



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

August 29, 2024

Hilton Harrisburg, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

*AC Members:* Chairman **Richard Shulby** (Baltimore / Piedmont-Carolinas), Secretary **Elizabeth Guenzler** (Central Coast), **Doug Scott** (Cape Cod and Western Connecticut), **Patti Webb** (Harrisburg), **Jim Perry** (Washington, DC), **Bob Brewster** (Intermountain), **Tom Gallagher** (Champlain Valley), **Dawn Holmberg** (Northstar), **Mike Yuhas** (Wisconsin), **Ed Fortuna** (Lackawanna and Wyoming Valley), **Ron Gawedzinski** (St. Louis), **Mitch Dakelman** (Jersey Central), **Bill Long** (North Texas), **Martin Owen** (Heart of Dixie), **Tom Posatko** (Wilmington), **Victor Varney** (North Carolina Railway Museum), **William Welk** (Philadelphia), **Richard Harrington** (Bergen-Rockland), **Becky Gerstung** (Niagara Frontier), **Mark Irvin** (Central Pennsylvania), **Brad Bender** (Cumberland Valley)

*AC Members Joining Remotely:* **Cora Sowa** (New York City), **John Simanton** (Inland Empire), **Richard King** (Cincinnati), **Ken Eddy** (Arkansas-Boston Mountains), **Wesley Ross** (Kentucky Central), **Ken Mosby** (Delaware Valley), **John DeRoo** (Kansas City), **Paul Hopkins** (East Tennessee)

*Others Joining Remotely:* Mike Crockett, Ward Wells, Alan Butler

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**Note:** the format of the meeting was the presentation and highlights of the various committee reports, followed by the Advisory Council meeting (which concluded the morning) and the Board meeting in the afternoon.

The reports were sent via e-mail to the Advisory Council and are also on the Documents (Admin) site of the NRHS website.

At 9:00, Vice-President Joe Maloney welcomed everyone and gave an update on President Tony White, who had heart surgery yesterday.

**Alco Photos**

Joe Maloney noted that he is currently working on 12 x 12 panes of glass negatives and 40,000 photos have been scanned to date.

**Chapter Development**

Skip Waters summarized his submitted report and would be proposing the Cincinnati Northern Kentucky Chapter at the Board meeting this afternoon.

**Chapter Engagement Committee**

Elizabeth noted the Fireside Chat with the Central Coast Chapter that had occurred on July 19<sup>th</sup> with Skip Waters representing National.

### **Cedar Rapids Conference**

Mike gave a brief overview of the successful May conference.

### **Conferences**

Bob Bitzer reminded everyone that the Autumn Conference is October 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> and gave an overview of the trip. Registration opens on September 5<sup>th</sup> at noon. See Bob or send him an e-mail if your chapter is interested in volunteering to host a future conference.

### **Conventions**

John Goodman gave an overview of the rest of the events for this convention and would leave discussion of future conventions to the Board meeting. Ron Gawedzinski asked for a round of applause for John and his committee.

### **Film Preservation**

Marlin Taylor gave an overview of the Film Committee and informed the assembled of the Youtube Channel at <https://nrhs.com/programs/our-youtube-channel/>. Al Weber noted that is not practical to put a lot of data on the website that is not accessed a lot.

### **Heritage Grants**

Charlie Webb outlined and highlighted the website and procedures for everyone. Applications will be available mid-November and the deadline is January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025

There were 28 grants approved in 2024 and \$125,000 was awarded.

### **Historic Plaques**

Walter Zullig reported that last week, an agreement was reached on wording for the Donner Pass plaque project and the group is targeting a spring 2025 installation.

### **Inspector General**

Walter had nothing to report.

### **Historic Preservation Award**

Mike Yuhas and Victor Varney spoke to this, noting the deadline for applications for the second year's round of awards was August 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **General Counsel**

John Fiorilla noted that if there are any legal issues that arise or you have a policy question, call or e-mail him as General Counsel. He also deals with money left to the NRHS by estates.

### **Membership**

Patti Webb noted that there are currently 3,995 members.

### **Membership Brochures**

Jon Baake mentioned the new brochure, which includes a QR code, will be ready before year-end. Over 10,000 brochures were sent out last year.

### **Membership Awards**

Doug Scott remarked there was nothing new to report. He will start on the next cycle after January 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **NRHS News**

Valli Hoski thanked Elizabeth Guenzler and Eileen Weber for their work and effort in editing and proofing each issue. The 2023 convention issue was 49 pages, a record.

