

This board meeting was conducted virtually, via Zoom, on the evening of Monday, April 22, 2024. President Keith Schmidt was presiding. Vice President Ward Wells, Secretary Tom Marcussen and Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek were present. We had all five Directors: Dan Grudzielanek, Ralph McClure, Andrew Roach, Neal Wegner and Mike Yuhas. One other member was present: Cathy Wegner.

Mike Yuhas started recording at 7:30 pm. All officers and directors were present (see above). We therefore had a quorum. Keith Schmidt called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm. That was the first agenda item.

The second agenda item was review and approval of the minutes from the previous virtual board meeting held on Monday, January 15, 2024. Secretary Tom Marcussen had distributed copies of those minutes to all officers and directors on Thursday, April 18. They are also posted on our Chapter Web site. Mike Yuhas moved that the minutes be approved as posted. Ward Wells and Dan Grudzielanek seconded the motion. No corrections were suggested. There was no other discussion. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

The third agenda item was the Treasurer's report from Tara Grudzielanek. As of March 31:

- Our checking account at Landmark Credit Union was at \$1612.01. Our savings account there remains at \$100.02. We have two certificates of deposit (CD's):
 - 18-month CD at 4.51%. Current value is \$17,686.57. Will mature in November 2024.
 - 24-month CD at 4.22%. Current value is \$11,415.19. Will mature in May 2025.
- We still have \$133.17 left in our US Bank checking account.
- Our Heartland Mutual Fund was valued at \$102,019.09. That is up by about \$7600.00.

There were no questions on the above report. President Keith Schmidt accepted the report as read.

The fourth agenda item was the Membership Report from Membership Committee chair Mike Yuhas. As of today, we have 146 members paid up through at least December 31, 2024. Two of those members have pre-paid through December 31, 2025. We have 25 members from 2023 who did not renew. That number includes several who died in 2023. Mike was not alarmed about the decrease. We are back to more normal conditions, with people having more options than virtual meetings, since the corona virus pandemic ended. Mike gave credit to our quality newsletter and presentations for our large membership. There were no questions on the membership report. President Keith Schmidt accepted it as presented.

The fifth agenda item was Old Business. No one was aware of any Old Business.

The sixth agenda item was New Business. The first sub-item was our participation in the Mad City Train Show in Madison the weekend of Saturday, February 17-Sunday, February 18. This was our first train show since before the corona virus pandemic. Ward Wells took the lead in organizing our participation. There were approximately 7200 paid attendees and 300 exhibitors. It was busier on Saturday than on Sunday. Traffic was pretty high on both days. Our new table cloth / throw and vertical banner, both with our Chapter logo and identification, helped us stand out and attract attention. We gave out a large number of Chapter ad flyers, and copies of Sparks & Cinders.

The second sub-item (under New Business) was an idea from Janet Yuhas after that show. Mike Yuhas is proposing that we offer a three-month free trial membership to anyone who shows up at a train show, or an in-person meeting at the North Shore Congregational Church in Fox Point. This would be Chapter-only (technically subscriber status) (not National). It would be a one-time per person offer. Keith Schmidt said that was a good idea. He is in favor if Mike is OK with the added paperwork. Keith will work with Mike Yuhas and Ward Wells to design an application form. It will not cost us any significant money. Therefore no formal vote was needed. The consensus was to do this. Neal Wegner said we normally order 160 copies of *Sparks & Cinders*, with 15-18 copies normally left over. Mike Yuhas said his current print-out of mailing labels shows 139 issues mailed out. He thought there were normally about 20 left over. Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek had lost communication with Chel Graphics due to an e-mail glitch. That is now fixed. She will contact Angie from Chel Graphics and have her call Keith Schmidt to discuss costs.

The third sub-item (under New Business) was our dinner train outing at the East Troy Electric Railroad. The date is now penciled in with them for Saturday, August 24, 2024. Keith had inquired about offering a choice of two entrees to attendees. He has not yet received a response. The choices that we can pick from are filet mignon for \$130.00, surf (shrimp) and turf (filet) for \$145.00, whiskey glazed brisket for \$115.00, bacon wrapped pork tenderloin for \$110.00, and lasagna for \$85.00. These are full meals with salad, dinner rolls, a cheese tray, other appetizers, potatoes, and dessert. Water and coffee will be free. Other drinks will be cash bar. We will need to have a minimum of 30 participants to make the economics work. We can expect the dinner train to leave the East Troy depot at 5:00 pm and return about 7:00 pm.

