoubleTree Hotel, Deerfield Beach, Florida

*AC Members:* Chairman **Richard Shulby** (Baltimore / Piedmont-Carolinas), Secretary **Elizabeth Guenzler** (Central Coast), **Cora Sowa** (New York City), **Doug Scott** (Cape Cod and Western Connecticut), **John Simanton** (Inland Empire), **Patti Webb** (Harrisburg), **Jim Perry** (Washington, DC), **Bob Brewster** (Intermountain), **Dave Hodges** (Gulf Wind), **Victor Varney** (North Carolina Railway Museum), **Robert Leslie** (Blue Ridge), **Tom Gallagher** (Champlain Valley), **Dawn Holmberg** (Northstar), **Ken Eddy** (Arkansas-Boston Mountains), **Carl Jensen** (Roanoke), **Mike Yuhás** (Wisconsin), **Regan Rickson** (Atlanta)

*AC Members Joining Remotely:*

**William Welk** (Philadelphia), **Richard King** (Cincinnati), **Tom Steckler** (Lancaster), **Valli Hoski** (Ad Hoc), **Rick Davidson** (Potomac), **Wesley Ross** (Kentucky Central), **Paul Hopkins** (East Tennessee), **Mark Irvin** (Central Pennsylvania), **Bob St. John** (Topeka), **Bill Long** (North Texas), **John Pollock** (Atlanta), **Al Baker** (Pacific Northwest), **Ed Berntsen** (Tacoma), **Tom Posatko** (Wilmington), **John DeRoo** (Kansas City), **Ed Fortuna** (Lackawanna and Wyoming Valley), **Val Hoski** (Ad Hoc)

*Others Joining Remotely:* Bob Bitzer, Larry Dyer, Harold Shaak

*Others in Attendance:* Tony White, Joe Maloney, Marlin Taylor, John Goodman, Al Weber, Jon Baake, Scott Andes, Dan Meyer, Bob Ernst, John Fiorilla, Skip Waters, Charlie Webb

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Richard called the meeting to order at 8:33, welcomed all in attendance and reviewed the agenda.

It was motioned by Mike Yuhás and seconded by John Simanton that the minutes of the May 21<sup>st</sup> meeting be approved. Carried.

*Business Arising From Previous Minutes:*

**Action Item 1 - Bob Ernst to supply the Council with the dollar amount of restricted vs. unrestricted funds in the NRHS Fund.** Bob explained that he cannot do this at the current time. There is \$1,070,000 in the Fund which is a mixture of restricted and unrestricted. The treasurer of the Fund resigned on July 1<sup>st</sup> and they are working on identifying which is unrestricted and which is restricted. Those that are directly specified to a particular category are find but “general” donations are not as easy. He needs to check with both the NRHS Fund and the NRHS.

Bob will be looking at this over the next few months and should have a report by the next meeting when it hopefully will be cleared up. *WORK IN PROGRESS.*

Victor Varney noted that Kevin Feeney has calculated that of the \$1,070,000, approximately \$570,000 had no restrictions and \$494,000 had restrictions. \$286,200 are permanently restricted from 2017 after a forensic accounting was undertaken.

**Action Item 2 - Bob Brewster to send e-mail to John Fiorilla regarding insurance.** Bob tabled the topic of insurance for excursions and noted that the cost of buses is double what it was a year ago.

John Fiorilla noted that there used to be a separate NRHS insurance policy for tours, called Rail Tours of America. Since it does not pay to have a policy if it is not being used, it does not exist anymore. Every group is on their own. Bob noted that the trip to Como had to be cancelled due to lack of interest.

**Convention Site Exploration Committee** - Carl Jensen reported there has been no formal progress since its inception in May. Informal discussions have occurred with a couple of about sites.

Val Hoski suggested Champaign-Urbana area of Illinois - there is train service from Chicago, ample hotels and the Monticello Railway Museum.

