

Plenary Session  
NRHS Convention Meeting  
July 17, 2025  
Minutes Approved 10/4/25

President Tony White called the meeting to order at 9 AM. He welcomed all to the convention meetings.

General Counsel, John Fiorilla, gave the safety briefing.

Eric Fogg requested that anyone who has not picked up their pre-orders should do so today. There are also items still available for sale.

Reports –

Conferences – Bob Bitzer. He has been sending letters to chapters explaining why they should host meetings and the benefits of hosting. The Fall Conference is being hosted by the Wisconsin Chapter. They are celebrating their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The dates are October 2-4. Registration will open on 10/2 at 4PM. Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> will be trips. The morning will be spent at the Christopher Transportation Museum and the afternoon at the East Troy Electric Railroad. Lunch will be at Milwaukee's Bavarian Bierhaus.

Heritage Grants – Charlie Webb. See Appendix 3. Charlie thanked the committee for all that they do. They appreciate Mike and Val for getting their information out to the publications. He thanked Dawn for getting the information on the website. They had to postpone their after-action review but will be scheduling one. They are thinking about next year's program. Applications will probably go out mid-November with a deadline of January 31, 2026. They gave out \$150,000 and could have given out more if they had it. There are a lot of people with Valued programs that need some attention. He has already had inquiries about 2026. The committee is getting reports slowly from groups that have completed projects over the past several years.

Convention Committee – Eric Fogg. Eric stated he had a lot of fun and hoped everyone else did. Registration went right up to the last minute, but they were able to accommodate everyone. The committee received \$1250 in sponsorships and ticket sales of \$104,853. The numbers are provisional and will be updated. In comparison, the 2024 convention generated \$84,000 of ticket revenue while this year it was \$104,000. He gave the attendance numbers for the trips. He stated that if everyone who attended brought one other person, The attendance would have been better.

Mike stated that next year's convention is in the works. They are looking at a few locations, but no decisions have been made yet. He mentioned that at our second stop, Steve Barry, an NRHS member, offered to organize our photo lines. He then showed a short film of the various trips we took over the week. He started with the view of his vehicle after he and Eric had gone to Costco! He thanked everyone for attending and thanked the bus hosts for their work during the week.

Film Preservation – Mitch Dakelman. See Appendix 4. Mitch stated that he took over the film library in 1991. The movie collection is housed in a station owned by the Friends of the NJ Railroad and Transportation. They keep getting donations of collections of slides and photographs. He received a new scanner last year to help with the digitization. It's an ongoing process. They use a gentleman in Utah to digitize film.

Membership – Patti Webb. As of July 7, membership was down 3.6%. Her homework for everyone is to recruit new members. President White then explained the process of paying online vs mailing. It's more accurate and cost saving to do it online.

Membership Awards – Doug Scott. See Appendix 2. All 2025 awards have been sent out. He will need to order more pins for 2026. He is currently getting pricing together for the budget. In the Spring he will be asking chapters where to send the pins.

RailCamp – Becky Gerstung. Another successful year. We had 37 campers this year due to a mix-up and one camper dropping out. We did have one girl this year. They all came from 22 different states. Of the 37, 19 received full or partial scholarships. Six NRHS chapters, 2 museums, a 4H club, RPCA, and Mass Bay Railroad Enthusiasts all helped the kids. Most of the kids say that this is the best week of their lives. They are introduced to employment opportunities other than operating the locomotive. They learn firsthand at the museums the value and importance of preservation and restoration. There are RailCamp brochures so please take some back and distribute.

We had some unexpected situations with Tacoma Rail, which is a big draw for Northwest. They have new management who advised “no more”. Becky sent a letter including a brochure with their photo on it. They agreed to this year, but this would be the last. Becky stated, “we’ll see”.

Amtrak, with all their shakeups, came through for us. When one location was cancelled, Tony was able to get the Perryville Railroad Museum to open for us.

There is no financial report at this time as all bills are not in yet. Over \$10,000 was used from the reserve fund to help some of the campers. She thanked John Cox and Tony White, both are directors, and the counselors and staff for their time.

Tony has expressed his desire to step down as the East Director. Becky then presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation.

Brochures – Jon Baake. See Appendix 1. He has mailed 15,000. 10,000 of those brochures came from Wes Ross referrals. He has some there if anyone needs them. Please contact him if you need more.