The night photo session (our fourth sub-item) will follow. We are thinking about using the Trent Siding, possible at or close to the junction. The North Shore dispatch car and the freight motor should be available by then. We may do a loading scene, and get the East Troy fire and police departments to participate. We may try for an antique fire truck or other historic vehicles. Lighting will be a critical part of the picture. There was an extended technical discussion on the relative merits of flash vs. flood lighting. Members had varying degrees of success with both at previous photo sessions at Saint Paul Union Depot in Minnesota and at the Illinois Railroad Museum. Flash lighting usually requires the use of stable tripods and multi-second exposures. Technical assistance will be limited to suggested settings. Photographers are advised that "You have to know how to use your camera." There are three members that might be able to provide lighting equipment and / or technical assistance—Chris Guss, Marshall W. Beecher, and Mark Raia. Mike Yuhas volunteered to reach out to all three. There was a consensus to limit participation for 25-30 photographers to deliver a quality product. The result will be a cost of \$100.00 to \$150.00 per person. Some sessions, from other organizations, involving actors, and / or rented props or lighting equipment, have gone as high as \$300.00. We will probably need to reach outside the Wisconsin Chapter to attract enough photographers to make the night photo session a viable option. It was therefore suggested that we begin advertising as soon as we know a firm date and other details.

There was some resistance to the above high prices. Mike Yuhas pointed out that this will be the effective kick-off event for our 75th anniversary celebration.

The fifth sub-item (under New Business) was our 2024 Annual Chapter Banquet. This will be at Pallas Restaurant on 108th Street in West Allis, on Saturday, October 5, 2024. Neal Wegner just confirmed our

reservation for that date with Desiree there. Mike Yuhas and Keith Schmidt are still working on recruiting a speaker.

The sixth sub-item (under New Business) was our upcoming participation in Trainfest 2024. It moved from State Fair Park to the newly upgraded Baird Convention Center on Wisconsin Avenue in downtown Milwaukee. The promoters are advertising over 1 million square feet of space, easy movement in and out for exhibitors, access via public transit, improved concessions, and \$6.00 parking. We can get a 5 x 10 foot booth space for free. A basic table costs only \$10.00. Electric power is much more expensive at \$150.00. Corner, end-of-aisle, and other special positions cost extra. Pipes and drapes cost extra. The dates have been pushed back to Saturday, November 23 and Sunday, November 24. That is the first weekend of gun deer hunting season, and the weekend before Thanksgiving. The reason for the delay is the very high cost of advertising up to the high-stakes general election on Tuesday, November 5. The price should go down after then. They will then have 18 days to get the word on this event out to the public before the event actually takes place. There are rumors of much higher costs next time. There was a consensus that we should participate as an exhibitor. Keith Schmidt will submit a request to reserve a booth.

The seventh agenda item was an update on preparations for our 75th anniversary year in 2025. The first sub-item was our new 75th (diamond) anniversary logo. Drew Halverson came up with one, suggesting the diamond shape at the crossing of two railroad tracks. It also contains the suggestion of a switch /turnout. It was first shown, and well received, at our regular meeting on Friday, April 5. Mike Yuhas suggested that we should use it. The consensus was to go ahead and do so. We will tell two other designers who were working on other ideas to stop work.

The second sub-item (under our 75th anniversary year) was promotional merchandise. That was a major driver of the need to finalize the logo. We want to have the new merchandise available no later than January 1, 2025. It would be nice to have samples available by the August 24 dinner train and the October 5 banquet. We are looking at applying it to mugs, clothing, baseball caps, other hats, and maybe custom items like camera bags. We also need to be thinking about thread and base / background colors. Keith Schmidt will look into prices, so we can start making some decisions on what we will do. Any merchandise sales will need to collect sales tax.

The third sub-item (under our 75th anniversary year) was our 75th anniversary (2025) banquet. This should be something special, beyond our typical annual banquet. We need to start thinking now about what we want to do. One suggestion was to try to get NRHS National President Tony White to attend and speak.

An added eighth agenda item was the date of the next board meeting. Ward Wells will be moving from California to Madison on June 15. Keith Schmidt was thinking about doing an in-person board meeting, with food and social time, which we have not had since the corona virus pandemic started. He put out the suggestion of the Pizza Ranch at Les Paul Parkway (the East Belt Line—Highways US 18 and Wisconsin 59 / 164) and Racine Avenue (Waukesha County Highway Y) on the SE side of Waukesha. Maybe in July—before the East Troy outing—so we can finalize details for that.

The ninth agenda item was “anything else for the good of the chapter.” Ward Wells said he would be at the May 3 meeting, and take charge of the projector. He re-iterated that we need to start advertising

the night photo session as soon as we know the date and other details. Keith Schmidt said he needs to firm up costs first.

There was no further business to discuss. Keith Schmidt said that he would entertain a motion to adjourn. That was the tenth and final agenda item. Ward Wells made a motion to adjourn. Neal Wegner and Mike Yuhas seconded it. There was no discussion or opposition. All were in favor. Keith Schmidt declared the board meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

The Zoom meeting room remained open for a short time afterward. Keith Schmidt said that we have a busy summer and 2025 coming up. There was a suggestion that we consider sponsoring a Wisconsin railroad history symposium—with participation by both Wisconsin NRHS Chapters and railroad-specific historical societies, possibly with a rented hall and expert speakers, in our 75th anniversary year (2025). There were more details worked out for the regular meeting on May 3. The Zoom meeting room closed at 8:37 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Thomas W. Marcussen
Wisconsin Chapter Secretary