



**ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

September 24th, 2022
Salon E, Holiday Inn, Springdale, Arkansas

AC Members Present: **Kenneth Eddy** (Arkansas-Boston Mountains), **Larry Dyer** (Atlanta), **Richard Shulby** (Baltimore and Piedmont-Carolinas), **Doug Scott** (Cape Cod), **Elizabeth Guenzler** (Central Coast), **R. Victor Varney** (North Carolina Railway Museum), **Dawn Holmberg** (North Star), **Bill Welk** (Philadelphia), **Ron Gawedzinski** (Saint Louis), **Bob St. John** (Topeka), **Mike Yuhas** (Wisconsin)

AC Members Joining Remotely: **Cora Sowa** (New York), **Jon Baake** (Washington DC), **Rick Davidson** (Potomac), **Bob Leslie** (Blue Ridge), **Richard King** (Cincinnati), **Tom Marsh** (Gulf Coast), **Mark Lazur** (Utica and Mohawk Valley, Gulf Coast), **Bob Brewster** (Intermountain), **Wesley Ross** (Kentucky Central), **Tom Steckler** (Lancaster), **Kenneth Katta** (Long Island-Sunrise Trail), **Rebecca Gerstung** (Niagara Frontier), **Al Baker** (Pacific Northwest), **Carl Jensen** (Roanoke), **Ed Bernsten** (Tacoma), **Richard Soderman** (Western Maryland), **Bill Long** (North Texas), **Paul Hopkins** (East Tennessee), **Richard Harrington** (Bergen-Rockland), **David Brighters** (Southeast Louisiana), **John DeRoo** (Kansas City)

Others Joining Remotely: Harold Shaak, Valli Hoski, Regan Rickson, Charles Webb, Walter Zullig, Marlin Taylor

Others Present: Al Weber, Eileen Weber, John Fiorilla, John Goodman, Carol Ann Cornelius, Frank, Ralph Robert Bitzer, Scott Andes, Ellen Scott, Robert Ernst, Joe Maloney, Dennis Goren, Tony White, Edward Harris, Dave Baniewicz, Skip Waters, Hugh Harris, Eric Fogg, Kevin Feeney, Dan Meyer.

Larry Dyer called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone at 08:03. Ken Eddy of the local Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, gave a welcome from the chapter. Larry then read the bylaw sections of Article 8 concerning the election of chairman and secretary.

He asked the members in attendance (in person and remote) if they elect Richard Shulby as chairman. There was unanimous agreement.

He then asked the members in attendance (in person and remote) if they elect Elizabeth Guenzler as secretary. There was unanimous agreement.

Richard then assumed the gavel, thanked everyone and asked for a moment of silence to honour the late Jim Wrinn, first responders and others whom we had lost.

There were no changes to the agenda. The minutes of the May 16th meeting had been distributed and there were no changes. **It was motioned by Joe Maloney that the minutes be accepted as presented. Seconded by Larry Dyer. Carried.**

Reports from National Officers:

1. President Al Weber - most areas have been busy; situation normal
2. Vice-President Tony White - he is gathering input from each chapter and membership and remarked that the Advisory Council is for the membership. Gave thanks to Richard and Elizabeth.
3. Secretary Ellen Scott - no report
4. Treasurer Bob Bitzer and Assistant Treasurer Carol Ann Cornelius - draft financial statements up to August 31st, 2022 were sent out earlier. The society is sound and the investment accounts are sound.

Ron Gawedzinski gave thanks to Bob Bitzer and Bob Ernst for the transparency of accounts for the flow of funds of the NRHS and the NRHS Fund.

Richard thanked Bob for providing the information before the meeting and was glad to see this practice in place.

5. Fund Treasurer Bob Ernst - a meeting occurred last night, one of the quarterly meetings. The money in the Fund is in a solid position in Wells Fargo Advisor Account. \$996,784 in that account and savings of \$53,751. They are consulting with the Wells Fargo advisors on a quarterly re-distribution of the portfolio to a 60/40 equity fixed income (currently 70/30).

There has been dissatisfaction with the audit and the company we have been using (KL) - recommendation will be made to move to a new firm for next year's audit.

Members of the Fund Committee are Bob Ernst, R. Victor Varney, Cynthia Atwood (Wells Fargo), Wesley Ross, Jeff Smith, Mike Walker and Bob Bitzer. Kevin Feeney is the comptroller and John Fiorilla the secretary.

The Fund was established as a way to hold money for the NRHS and protect it; it is at arms length from the Society. It is in a very conservative investment. The Fund does not operate anything or have programs. Fund Trustees are approved by the Board on a two-year cycle. They have no control over how the NRHS uses the money. They send it over as long as it is for a legitimate use.

The Samuel Freeman Fund is in the second of three years for Heritage Grants and there is \$100,000 there.

Cora Sowa asked for confirmation that if someone sues the NRHS, they can't get that money. Bob Ernst confirmed, saying that the Fund is a separate corporation from the NRHS, independently incorporated.

Signature Program Reports

1. *Heritage Grants* (Charles Webb) - trying to get funds to groups more quickly and working on a project to pursue this. He is also consolidating the request for legal documents with the applications. Applications will be updated by the end of October. The deadline will be moved from February 28th to January 1st to give more time for review.