Discount List – Wes and Shirley Ross. Wes thanked everyone who worked on the project. He is looking forward to next year.

Historic Plaques – Walter Zullig. See Appendix 8. If anyone has any idea, please contact Walter.

Inspector General – Walter Zullig. See Appendix 9.

Treasurer – Bob Bitzer. One of the reports sent to the board gives a complete picture of activity over last year and the current year. The audit for 2024 is being prepared. All Heritage Grant payments have been made. Ward will go into more detail of the reports at the Board meeting. Kevin Feeney stated that many checks have been issued and explained why some balance look so high.

NRHS Fund – Bob Ernst. See Appendix 6. Bob gave an update to the report. As of 7/4 we had \$6031 in donations. He thanked all those who have made donations. We have received \$29,713 from the Winkler Estate. He then thanked John Fiorilla and Ellen Scott for their help with the donations.

General Counsel – John Fiorilla. See Appendix 5. He has been busy securing insurance for both RailCamp and the current convention. He made a point that you need to read all contracts before signing. He worked with the Winkler Estate to obtain the funds from the estate.

Chapter Development – Skip Waters. At the last meeting we held off on the discussion for acceptance of the Hub City Chapter due to a location conflict with the Hagerstown Chapter. The two are in close proximity to each other. After much discussion with each of the chapters, he learned that both chapters have very different goals. Both are active in their focus of interest. They both agreed that they can both function in their current locations without harming the other. In the future, they may decide to merge but choose to stay as individual chapters at this time. Skip will bring up the Hub City chapter for approval at the Board meeting later today.

#### New Business

Ellen Scott received a letter from a member looking for information. He has several photos from the 1964 Convention held in Newark NJ. He is looking for information on where the convention was held. If anyone has any information, please let her know.

Becky Gerstung has information for potential camper sponsor support.

Richard Shulby announced that the Extent and Bygone Roundhouses survey is now online. It's taken him 10 years to do the research, and he will update the information yearly.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:20am.

Respectfully submitted,

**Ellen Scott**

Ellen Scott  
Secretary

## **Appendix 1**

### **Membership Brochures.**

So far this year I have sent out more than 10,000 NRHS Membership Brochures to approximately 120 railway attractions and museums. Most of the requests for brochures were the result of Wes Ross contacting railway attractions and museums for his annual directory and at the same time asking those contacted if they would be willing to display NRHS Membership Brochures. Where yes, Wes creates a list of the attractions requesting brochures and forwards it to me. I serve as the fulfillment center packaging up and mailing out the brochures as requested. I also process requests for up to an additional 5000 brochures (in total) from chapters and others promoting the NRHS and I distribute them at conferences and conventions.

Jon Baake

## **Appendix 2**

### **Membership Awards**

As of 7/3/2025, all membership awards have been sent out to chapters or individuals.

Thank you to all chapters who responded to Elizabeth's request for direction as to where to send certificates and pins. Two Chapters received 10 awards each and several others also received multiple awards. I sent follow-up emails to other chapters, some responded. All those chapters that we received no response at all had their membership awards sent directly to the recipients.

I did receive back two thank you letters from At-Large members. They were surprised and pleased that our NRHS recognized them.

Doug Scott  
Membership Awards

## Appendix 3

June 15, 2025

**NRHS Heritage Grants Committee.** Report for NRHS Convention

2025 recipients have been notified.

Acceptance Agreements approved by John Fiorilla and forwarded to the treasurer for disbursement.

Those not receiving awards have been notified

Press release has been distributed

Web site list of awardees was provided to Dawn and company

Thank you messages from recipients shared with committee members

After Action Review scheduled with committee members

**Other items:**

Committee unanimously approved the request from the Waldwick Historical Society to reallocate the \$4550.00 grant approved in 2024 for exterior spot repairs to 1890 ERIE Railroad "WC" wooden Interlocking Tower. Since the award was granted the priorities of the Society changed to the immediate need to address issues with the stairs and handrails. This change was approved by President White. Amendment letter to original award notice was sent.

## Appendix 4

### **Film and Slide Preservation Committee – Marlin Taylor**

At this point, there is nothing to be added to the Film and Slide Preservation Committee report submitted for the Spring Conference -- we simply continue to focus on the areas discussed in that report.

