Plenary Session
Fall Conference
October 4, 2025

Minutes approved 5/30/2026

President White called the meeting to order. Mike Yuhas went over housekeeping. All Zoom attendees should stay muted and raise their hand when they wish to speak. Once acknowledged, you can then un-mute.

John Fiorilla gave a safety briefing. He advised of the address of the hotel, where all the exits are, and restrooms.

Mike then advised that the meeting was sponsored by the Wisconsin Chapter. President Keith Schmidt, Vice President Dan Grudzielanek, and Vice President Ward Wells were also present. He then advised how the day would progress beginning with reports from the committees. He then turned the meeting over to President White

President white welcomed everyone. He was happy to see the turnout today. He gave a quick story about a member's trip to Milwaukee that had a few hiccups. At one point h was thought to be missing. The moral was that if you see someone who looks like they are troubled or lost, ask if they need help. You might be able to point them in the right direction.
He then asked for a moment of silence for those who are no longer with us.

Reports

Convention – Mike Yuhas. We had a successful convention in East Lansing MI thanks to all our volunteers and the participants. We had 180 participants over the four days of off-site trips and one day of meetings. We had good feedback saying how everyone had enjoyed and some things we didn't do perfectly right. There is a recap video on the NRHS Film Archive Channel. We did something different with registration in that there were no individual tickets.
For 2026 we have nothing firm yet, still in the talking stage. Looking at Cincinnati for a Fall September combination convention and conference. Looking for help from the locals in the area and will be working with them.
2027 Baltimore. B&O Railroad Museum is working on the 200th anniversary of the railroad in America. America Rails 200 is one of the sponsors.

Conferences – Bob Bitzer. He has a chapter that was looking into a fall conference but because of a fall convention we may have to reschedule that. There is no formal proposal currently. We need a chapter to help us with a spring conference. It is important for the business of the society. He will be sending out a memo about this and will also have Val include an article in the NRHS News. Bob stressed the reasons we need the chapters to help with this. Elizabeth asked if she should send a letter to all representatives and presidents, if that would help. Patti Webb suggested looking into

Key Lock & Lantern. They hold a conference every year around the May time frame and have expressed an interest in partnering with the NRHS. Tony asked Patty to send any information to himself and Bob. She acknowledged she would do that.

Heritage Grants- Charlie Webb. He did not get the Zoom link for the meetings. Make sure to use his Grants email address. The team is working on upgrading things for the 2026 application. They expect to have the application available by Thanksgiving. The deadline will be in January. Since there is no board meeting between now and then, he would really like to know what amount of money they will have for the 2026 program or at least a general idea. Many of the applicants are interested in what the program has and what we might be giving.

The second thing is the Twin Forks chapter grant and the restoration of an American Flyer car. Walter Zullig is working on that. He will defer all questions to Walter. Walter advised that the chapter has gone thru several evolutions: they lost members and almost fell of the chapter list as many members moved; most has been resolved but the chapter has decided they are not able to continue the project. Walter is working on a suggestion that we would take back $2000 of the grant and let them keep the rest for the work already done. The bigger question is that the car needs a home. The chapter has decided they can't to store it, it needs to be stabilized, needs to be protected. We need to get the word out if someone can pick it up. The committee would be open to that restoration in the 2026 grant cycle. Ed Kohler, LI Sunrise Trail Chapter is the neighbor to Twin Forks. He gave some history about the car and that Twin Forks had offered the car to them. One of the issues is getting the car trucked to a location. Val stated that if you need something about this published in the News to send it to her. Tony advised that anyone taking the car would have to arrange for a crane at both ends, a trailer, police department, and utility lines on the route and it takes time to do the prep work. We would be willing to assist in this, but the chapter must realize that it's a big expense.

Film Preservation – Marlon Taylor. Nothing new to report. They keep on doing what they do. There are 3000 photos in the gallery.