He would also like to explore transferring the funds electronically rather than by cheque and will be discussing this with Bob Bitzer. The proposal to raise the limit from the current \$5,000 to \$10,000 will be worked on this winter.

He has developed a tracking sheet for project reporting, and also thanked Val Hoski and Skip Waters for use of the newsletter and social media for the recognition of the work completed.

2. *RailCamp* (Becky Gerstung) - 2023 is now in the planning stages. Tony White and John Cox have been in contact with the groups including the University of Delaware and University of Puget Sound in Tacoma. Do not have firm figures at this time. She has been approached by two new sponsors. Two new sponsors stepped forward and new brochures are being developed to remove Mount Rainier Scenic Railroad and the addition of Portland.
3. *Historic Plaques* (Walter Zullig) - nothing new. Two groups approached us but interest waned and there is nothing to report. No pending projects.
4. *Film Library* (Marlin Taylor) - not a lot to report. Very limited in manpower. Mitch Dakelmann digitizes the pictures as he has time. In 2019, they were given a huge collection by Mr. Wybel from the defunct Bluewater Chapter. There are three more reels to work on and the next project is to build a slide photo collection through the website in a few months.

Carl Jensen asked if there was any way of expediting the process? Could the AC take it up on his behalf? A Paducah Chapter member is a professional film editor. Marlin replied that the films are raw and there is a lot to be edited. Transcription and narration also needs to be done.

Marlin noted that he and Joe Maloney had discussed this topic recently and Carl suggested we earmark funds for this project. Need to get projects separated and itemized. Jon Baake agreed, noting it is important to identify a cause for fundraising and people are more likely to contribute when a specific project is highlighted.

Cora Sowa asked where the film library is located, to which Marlin replied that most of it is in New Jersey (Mitch's home) and the basement of a preserved railway station. Cora then asked if the project needed funds. The answer was that there is a reasonable amount of money set aside for the project.

Carl suggested a sub-committee or group was needed. Victor Varney mentioned that his chapter (North Carolina Railway Museum) is doing a mini version of this; collecting and

preserving in a climate-controlled area, which is about 1% of his job. Videos are 8 mm, 16 mm and VHS. The problem is that it is unknown where the locations are or what is being shown. Digitization has its limits. They have been somewhat successful in “crowd-sourcing” for locations.

Marlin remarked that he had bought special equipment to convert from VHS to digital but there are not enough people to help.

Richard Shulby asked Victor if he would be willing to assist with this project and help to formulate a plan with Joe Maloney, Marlin Taylor and himself. Victor agreed.

Marlin mentioned that Tom Coughlin (“digital brains”) is looking to get it centralized and open a cloud account for digitized footage). There are also slides from William Martin in Alabama with no identification.

Richard made a motion to assist the Film Committee with strengthening their process and giving it more support, with the assistance of Victor, Joe and himself. Doug Scott seconded. Carried.

There was a fifteen minute break.

5. *Website* (Dawn Holmberg) - She has been having problems with the website but is updating records as to chapters and the main site. The Admin site is creating a few problems. Al Weber then explained that the server needs to be upgraded and will be recommending to the Board to upgrade to the next level, which gives us four times the server space and power.

Val thanked Al and Dawn for their efforts and noted that delays to the News being posted on the Admin site is on the server side not the ‘human’ side.

6. *Facebook* (Skip Waters) - He posts chapter news, Heritage Grants and some news items on our FB page and is always on the lookout for “original content”. If anyone wishes to submit items, his e-mail is wgrush@swbell.net

Membership

1. *General* (Hugh Harris) - He will be issuing a reminder for the 2023 renewal cycle. Working on getting online system to work properly. Between 5,200 and 5,300 Bulletins are mailed out each quarter and there are 4,600 members with a renewal dates of December 31st, 2022.

Jon Baake reported that he sent over 10,000 membership brochures out last year, and if anyone needs them, please send him an e-mail. Plastic holders can be sent also.

2. *Awards* (Doug Scott) - Sent out 2022 pins and certificates. Needs all chapters to send updated chapter information to Dawn so he can send to national representatives so they can present the pins and certificates.

Committee Reports - Convention

John Goodman reported that the 2021 Milwaukee convention made a small profit, just under \$7,000. The 2022 Buena Park convention was the lowest-attended at 104, but it was very successful.

2023 will be in the Fort Lauderdale area. Two hotels are being looked at. The dates will either be September 1st to 6th or September 8th to 13th. Brightline, Gold Coast Railroad Museum and Flagler Museum and the U.S. Sugar Railroad are potential venues.

- Registration would open Friday, meetings would be Saturday and the banquet Wednesday, which closes the convention..
- A seminar room is being offered but the question is do we charge for attending a seminar. Ron Gawedzinski noted that the society has money and we can afford. He and John would discuss later in the day. Walter was willing to get the Brightline President as the banquet speaker. Carl mentioned that the seminars are a 'non-convention expense'.
- Richard Shulby noted that attendance was down at other events also; it is not just the NRHS.