## Appendix 5

### **Report of the General Counsel**

Since the last Board meeting in Johnson City, the General Counsel has been busy securing insurance for both Rail Camp and the Lansing Convention. Some of the requirements for insurance by some of the providers of services were quite onerous and our insurance carriers would not cover some of these provisions. We were able to have the providers alter their requirements so that they were acceptable to our insurance carriers. We also were involved in a situation where we discovered very late in the game (a few days before the sale) that an individual was selling a film which NRHS owned and which had been loaned to a now deceased member. The most inexpensive way to recover the film once we saw it on eBay was to purchase it back. Mitch Dakelman, head of the film committee discovered the issue and was able to recover the film by purchasing it for a small fee on eBay. General Counsel also gave advice to Skip Waters regarding issues involving a new chapter at Hagerstown Maryland. This appears to have been resolved and the issue will be discussed at the Lansing Board Meeting. Finally, the General Counsel worked with Ed Berntsen regarding issues involving equipment owned by the Pacific Northwest Chapter. We assisted in getting them local counsel to help with resolving the issues.

June 25, 2025

John K. Fiorilla  
General Counsel

## **Appendix 6**

Trustees and Officers

Bob Ernst, President,  
R Victor Varney, Vice Pres.  
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 in person on Friday, May 2, 2025. The next meeting of the NRHS Fund Board will be held as a Zoom meeting on July 25, 2025.

As of July 1, 2025, the Wells Fargo Advisors investment portfolio was valued at \$1,329,820.00. The Wells Fargo Checking account was \$6,502.00.

The NRHS Fund attached a donation ask letter to the membership proxy notice. As of July 4, 2025, \$3,725.00 was donated by the membership through this campaign.

The NRHS Fund is seeking a Comptroller to replace Kevin Feeney. Kevin has taken on the Comptroller position in the NRHS.

The NRHS Fund completed the transfer of \$133,594.00 on June 11, 2025, for the Heritage Grants Program. This included \$50,000 from the Samuel Freeman Trust grant.

Information for the 2024 audit is going to Bowers as requested by the auditors. The engagement letter was signed and sent to Bowers on June 12, 2025. The goal is to have a completed audit and 990 form well before the November 15, 2025, deadline.

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

The NRHS Fund will present a slate of candidates for the Board of Trustees at the Fall Conference. Three Trustees terms end this year, Wes Ross, Jeff Smith and Charles Webb.

The meeting schedule for the NRHS Fund Board in the remainder of 2025 will be July 25 and October 24. All will be held at 7PM ET on Zoom. The NRHS Fund will have a report to the Board at the Fall Conference.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Ernst

NRHS Fund President

## Appendix 7

### **REPORT OF NRHS INSPECTOR GENERAL**

Since the last Board meeting, I have been working on a matter that originated with the Heritage Grants Committee. The issue involves a chapter that received a grant several years ago but appears to have done very little work on the grant project. Meanwhile they seem to have split into two sub chapters, each with a different responsibility. Aside from the obvious question of if and when they will complete the project, a side issue has

popped up since the chapter has but four National members whereas our Bylaws require five members to maintain a chapter. This investigation is ongoing.

No other issues have come to the IG's attention since the last Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter E. Zullig Jr.,  
NRHS Inspector General

## **Appendix 8**

### **REPORT OF HISTORIC PLAQUE COMMITTEE**

The plaques for Tunnel #6 at Donner Summit, CA, and the former SP turntable at the Oregon Rail Heritage Center in Portland have been received and installed. A further program will take place at Tunnel #6 on Tuesday, July 8. The dedication ceremony for the Portland plaque is expected to take place in the near future.

We also had worked with the Wichita Valley Chapter on a possible plaque but they seem to have lost interest as there has been no communication from them since mid-March. An Upstate NY chapter has inquired about plaques for several structures on the Southern Tier of NY and nearby areas in Pennsylvania. One suggestion is the historic DL&W passenger station in Binghamton, NY. I have sent them the necessary paperwork and we expect to hear from them shortly.

As always, suggestions of historic rail facilities that might be plaque candidates are most welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Walter E. Zullig Jr.  
Chair-Historic Plaque Committee