### **RailCamp**

Rebecca Gerstung reported that between RailCamp East and RailCamp West, there were 36 campers from 18 states this year and there were nine counsellors from seven states. The society awarded half of them full or partial scholarships to attend and no one has ever been turned down due to lack of affordability.

Applications for 2025 will be out on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ed Fortuna, Representative of the Lackawanna-Wyoming Valley Chapter, noted that their chapter had sent two campers through scholarships and his chapter. Both boys enjoyed the experience immensely and spoke at a chapter meeting.

### **Treasurer**

Bob Bitzer reported that the Statement of Financial Position and Statement of Financial Activity up to July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 was sent to all. He is working on a summary of the California and Fort Lauderdale conventions and should have them ready by the October conference.

### **NRHS Fund**

Bob Ernst reported that there is currently \$1.3 million in the Fund.

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A half-hour break was then taken and Richard called the Advisory Council meeting to order at 11:00, outlining the new format of meetings.

The minutes of the previous meeting, on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, were reviewed and had been sent to the Council previously. It was motioned by Mike and seconded by Jim that the minutes of the previous meeting on May 5<sup>th</sup> be accepted. Carried.

### **New Business**

1. Central Coast Chapter insurance -- Elizabeth read an e-mail from the chapter president, Steve Ferrari and John Fiorilla spoke to the question, suggesting they hire a broker to find the best prices. He recommends Newcastle Insurance Brokers and promised to send an e-mail with details [Secretary's note - he did and the information was passed to Steve].
2. Getting financial items on the website in a timely manner -- Richard asked Ron if he was asking for a recommendation to the Board and he answered in the affirmative.

Victor noted that it was the minutes from the Advisory Council and Board too, to which Ellen responded that as soon as the minutes are approved by the Board, they are put up. As Advisory Council Secretary, Elizabeth responded that once the minutes have been typed and reviewed by

Richard, an e-mail is sent to all AC members and it is put up on the website at that time, usually within a month of the meeting.

Bill Long felt the recommendation should be a motion.

Bob Ernst acknowledged that he has been behind in this. Anything that has been approved by the Board will put be put on the Admin site including 990's and financial statements.

**Action Item 1: Bob Ernst to look into this in more detail and get the items posted.**

Ron asked about the time lag, to which the reply was the Board approves the financial data once ready. The loss of two key financial people in recent times has contributed to the delay.

Bob Ernst noted that Kevin Feeney updated the report and the recent Fund meeting minutes would be posted once they have been approved. Kevin reported that the last audited financial statements were in 2022. The 2023 audit report is not expected before November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Al Weber remarked that unaudited financial statements usually have large holes in them. The finances of conventions and conferences are major items that, for example, take a while for bills to arrive.

John Fiorilla noted that we hired the new accounting firm because of a lack of timely reporting by the previous one.

Dawn suggested circulating a draft to those who need to see the information but give her the final version for posting.

**The motion on the floor - to have financial items posted to the web in a timely manner was seconded by Ron. It was voted on and Mike and Richard were opposed. Motion carried.**

### **Open Mic**

*Topic 1:* Patti Webb noted that she had been looking over the financial reports, particularly the convention expenditures and made a motion that an oversight committee be formed by local chapter members to investigate the expenditures by the Convention Committee.

Skip Waters explained that the conventions used to be hosted by local chapters, a practice that stopped in 2008. Since then, National has taken on the job. The trips to the cities and convention venues are necessary and it comes out of the convention budget, not the society's budget.

Discussion ensued with Skip and Elizabeth explaining the reasoning behind the travel and the benefits of face-to-face meetings, which the degree of success and smooth running of the daily events are a direct result. Jon Baake spoke in favour of the committee and commended the work done by them over the years.

Bob Bitzer noted that he is working on the 2022 and 2023 convention financial reports.

**Mark Irvin seconded the motion and Patti Webb, Mike Yuhás and Mark Irvin voted in favour. Dawn abstained and everyone else voted against. Motion defeated.**

*Topic 2:* Ron spoke to the lack of transparency of transfer of funds between the NRHS and the Fund. Kevin Feeney responded that there is no transfer account. The Fund spends no money on its own apart from a small expenditure to Wells Fargo.

It was agreed that Kevin would change the phrase “Program Expense” to “Program Expense to NRHS”.

**The previously-approved motion about financial items being posted to the web in a timely manner was then amended to remove “to the web”.**

### **Announcements**

Becky reminded everyone about the albums of photographs that were surplus to her Niagara Frontier Chapter’s needs that were on the side table and they were free for the taking. She also thanked Val for the inclusion of the chapter calendar in the News.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm.

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