### ***Chapter Engagement Committee***

Elizabeth reported that the Committee had met on August 18<sup>th</sup> and divided the 20 chapters which had not responded to the request for updated key officials and contact information among the Committee members, and that they had started to make phone calls.

She also informed everyone that the group would be meeting once a month to review the responses to the chapter survey to address the chapter-specific comments in detail.

Mike Yuhas then reminded everyone of the Chapter Discussion Group and encouraged members to sign up via a QR code on the video screen. 14 people have already subscribed. We want to continue the momentum of the convention. You will receive a confirmation e-mail, be asked a couple of questions and you're in! Go to <https://groups.io/g/NRHSchapters>, press the blue "Apply" button and follow the instructions.

### ***Financial Report***

Bob Bitzer remarked that it takes a lot of people to do what we do - we are not "small potatoes". We lost our assistant treasurer and convention treasurer Carol Ann Cornelius and are turning the treasurer position over to Bowers and Company which has a subsidiary that does accounting work as well as auditing. Bob is in the process of getting data to them so QuickBooks can be updated. Once that is done, he will issue a complete detailed financial statement again. He is working with a volunteer to possibly be an assistant treasurer but he wants to assure everyone that everything is being monitored so we know our financial status is good.

Bob Ernst reported that the Fund met last night and the financial statements will be sent to the Advisory Council in the next couple of days by Elizabeth.

### ***Heritage Grants***

Charlie sent a report on July 30<sup>th</sup> and will re-send. \$124,950 plus an emergency grant for \$5,000, totaling \$129,950 were announced in the spring.

### ***Historic Plaques***

Walter reported a couple of requests have been received but nothing definite at this time.

### ***Film Library***

Marlin is slowly continuing to digitize the films and the lack of manpower and capable people remains. It is not advisable to put the raw footage on the website; it needs editing. Joe Maloney is in agreement with that and re-iterated that every film has had to go through editing. Board approval and financial assistance has been given to Mitch Dakelman and Joe needs to follow-up with Mitch for the next steps.

**Action Item 1 - Joe Maloney to follow up with Mitch Dakelman on the status of the financial assistance given for the film library project.**

Al Weber remarked that there is an issue with storage space since the website provider does not want us to store videos. He is working with another company.

### ***Website***

Dawn mentioned that 77 chapter updates have been made to date.

### ***Facebook***

Skip reported that there has been better engagement with the chapters sending items to him via e-mail or Facebook Messenger. He also re-posted the US Sugar Express train public sales announcement. He continues to encourage chapters to submit items to him for posting on Facebook.

It was suggested that the NRHS News be put on Facebook but since there are copyright issues, it would have been delayed.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### ***Convention Report***

John reported that this had been a very difficult convention to organize - it was originally “we will” then changed to “not until further notice”. He then reviewed the events for the week.

Regarding 2024, it will be in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with the tentative dates of August 23<sup>rd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> [secretary’s note: it was later changed to August 26<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>]. There will hopefully be a Reading 2102 trip out of Jim Thorpe, Budd cars on the Reading, Blue Mountain and Northern and a visit to the East Broad Top Railroad.

Patti Webb, the Harrisburg Chapter representative noted that the chapter was very excited about the convention coming to the area. Harris Tower and the Power Director’s Office are run by the chapter.

**Carl Jensen moved that the Advisory Council endorse going to Harrisburg, date to be determined, if not August 23<sup>rd</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>. Seconded by Tom Gallagher. Carried.**

2025 - A Rock Island-Silvis, Illinois (Friends of 261) convention is worth considering, but the Chinese QJs will not be ready, although a diesel could be used.

2026 - potential for Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal

Bob St. John noted that the Union Pacific Historical Society is exploring Rock Island and Silvis as their convention site in 2025.

