



ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

July 17, 2025
Graduate Hotel, East Lansing, MI

AC Members: Chairman **Richard Shulby** (Baltimore / Piedmont-Carolinas), Secretary **Elizabeth Guenzler** (Central Coast), **Doug Scott** (Cape Cod / Potomac / Western Connecticut), **Ron Gawedzinski** (St. Louis), **John Simanton** (Inland Empire), **Robert Leslie** (Blue Ridge), **Dawn Holmberg** (Northstar), **Rebecca Gerstung** (Niagara Frontier), **Robert Brewster** (Intermountain), **Mitch Dakelman** (Jersey Central), **Marlin Taylor** (Delaware Valley), **Jim Perry** (Washington, DC), **William Welk** (Philadelphia), **Ken Eddy** (Arkansas-Boston Mountains), **Bob St. John** (Topeka), **Joe Maloney** (Tidewater), **Stephen Himpel** (alternate for Lancaster), **Ed Fortuna** (Lackawanna-Wyoming Valley), **Marvin Rogers** (Samuel Spencer)

AC Members Joining Remotely: **Skip Waters** (North Texas), **Regan Rickson** (Atlanta), **Wesley Ross** (Kentucky Central), **John de Roo** (Kansas City), **Cora Sowa** (New York), **Arthur Bliss** (Champlain Valley), **Patti Webb** (Harrisburg), **David Foster** (Roanoke), **Ed Berntsen** (Pacific Northwest / Tacoma), **Richard King** (Tri-State), **Gilbert Sebenste** (North Western Illinois)

Others Joining Remotely: Scott Andes, Walter Zullig, Ronald Resua, Jon Baake, Charlie Webb, James Muhr, Ken Mosby.

Others in Attendance: Preston Hamilton, Ralph Bitzer, Kevin Feeney, Ward Wells, David McGowan, Lisa Didden, Alex Powers, Mike Palmer, Val Hoski, Robert Ernst, Tony White, Christopher Guenzler, Jim Rowland, Mike Yuhas, John Fiorilla, John Sweigart, Dan Meyer, Al Weber

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 9:00 and thanked the convention committee and all volunteers, after which John Fiorilla gave a safety briefing.

Conferences

Bob Bitzer remarked that he would be promoting chapter involvement; no 2026 locations at this time.

Mike Yuhas gave an overview of the autumn conference on Friday, October 3rd and Saturday 4th. The Wisconsin chapter is hosting and celebrating their 75th anniversary. The events will be a charter trip at East Troy Railroad Museum in East Troy and a visit to the Christopher Transportation Museum in Sheboygan (formerly Christopher Farms and Garden) with its huge collection of railway china. Saturday will be the Advisory Council and Board meetings.

Conventions

Eric gave a recap of this convention, noting that there was \$1,250 received in sponsorship with a provisional amount of \$104,853 in advance ticket sales. The committee was not yet ready to announce a location for 2026 at this time.

Mike provided a photographic recap of the last four days.

Film Preservation

Mitch remarked that he has been involved with this project since 1991 and has been receiving many collections of slides and photographs. The photo gallery on the NHRS website is constantly being updated.

Membership

Patti reported that we are 3.61% down and encouraged all to recruit members.

Membership Awards

Doug remarked that all 2025 awards have been sent to either chapters or directly to the members. He will need to more for pins for the 2026 awards.

RailCamp

Becky reported there were 37 campers this year (36 boys, 1 girl) from 22 states. 19 received a full or partial scholarship. Six chapters, two museums, Railroad Passenger Car Alliance, Massachusetts Bay Railroad Enthusiasts and a model railroad club all assisted financially.

She gave an overview of both RailCamp East and Railcamp West and reported that over \$10,000 in reserve funds were used. She also noted that a one-page sponsor guidelines was available for anyone who wanted it.

Becky presented Tony White with an appreciation certificate for his many years of service and dedication to this signature program.

Historic Preservation Award

Mike reported, that as announced previously, the winner this year was the Reading and Northern. He thanked the committee members, Railway Age and Railway Track and Structures magazine. Between 30 and 40 nominations were received. Mike encouraged nominations from members for next year's program.

Brochures

Jon Baake reported that he mailed about 15,000 brochures (10,000 as a result of Wesley Ross' Rail Attractions Guide letter). He encouraged chapter members to become National members.

Rail Attractions Guide

Wesley Ross thanked all who worked on the list this year, which has been published on the NRHS website and e-mailed to all.

Historic Plaque Program

Walter noted that the plaque at Tunnel 6 of Donner Pass was installed on July 8th and the one at the Southern Pacific turntable would be installed in the near future. He is in discussions with the Wichita Valley Chapter for a plaque, as well as the Susquehanna Valley Chapter for several locations. He encouraged anyone to contact him if they wish to know more or suggest a location.

Finances

Bob Bitzer remarked that the financial report had been sent to the Board and Ward Wells, Assistant Treasurer, confirmed we have a positive income year-to-date.

