



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

May 3, 2025
Carnegie Hotel, Johnson City, TN

AC Members: Chairman **Richard Shulby** (Baltimore / Piedmont-Carolinas), Secretary **Elizabeth Guenzler** (Central Coast), **Scott Stodola** (George L. Carter), **Doug Scott** (Cape Cod, Potomac and Western Connecticut), **Charlie Webb** (alternative representative in lieu of Patti Webb, Harrisburg) **Jim Perry** (Washington, DC), **Dawn Holmberg** (Northstar), **Ron Gawedzinski** (St. Louis), **Robert Leslie** (Blue Ridge), **Victor Varney** (North Carolina Railway Museum), **Paul Hopkins** (East Tennessee), **David Foster** (Roanoke), **Arthur Bliss** (Champlain Valley), **Stephen Himpel** (alternate representative in lieu of Harold Shaak - Lancaster Chapter)

AC Members Joining Remotely: **John Simanton** (Inland Empire), Marlin Taylor (**Delaware Valley**), **John DeRoo** (Kansas City), **William Welk** (Philadelphia), **Wesley Ross** (Kentucky Central), **Bob Brewster** (Intermountain), **Skip Waters** (North Texas), **Richard King** (Cincinnati), **Dan Grudzielanek** (Wisconsin), **Ken Katta** (Long Island Sunrise Trail), **Regan Rickson** (Atlanta), **Corrender Taylor** (Wichita Falls), **Valli Hoski** (Ad Hoc)

Others Joining Remotely: Scott Andes, Kevin Feeney, Walter Zullig

Others Present: Jon Baake, Bob Bitzer, Bob Ernst, John Fiorilla, Eric Fogg, Christopher Guenzler, Ellen Scott, Dan Meyer, Joe Maloney, James Schoonmaker, Sue Bishop, Ward Wells, Tony White

The morning started with the plenary session and highlights/overview of the previously-submitted reports, which were sent via e-mail to the Advisory Council and are also on the Documents (Admin) site of the NRHS website.

Tony welcomed everyone at 9:03 and asked for a moment of silence for those who recently passed.

Rail Attractions

Wesley reported there were 170 attractions listed so far and a good response has been received. 750 letters were sent asking if the organization was willing to display our brochures. 9,000 copies of the brochures will be sent, including to forty different locations than in past years. If anyone knows of an organization not displaying our brochure, please let him know.

Historic Plaques

Walter is working on three; two have been completed and one is in progress.

2025 Convention

Tony noted that on April 13th, an emergency Board meeting was called with one item of business - to vote on the location of the 2025 convention. There were 9 yes votes and 1 abstention for the location of Lansing, Michigan.

Mike, as convention co-chair remarked that the convention will be July 12th to 17th and the Convention and Visitors Bureau would be sending a postcard to all members. in the next week or two. The convention hotel will be The Graduate by Hilton, which has free valet parking.

He then gave an overview of the events

- July 12th - reception with speaker
- July 13th - Steam Railroading Institute excursion with diesel from Clare to Owosso\
- July 14th - Nickel Plate 765 excursion from Coldwater, MI to Ray, IN
- July 15th - National New York Central Museum, tour of Norfolk Southern Elkhart Yard, tour of Adams-Westlake factory
- July 16th - Greenfield Village, screening of “Train Time” film, tour of Michigan Central station in Detroit
- July 17th - Advisory Council, Board and Membership meetings

The convention team is: Ellen Scott (Welcome Centre Ambassador), Bob Brewster (Motor Coach Liaison Ambassador), Elizabeth Guenzler (Chief Bus Host Ambassador), Dave Baniewicz (Swag Ambassador), Dan Meyer (Audio and Visual Ambassador). Dawn Holmberg will be posting everything online and Carson Sailor is in charge of the new brochure.

The hotel contract has been signed. There is a room block of 50 rooms and the hotel has a capacity of 194 rooms.

Conferences

Bob Bitzer thanked the George L. Carter Chapter for putting on an excellent conference. There were seventy plus attendees.

The autumn conference will be in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on October 3rd and 4th hosted by the Wisconsin Chapter, which is celebrating their 75th anniversary. The rail event will be a charter on the East Troy Electric Railroad.

Bob invited any chapter to contact him about hosting conferences in 2026 and beyond.

Heritage Grants

Charlie reported the committee is planning to announce recipients at the end of May. Letters will be sent to successful applicants, as well as unsuccessful. There will be a press release and the list will be published in the News and railway publications.

Membership

On behalf of Patti Webb, Charlie reported that membership is down 4.89% this year. Dues of similar organizations are about \$10 less than NRHS. New members would be preferable than raising dues.

Tony noted that we have been bringing in new members and references the Historic Preservation Award, photo contest and the Heritage Grants programs.