### ***Conferences***

Bob Bitzer remarked that he needs help and support from chapters in getting different locations. He reviewed current model. COVID-19 and the Zoom video conferencing impact has driven attendance down. Val Hoski mentioned Monticello Railway Museum in Monticello, Illinois and Richard Shulby asked her to talk with Bob about that potential.

Victor Varney noted that Raleigh was scheduled to host in 2021 but that did not occur because of COVID; perhaps they may be able to now.

We assisted the Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter and Reno with financial assistance. Jon noted that it is not on the Advisory Council, but the Board in needing to come to a decision to support chapters at this afternoon's meeting and bring this discussion to a conclusion.

Bob is prepared to make recommendations to the board, or a new business plan or model. Carl asked the amount of the subsidies - \$4,000 for Springdale and just under \$2,000 for Reno - and commented that we need to come up with a benchmark plan of what we want to do. Charlie Webb suggested piggybacking with other organizations.

**Richard recommended that the AC support Jon's suggestion that the Board come up with a plan with Bob's business models for conferences. It was motioned by Bob and seconded by Mike that the motion be seconded. Carried.**

### **MEMBERSHIP GENERAL**

The Membership Committee is in the process of standardizing chapter submission and dues from the chapters. Chapters who are National members can get a report mailed to them, which includes all chapter members on whatever frequency the chapter desires. The virtual membership card is being explored but the regular paper membership card will be retained. Mike asked that any registration issues be communicated to him.

Jon Baake asked about membership trends - we are down in numbers compared to 2022 due to deaths and the cost. Neon allows for each member to cover the credit card fees for renewing - online renewal is encouraged. Tom Gallagher remarked that he does not like to pay any more than he has to.

Jon asked Mike about marketing and publicity in an effort to find out where new members learned about us. Mike replied that there is a small allocation in the budget for marketing, which he does.

John Fiorilla noted that the dues were last raised in 2010. We are supporting history. Cora mentioned being in touch with influencers and younger people, to which Patti Webb noted that the Perryville Chapter has had success in this regard. She also encourages chapter representatives to encourage those who are not National members to become such.

### **MEMBERSHIP AWARDS**

Doug reported that all pins have been sent out to the recipients.

**NRHS BULLETIN**

Tony gave a report for Jeff Smith. White River Productions has been the technical producer for The Bulletin for the last ten years. It will now be handled by Tony Koop. Proofreader Irene, who has done that job for more than five years, is being replaced by Mike as of Volume 86 #3. The book review editor position remains open for now. Maps produced in Volume 86 #4 are being done by Rick Johnson.

**NRHS NEWS**

Val thanked Eileen and Elizabeth for proofing and copy-editing. All issues are over 25 to 30 pages. 10 issues of the News this year; the commitment is nine. She wondered if we need three print issues or would two suffice?

**LEGAL ISSUES**

John Fiorilla noted that he is working with the state and new accountants on tax returns. No litigations. Filing with patent offices occurred this year as all came due and are now complete. He collects mail for the organization and sends to the appropriate person.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Bob Leslie remarked that for the last two to three years, 1,600 to 2,600 people are watching Virtual Railfan - is there a marketing opportunity to advertise? Mike Yuhas and Bob will discuss this separately.

**OPEN MIC**

Mike Yuhas discussed the Outstanding Railroad Historic Preservation Award and announced the five finalists - Arkansas and Missouri, Everett Railroad, Iowa Traction, Reading, Blue Mountain and Northern and Union Pacific. The presentation will be at the Railway Interchange conference in a month's time.

Carl asked Victor who was making the nominations, to which he replied Railway Age subscribers, Railway Truck and Structures and NRHS members. All nominations were submitted to the NRHS website.

**REVIEW OF ITEMS**

Richard Shulby reviewed the Council's recommendations - endorse Harrisburg as the 2024 convention location and support direction of the business model for future conferences.

There being no further business, it was motioned by Mike and seconded by Dawn that the meeting be adjourned. Carried at 11:30.

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