Membership – Patti Webb. See Appendix 1. Membership is on a decline. She will be stepping down as chair due to health and personal issues. She is hoping Tony will recruit a new chairperson. Current membership as of 9/21 is 3,879, approximately at 4.58% decline since 2024. Mike Yuhas added that the 2024 numbers are for a full year while this number is only ¾ of the year. The numbers will be different at the end of the year. There is still a decline but there should be a lower percentage at the end of the year. The committee has also been sending out renewal reminders for all memberships expiring from the end of September through the end of March. The first went out on 9/27. They are looking to get early renewals. Mike thanked Steve Siegrist for his work. Steve handles all memberships sent in by check. Trying to get people to renew online.

Membership Awards- Doug Scott. See Appendix 2. He has nothing new to report.

Brochures – Jon Baake. Nothing to report.

RailCamp – Becky Gerstung. See Appendix 3.

Historic Preservation Award – Mike Yuhas. Nothing has changed. We have a great relationship with our partners: Railway Age and Railway Track and Structures magazines. The next Railway Interchange show is in May so will ask for nominations towards the end of the year. This is for Railroads, not historical societies, preservation groups but common carrier railroads. It is to support the work they are doing to preserve railroad history.

Historic Plaques – Walter Zullig. See appendix 4. Two plaques were unveiled this year. He sends information to anyone interested.

Attractions – Wes and Shirley Ross. Wes thanked everyone. They are getting ready for 2026. Let them know if anyone is missing from the list. Send any information to Wes.

Inspector General – Walter Zullig. See Appendix 5 and the Grants Report.

Treasurer's Report – Bob Bitzer. Financially we are in good shape. Quick Books is working well. They are involved with the 2024 audit currently. It has an 11/15 filing date. Ward stated that total assets are about $455,000 but that's due to a Bulletin decrease. He then stated that that was the wrong report but that we are profitable by about $44,000. Donations are holding steady. 2025 is still profitable, RailCamp broke even, the convention had a profit. Restricted and unrestricted donations are down this year. There was a question as to where they go. Ward advised they go to both. The treasurer sees the ones that come in with the dues. Those stay with the NRHS.

Tony added that the next Bulletin is ready to be sent. The delay was due to issues with the printer.

NRHS Fund – Bob Ernst. See appendix 6. They are looking for a comptroller Kevin Feeney is now the comptroller for the NRHS. If you know anyone, please let Bob know, He will be putting something in the News. As of the first, the total was $1,450,768nin the Fund account.

NRHS News – Val Hoski. The October issue is almost ready to go. Next will be the November/December issue. All issues are available online going back to 2024.

General Counsel – John Fiorilla. Not a lot going on since the last meeting. Any mail donations he receives go into the Fund. We have received $25,000 from and estate and waiting on $5,000 from another. You can specify in your will a donation to the NRHS. He deals with the attorneys from those estates.

Merchandise – Dave Baniewicz. Convention sales went well. They made a profit. He is looking forward to next year. He is hoping to be in a better location.

New Chapters – Skip Waters. Hub City in Maryland is a social media hit. The are always promoting their progress and activities. They are very proud to be a member of the NRHS.  He stated that everyone should check out their Facebook page. He has had no new requests.

Internet Group – Al Weber. The committee consists of Dawn, Trish, Al and Mike. GoDaddy is the current provider. They are discontinuing some services. They want to think about starting a second virtual server. This would be to move things over that GoDaddy won't do. The are looking at InMotion. A lot of chapters are using this provider. They are a nationwide server farm. The cost is approximately $1,000 for 3 years.

Ward Wells wanted to correct a previous statement. Assets are $133,00 and Profit is $46,000

Tony expressed that committees are a lot of fun. You get to accomplish things and feel good about it. There's not a lot of work and many of the meetings are held via Zoom. We must support each other to make this work.

There being no further business, this portion of the meeting was adjourned.

The Advisory Council meeting will begin at 10:30 am.

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

# Membership Awards

All 2025 membership Awards were sent out and none so far have been returned for bad addresses.

I need to purchase more 50 & 60 years pins to cover 2026 and beyond for a few years and also cover mailing expenses and supplies

I am asking that $3900.00 be budgeted for Membership Awards to cover additional pins plus 2026 mailing and supplies.