Jon Baake asked if there was a way to gauge how many members are we acquiring from the brochures, heritage grants, etc. Mike confirmed there was a check box on the application form.

It was suggested that there be student discount memberships? Carson suggested a link from Facebook to join, which would be an easier way to join. Tony commented that dues will not be raised.

Financial Report

Bob Bitzer noted there have been changes in the financial team with Ward Wells taking on full responsibility for accounting reports. With the help of the comptroller, we have a better financial picture and reporting mechanisms. He has realigned services with the Bowers and Company, which continues to be our external auditors and do the 990 reporting.

The budget has a \$41,000 shortfall which will be addressed by absorbing it through unrestricted donations - a formatted transfer process between NHRS and the Fund.

Bob Ernst reported that the NRHS Fund met the previous evening. There is \$1,340,952 invested and \$41,451 in the Fund's chequing account.

A half hour break took place then Richard called the Advisory Council meeting to order at 11:00.

The safety announcement had been made prior to the plenary session so that item was not addressed for this meeting.

Elizabeth asked for the Board members in attendance and Tony, Ken, Mike, Tom, Ellen, Bob, Larry, Kevin and Scott made themselves known.

The agenda was reviewed after which, **Richard asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the last Advisory Council meeting on October 12th. Doug Scott made the motion, Jim Perry seconded and it was carried.**

New Business - Timely Response to Requests

Elizabeth thanked everyone for responding in a timely manner to her annual request for updates to key officials and for those chapters who notify her during the year of changes. She was also appreciative of the responses received regarding membership awards and pins, which had been sent on behalf of Doug Scott, who is in charge of them.

However, the request for the chapter representatives to sign the conflict of interest policy and confidentiality policy agreements had, for some chapters, not been answered in such a timely manner. Four requests over three months resulted in about 50 chapters not responding. It took a direct and stern e-mail written by Tony and sent to chapter presidents and vice-presidents and other officials to whittle that number by just over half.

A few chapter presidents asked that they be included on e-mails sent to the chapter representatives so the decision was made to send all future e-mails to both the chapter representative and the chapter president, unless they are the same person.

New Business - At-Large Representation on the Council

Elizabeth remarked that Tony would like to have representation from the At-Large membership on the Council. Currently it is made up of the chapters only. Richard suggested an election, which perhaps could be part of the next election cycle, although it was noted that it cannot be combined with the Board election.

Mike advised the assembled that of 3,908 active members as of today, 1,107 are At-Large. It was then suggested that an e-mail be sent to all At-Large members (since Neon can target a specific group of people), to gauge their interest on sitting on the Advisory Council..

Victor mentioned that although a letter may be sent to all, the AC review the responses and appoint two or three.

It was also suggested that whoever is appointed give a commitment to attend a conference or convention (preferably in person, or otherwise remotely).

Richard suggested that a small, new committee, called *Advisory Council Committee for At-Large Members*, made up of Richard, Elizabeth and Mike to set up parameters of how to choose members and appoint an At-Large representation.

It was motioned by David Foster and seconded by Arthur Bliss that the above committee be created.

A vote was taken and all representatives were in favour. Carried. [secretary's note: Doug Scott indicated his interest to be part of the committee after the fact and he was added]

New Business - Chapter Yearbook/Activities Annual

Elizabeth introduced this topic, reviewing the publication that ceased in 2008 which had been published annually and included conference and convention coverage, financial report, chapter listing and detailed report on chapter activities, membership awards, Heritage Grants list and other information.

She asked for input and comments from the Council on the idea of re-introducing such a publication. It was suggested by Paul and Ron that the chapters be surveyed to gauge their interest before embarking on anything.

Wesley Ross noted that the subject has come up in prior years and while it is expensive, it is a good idea. Other suggestions were an online publication only as a printed one (and mailed to all members) would be prohibitively expensive. Val suggested that the News could be a channel.

Kevin advocated for geolocating of chapters on a map and Val brought up the Sherlockian Society and showed the location of the various member societies around the country/world which may be something we could include on our website in the future.

Charlie suggested using the chapter website listing with links. Dawn had the idea of those who wanted a copy to pay for it and noted that a map showing the chapter's meeting location is on the NRHS chapter website.

Elizabeth moved that a survey be conducted of the chapter representatives/chapter presidents to gauge their interest in a chapter yearbook/activities annual. Ken Eddy seconded. Carried.

Open Mic

Ron followed up on the Chapter Survey and the Executive Summary that was distributed to all Board members in October, asking what action was going to be taken. Mike Yuhas asked for some concrete proposals from the Chapter Engagement Committee as to what the Board should do.

Announcements

Charlie remarked that Harris Tower, which the Harrisburg Chapter operates, has a leak in the roof which needs to be repaired. The Chapter has started a capital campaign to raise funds for the repair.

There being no further business, it was agreed that the meeting be adjourned at 12:13 pm.
