

This board meeting was conducted virtually, via Zoom, on the evening of Thursday, December 10, 2020. Officers and directors in attendance were President Mike Yuhas, Vice President Keith Schmidt, Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek, Secretary Tom Marcussen, and Directors Dan Grudzielanek, Ralph McClure, Andrew Roach, and Neal and Cathy Wegner. Everyone was able to participate in real time. We had nine out of nine present. That met the quorum requirement of six out of nine. Therefore the meeting could proceed.

New member Ward Wells of Riverside, California, and long-term member Bob Joyce were also present. Ken Thompson joined us partway through the meeting.

President Mike Yuhas called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm.

Topic 1—Secretary Tom Marcussen had sent the minutes of the last virtual board meeting, held on Thursday, July 23, 2020, to the board on Tuesday, December 8. There were no corrections. Keith Schmidt moved that they be approved. Neal Wegner seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

Topic 2—President Mike Yuhas opened his remarks with a discussion of the challenges of the ongoing corona virus pandemic. We all miss the fellowship of in-person meetings. Zoom has given us the opportunity to bring in remote attendees and presenters. We have seen a slow increase in membership. We are very unsure how long the current situation will continue. The Great Northern Historical Society just cancelled their annual convention and meeting in September 2021. Their reasons for doing so are unknown.

Topic 3—Vice President Keith Schmidt had nothing separate from the agenda for his report. He said he would have a lot of input for Topic 13—live streaming of future in-person meetings. He offered us a preview of his most significant points.

Topic 4—Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek provided a preliminary version of her report. Our November checking account statement showed a balance of \$5829.40. We have had a number of renewals and quite a few new memberships come in, and some expenses go out, since then. She figures our current balance is \$6555.16. She will look into the current value of our certificates of deposit, and the status and value of our other accounts, before the annual business meeting on Friday, January 8, 2021. Keith Schmidt found reports of checking and savings accounts at two banks in the February 2016 issue of *Sparks & Cinders*. Other members said some of those had been consolidated and closed since then.

Tara asked if we wanted to consider putting financial records and reports on-line. Would access be limited to officers and directors? To members in good standing only? Or could anybody (who knows where to find it) look at it? We reached no consensus or decision on that.

Topic 5—*Sparks & Cinders* Interim Editor Keith Schmidt reported getting lots of good content. Dave Nelson has given us some well-written little-known interesting history. Keith is working on an article on the just-removed wig-wag crossing signals in Sheboygan. We are getting good pictures. Keith is encouraging more members to submit pictures. Only a few members are providing most of our photos. We could use more diverse input subject matter.

Neal and Cathy Wegner reported that assembly and distribution are proceeding smoothly. The new envelopes are easy to work with. There have been no more reports of damaged issues since we started using them. The mailing list is being kept up to date with new members.

Topic 6—Ralph McClure last talked to Amanda at Pallas Restaurant on Saturday, July 25, 2020. That was to further postpone our already-delayed reservation date of October 10 for the 2020 banquet. They said then that they would be willing to hold our deposit until we can re-schedule in the spring of 2021. Their current price at that time was \$17.95 per plate, with an added 17 % gratuity, for attendance of 40.

Should we be thinking about a date in June or July? No one can predict with any degree of certainty if public-health conditions will be better by then or not. Some groups are proceeding with tours, meetings, conventions, etc. and others are holding. The consensus was that it was too early to make that decision now. Keith Schmidt said that the National N Scale Convention in June in Reno, Nevada, was just cancelled. The prime reason was that the hotel(s) wanted too much of their money up front, and agreeing to their terms was too risky.

It was decided that Ralph should call Pallas again, just to touch base, let them know that we are still in existence and interested, and ask if they would continue to hold our deposit. If there is a limit on how long we would have to reschedule or else forfeit the deposit, then we shall have a decision to make.

Mike Yuhas is similarly keeping in touch with the North Shore Congregational Church regarding resumption of in-person meetings. They are OK with our coming back when doing so is safe. They have no idea when that will be.

Moving on into the “Old Business” section of the Monday, December 7, Agenda:

Topic 7—Meetings (in person, virtual, and slide shows)—was already covered under previous topics above.

Topic 8—The NRHS National Convention in Milwaukee is still on for August 23-28. Mike Yuhas is informally working with the Convention Committee at National. Details are still fluid. Arrangements have become much harder to make.

National has taken the lead on Convention planning, and handled the money, for the last 10-15 years. They will probably be looking for volunteer helpers, maybe as many as 15-20. These would have to be registered attendees. They will probably be offered a discount on their registration fee in exchange for their work. With no events set up yet, the terms of the above are still speculation.

Moving on into the “New Business” section of the Agenda:

Topic 9—Our next annual business meeting will be held on Friday, January 8, 2021.

All incumbent officers and directors indicated their willingness to run for another year of service. We will ask for nominations from the floor first. If there are none, we can nominate all of the incumbents to run as a slate, and have one vote (unless someone objects). Any contested offices would have to be voted on separately.