General Counsel

John Fiorilla recapped his previously-submitted report.

Chapter Development

Skip reviewed the proposed new Hub City Chapter and the neighbouring, existing Hagerstown Chapter. [At the Board meeting, the formation of the Hub City Chapter was approved]

Other

Richard Shulby announced that the database of 3,300 bygone roundhouses and those existing had been updated and is now live on the NRHS Admin site and thanked Dawn and Trish for all their work that was entailed in completing the project.

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Richard called the meeting to order at 11:00. He allowed Val Hoski to present her report as she had not done so earlier. She remarked that there will be a July issue of the News, the sixth of the year, leaving three issues left, two of those will be mailed. Val is looking for Christmas-related stories for the November issue.

Elizabeth asked for those Board members present to identify themselves and Kevin, Mike, John, Tony and Tom made themselves known.

Richard asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the last Advisory Council meeting on May 3rd. Ron Gawedzinski made the motion, Joe Maloney seconded and it was carried.

Business Arising From Previous Meeting

1. Update on Committee for At-Large Members

Richard reviewed what has been done so far and the e-mail to At-Large members (mail to those without e-mails) will go out shortly.

2. Update on survey of chapter representatives/presidents regarding chapter yearbook/activities Annual:

Elizabeth reported that this is a work in progress.

3. Recommendations to Board re. Chapter Survey

- prepare an updated contact list for officers, directors, committee chairs with their @nrhs.com e-mails and distribute to national representatives so they know who to contact.
- encourage chapter engagement with the public (if not already doing so) and through railroadiana shows/expositions.
- create a Best Practices for how to make a chapter grow

It was noted by Richard that the Board is small, the Advisory Council is large and the volunteer pool is larger and need someone to lead the effort.

Tony noted that Board member Larry Pearlman is on the Chapter Engagement Committee. David Foster suggested that chapters send in their experiences of what they are doing to contribute to their successes.

New Business

1. Richard noted in that previous administrations, items presented to the Board would be voted upon without Advisory Council input. That has not been happening in recent years, which is as it should be. It was noted that Jon Baake volunteered to be the liaison between the Council and the Board. The Advisory Council will work with Jon to see that this communication protocol is maintained.
2. Champlain Valley Chapter's representative Arthur Bliss introduced the topic of prioritizing Amtrak access for conferences and conventions, noting there is a lot of interest in Vermont in riding Amtrak.

Mike Yuhas took an unofficial poll of the audience and remarked that ten people in attendance rode Amtrak to this convention. It is a concern of the convention committee, but not the highest and it depends upon the destination if travel by train is feasible.

Ken Mosby from South Carolina noted that Amtrak cancelled its trains for the convention time period.

3. Arthur Bliss introduced his chapter's second item, digital access to *The Bulletin*. He is very interested in railway history and the *Bulletin* is a huge source of information for developing history.

Mike Yuhas commented that the current editor does not want the *Bulletin* to be distributed by electronic means since all control would be lost. There is an agreement with the contributors for a one-time use in a printed issue but cannot share or disseminate in digital form. John Fiorilla agreed.

Marlin remarked that the *Bulletin* is the last reason for people to join the society. Al Weber noted that do not have the rights to re-print the articles from the early years.

Jim Rowland of Lehigh Valley Chapter commented that a similar request had been received in their chapter and they digitized their newsletters but they are not downloadable. Digital access is via a members only section of their website.

Open Mic

Ron Gawedzinski announced that he is leaving the St. Louis area later this year and will no longer be the representative for the St. Louis chapter after he leaves. He introduced Cliff Kierstad, his successor.

Patti Webb, on behalf of the Harrisburg Chapter, thanked everyone for their generosity for their donations with the roof repairs, which have now been covered. A Heritage Grant receipt will enable a security system and fire alarm system to be installed.

Ed Fortuna mentioned their chapter's calendar and they sent four campers to RailCamp over two years.

Jon Baake noted that Lisa Didden has become the RailCamp committee head for the Washington DC chapter.

Bob Brewster noted his Intermountain Chapter holds meeting in a private area of a restaurant on Saturday and they try to have three excursions or tours each year. He has attended more than half of the conventions since the 1990's and there are nine chapter members here this year. That is reflective of the quality of the events.

Steve Himpsl, representing Lancaster Chapter, reported he found handwritten notes from 1935 to 1946 which have been digitized but he brought the originals for interest.

Patti Webb commented that this was a work day for her but as she works from home, has the flexibility to attend but realizes there is no way to limit a convention to the weekends. Valli added that not everyone has a 9-5 job. Becky then suggested a survey to all participants and membership regarding the timing and length, to which Mike agreed.

Valli Hoski suggested the possibility of posting convention overviews on Youtube and Mike and Marlin will work on sharing them.

Announcements

Elizabeth announced the next Fireside Chat will take place on September 23rd with the Champlain Valley Chapter.

There being no other business, it was agreed to adjourn the meeting at 12:00.