2024 will be Harrisburg, Pennsylvania - stay tuned.

Committee Reports - Conferences

Bob Bitzer reported that there were just 42 members in attendance here in Springdale and wondered how to generate more interest and get people to attend.

The Spring 2023 conference will be joint with the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society and the Southern Pacific Historical Society.

- It will occur in Sparks (Reno) at the **Nugget Hotel and Casino from May 16th to 21st, 2023. Tuesday to Sunday, with Sunday being the Advisory Council and Board meetings at the end of the convention.**
- **Hotel costs will be \$99 Monday to Thursday and \$129 Friday and Saturday.** Bob is not certain if those rates include the resort fee.

Future conferences need volunteers from chapters or we will need to change the model.

Bob Brewster remarked that he would like to see a shuttle system or the like from the airport to the hotel for future conferences.

Victor Varney wondered about the financial exposure and asked could National mitigate the financial losses if that occurs. Bob would discuss this at the afternoon's Board meeting.

Jon Baake remarked that with the restructuring of the Board, a smaller attendance is expected. Elizabeth noted that these conferences are open to all members so there should be more.

Carl noted there is a large distinction between the convention and the conferences and we need to look at this in more detail. The AC needs to help the Board make decision.

Publications

1. *Bulletin* (Jeff Smith) - no report
2. *NRHS News* (Val Hoski) - her report is online
3. *Attractions* (Wesley Ross) - The 2022 list has been published. He thanked Jon Baake for distributing the brochures. Whereas previous versions just included those who gave a / discount for NRHS members or were free, since COVID-19, it was decided to include everyone who wanted to participate, thereby increasing the number of brochures available to the public. It is in the best interests to continue with the hybrid lists and hopes a decision can be made in the near future,.

Tony White mentioned that this would be a Board agenda item.

Legal Issues

John Fiorilla reported that the trademarks of “RailCamp” and “NRHS” have been renewed, he has signed off on the grants applications, have approved new audit company, Bowers & Associates, oversaw the elections and working on the applications for filing for non-profits of NRHS and NHRS Fund.

Share The Wealth

As Becky Gerstung was not on the phone at this particular time, Richard Shulby read her report, asking that the program be ended due to lack of participation.

Victor Varney moved that the Share the Wealth program be ended. Mike Yuhas seconded. Carried.

New Business

1. Zoom Meetings for Heritage Grants - Charlie Webb.

Charlie summarized his request, explaining that the ‘free’ version of Zoom allows for only 40 minutes for a meeting and could a subscription be bought for use by his group and other signature program committees so valuable time and continuity of the discussion is not wasted in people re-connecting

Al Weber explained that we do have a yearly subscription to GoToMeeting and Dan Meyer (or Al) is the contact. Skip Waters noted that a Zoom platform would be beneficial to the chapters. Tony White noted that it could be set up for anyone and Doug Scott agreed it would be very beneficial.

Ellen Scott agreed to send out the information.

2. 175th Anniversary of railroads in Chicago in 2023 - Blackhawk Chapter.

David Daruska talked to this topic. His chapter has been promoting October as Railroad History month with posters for sale, website, a Mayoral proclamation and a landmark application for the Kedzie Street station.

Their efforts have not received much attention. Initial support was received from the Chicago History Museum but the contact person passed away. He will be contacting the National Park Service in Pullman.

Carl Jensen suggested the chapter contact Val Hoski for a newsletter item, to which she readily agreed. David is not looking for funding from the AC, just recognition of their efforts.

Open Mic

1. Jon Baake sees the conferences as a business meeting with a trip added on. Does not want to see them compete with a convention. Conference should be a complete package.

Tony summarized that in 2023, the Board meetings will occur at the spring conference in Sparks and the convention in Fort Lauderdale. If we need a third, it would be virtual.

Jon Baake made a motion that the Advisory Council would meet at the same time the Board is -- either in-person or virtual. Carl seconded. Tony confirmed that that will occur. Carried.

2. Dave Baniewicz noted that emblem sales are now at clearance prices and were available at the back of the room.
3. Victor Varney noted that the North Carolina chapter information on the NRHS website was not up-to-date, and the chapters which were no longer in existence were still on the website. Hugh reported that he had embarked on a project to correct chapter information which was a long project.

Richard Shulby noted that with the elimination of Regional Vice Presidents and Regional Directors, we had nothing to put in place to counter it and need to improve two-way communication.

Elizabeth Guenzler reminded everyone of the work Becky Gerstung had undertaken to obtain current chapter representative information and that the list she has is the most up-to-date. She is being informed of changes and is sending those amendments to Dawn for website update. She also mentioned the Website Communications, Information and Sales Committee that had been formed by Frank Cornelius with herself and her husband Christopher as co-chairs.

Richard Shulby made a motion that a committee be formed to 'investigate communication with chapters'. Mike Yugas, Elizabeth Guenzler, Valli Hoski, Jon Baake and Tony White volunteered, as did Richard. This was seconded by Ron Gawedzinski. Carried.

There being no further business, it was motioned by Doug Scott and seconded by Ron Gawedzinski that the meeting be adjourned. Carried at 11:38.