Only members can hold office or vote. One must be a member of National to be a Chapter member. Subscribers to *Sparks & Cinders* are not official members. They and other guests can only observe the proceedings. We will be using the “breakout rooms” feature in Zoom to separate members from

subscribers and guests, to ensure that only members are allowed to vote. The host will identify members of those two groups, based on an up-to-date membership record, on arrival. We did a test run of the breakout room feature. It worked very well.

The top item for the meeting agenda is election of 2021 officers and directors (above). Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek will prepare a full treasurer's report. Secretary Tom Marcussen will send her a sample format from past meetings. There were no other items for the agenda at this time. Any additions should be sent to President Mike Yuhas.

Topic 10—Potential Chapter projects. The first of these is a rail photo calendar. The Long Island Sunrise Trail Chapter has sold one every year for many years. They sell them to members for \$8.00, and non-members for \$11.00, plus a nominal shipping cost. They get a very reasonable printing cost in exchange for a 1000-copy minimum. That is for the New York City metropolitan area. We are not likely to sell that many here. There is no shortage of good photos that we could use. We are thinking that maybe we can sell some 2022 calendars at the National Convention and at Train Fest. Mike Yuhas, Keith Schmidt, and Dan Grudzielanek will work on this project.

The second potential project is a wall map of the historic railroads of Wisconsin, based on Secretary Tom Marcussen's thorough research of where they all went from roughly 1893 to 1970. Tom had a number of questions. The answers were:

- It would stop at the Wisconsin state line. It would not include any tracks in Upper Michigan, NE Illinois, or NE Minnesota.
- Details would be limited to what could be clearly shown on one poster-size sheet.
- Printing would be on a four-color press. Inks could be mixed to obtain a limited number of other colors. For example—everybody knows the Milwaukee Road's color is orange. We would be able to show it as orange.
- Illustrator Rick Johnson, who recently retired from Kalmbach, may be available to at least advise and assist, and possibly to draw up a professionally-drafted map.
- Tom would retain ownership of the copyright on his work.
- Dan Grudzielanek suggested that we have a written contract. Then all parties have the same understanding of the terms of the agreement, and the same written record of what those are.
- Ralph McClure asked if we could sell these at the National Convention or Train Fest. Mike Yuhas said that we could if we had a final version to give to Rick Johnson today. Tom Marcussen said we are not there yet. He had not been able to do much with these during the last decade of his more-than-full-time career. There are a number of known errors that need to be fixed. The records of what they are became scattered during his post-retirement move.

It was decided to start moving forward on the wall map project. Mike Yuhas will check into whether Rick Johnson is available and interested. Tom Marcussen will scan and send some representative source material to the board.

Topic 11—Should we do our usual annual donation to the North Shore Congregational Church? This is given in appreciation for the use of their space. We want to maintain that relationship. We had been donating \$450.00 per year, plus two \$25.00 gift cards, one for each of their two custodians, for the past several years. Someone suggested that we cut that back to \$150.00 for the three in-person meetings (instead of the usual nine) that we were able to hold there in 2020. Someone else pointed out that

their bills have not changed because we could not meet in person after March. There was concern that a sharply reduced amount might be perceived as an insult. An alternate meeting space would cost a lot more. There was a consensus that we should stay with the above amounts. There was a suggestion to increase the \$450.00 to an even \$500.00, to compensate for the church's increased expenses to deal with the corona virus, and possibly help them with loss of other revenue.

Keith Schmidt made a motion to donate \$500.00, plus two gift cards of \$25.00 each, to the North Shore Congregational Church. Neal Wegner seconded it. There was no further discussion. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek will write out a check(s). President Mike Yuhas will write a letter.

Topic 12—Should the Chapter establish a Pay Pal account? We have none now. Do we want to set one up? Its primary use would be for payment of Chapter dues and S&C subscriptions. Keith Schmidt runs the PayPal account for the SE Wisconsin N Scale Club. PayPal takes a fee of a couple per cent in exchange for the service that they provide. Would the Chapter be willing to absorb that? Or should we ask members who pay that way to pay a convenience fee? There was a strong consensus that members should still keep the option of paying by check or (once in-person meetings can safely resume) cash. Mike Yuhas, Keith Schmidt, and Tara Grudzielanek will work on this.

Topic 13—Investigate equipment needed to live-stream future in-person meetings. Keith Schmidt said that is very easy to do with electronic images shown with a digital projector. It is a lot harder with traditional film slides shown on a film slide projector. After we get past that, audio could be our biggest problem. Some suggestions included using a Bluetooth microphone, upgrading our sound system, or using the church's sound system or Wi-Fi (if they would allow us to). Getting a definitive answer might require a full-scale test. Even getting access for that might be a problem because of corona virus restrictions. There was no consensus or decision on how to proceed.

Topic 14—Anything else for the good of the order. President Mike Yuhas reminded everybody about our virtual slide show on Tuesday, December 15, 2020.

Keith Schmidt made a motion to adjourn. There was a second. All voted to adjourn. The meeting was formally adjourned at 9:32 pm.

Respectfully Submitted  
Thomas W. Marcussen  
Wisconsin Chapter Secretary