Doug Scott
Membership Awards

RailCamp – Another successful year! We had 37 campers this year. These kids, only one girl this year, came from 22 states. Of the 37 campers, 19 received full or partial scholarships. We have our usual reserved funds and out of the blue a guy offered to send a kid to camp. 6 NRHS chapters, 2 museums, a 4H model club, RPCA and Mass REA all helped kids this year. These young people are not only getting "the best week of their life", but they are introduced to employment opportunities beyond "driving the train". They learn first-hand at the various museums we include the value and importance of preservation and keeping railroad history alive. My chapter has past campers serving as a museum docent, a track replacement work crew member and even one of the very first RailCamp attendees at Steamtown, now working for VT Railway, just completed his second year as a counselor. Look at the age of your membership and ask yourself, "Who will carry on?" Get your young people involved. RailCamp is a great introduction. I have brochures available. Give them out at a chapter meeting, take them to the Boy Scout office or anywhere young people gather or leave them at a local museum or library. Not all the bills have been paid. I do not have a final financial report at this time. It looks like we did go over budget a little. Fortunately, we have reserved funds for this. Over $10,000 was used to help campers. One of the biggest expenses is renting vans. We need a sponsor for some assistance with this.

RailCamp happens thanks to the planning and execution of two great programs. None of this would be possible without the dedication and tireless work of our directors. Tony White for East and John Cox for Northwest give countless hours of their time to make it all happen. All counselors and support staff are volunteers.

I especially want to thank Tony. He has been involved with this since 2015, the same year I joined the team. He has been there planning, visiting venues, the University, restaurants, making personal contacts with key people along the way. His friendly manner and respectful pursuit of the various ideas for the East program is reflected in the cooperation he has received from everyone. He has expressed his desire to step down, work in the background, share his knowledge and be there for support for a new Director.

We are always looking for new counselors and support staff. If you are interested, please contact us.

## REPORT OF HISTORIC PLAQUE COMMITTEE

Since the last meeting we have worked with several chapters and other organizations that are interested in obtaining NRHS Historic Plaques. There is nothing to report on these efforts as of this writing.

We always are open to suggestions from members for possible plaque subjects.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter E. Zullig Jr.
Chair—Historic Plaque Committee

# Appendix 4

## REPORT OF HISTORIC PLAQUE COMMITTEE

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Respectfully submitted,

Walter E. Zullig Jr.
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# Appendix 6

NRHS Fund Report – 2025 Fall Conference  October 4, 2025

# Trustees and Officers

Bob Ernst, President
R. Victor Varney, VP
Wes Ross
Jeff Smith
Mike Walker
Bob Bitzer
Charles Webb
(Non-voting)
John Fiorilla, Secretary & General Counsel
Kevin Feeney, Comptroller

The NRHS Fund Trustees have been meeting quarterly. The last meeting of the NRHS Fund Board was held via Zoom on Friday, July 25, 2025. The next meeting of the NRHS Fund Board will be held as a Zoom meeting on October 21, 2025.

As of September 22, 2025, the Wells Fargo Advisors investment portfolio was valued at $1,393,765.31. The Wells Fargo Checking account was $53,661.81.

A $5,000 donation was received from the Lynn A. Heintz (At-Large #4473) estate.

The NRHS Fund is not anticipating another transfer to the NRHS in 2025.

The NRHS Fund will conduct year-end membership fundraising along with Giving-Tuesday emails.

The NRHS Fund is seeking a Comptroller to replace Kevin Feeney. An article will be in the next issue of the *NRHS News*.

Information for the 2024 audit is going to Bowers as requested by the auditors. The Fund has not had any updates or requests for information from Bowers.

The NRHS Fund is seeking in coordination with the NRHS a person that can approach Foundations, Trusts and Railroads for grants.

The NRHS Fund is presenting a slate of candidates for the Board of Trustees. Three Trustees terms end this year, Wes Ross, Jeff Smith and Charles Webb. The names of the candidates will be given at the BOD meeting.