

This was our first in-person board meeting since before the corona virus pandemic of 2020. It was held in the Northwest meeting room at the Pizza Ranch restaurant 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, on the evening of Thursday, July 11, 2024.

The first agenda item was call to order. President Keith Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:45 pm. Vice President Ward Wells, Secretary Tom Marcussen and Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek were present. We had four of our five Directors: Dan Grudzielanek, Ralph McClure, Andrew Roach, and Neal Wegner. Director Mike Yuhas was unable to be there. We had eight out of nine officers and directors, which exceeds the required quorum of six (two-thirds). Two other members was present: Karen Challis and Cathy Wegner. There was one guest—Maureen McClure.

The second agenda item was review and approval of the minutes from the previous virtual board meeting held on Zoom on Monday, April 22 2024. Secretary Tom Marcussen had distributed copies of those minutes to all officers and directors earlier today. Ward Wells moved that the minutes be approved as sent. Neal Wegner 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 June 30:

- Our Heartland Mutual Fund was valued at \$98,746.66. There was a general market pull-back / correction in the second quarter. Our holdings are still worth much more than they were several years ago.
- Our checking account at Landmark Credit Union was at \$357.40. All outstanding bills have been paid. Our savings account there remains at \$100.02. We have two certificates of deposit (CD's):
 - 18-month CD at 4.51%. Will mature on November 14, 2024. Current value is \$17,886.15.
 - 24-month CD at 4.22%. Will mature on May 15, 2025. Current value is \$11,539.71.
- We still have \$133.17 left in our US Bank checking account. This will be closed out.
- We are currently paying about \$1.00 to print each issue of Sparks & Cinders. Postage rates will be going up again—from 68 to 73 cents per first-class stamp—later in July. We mail 10 issues per year to each member and subscriber. We will be spending \$17.30 per member per year on S&C. We also have other expenses. Current Chapter dues of \$20.00 per year do not cover all routine expenses. We are reducing our cushion of assets / savings.

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—presented by Ward Wells. As of today, we have 149 members paid up through at least December 31, 2024. Two of those members have pre-paid through December 31, 2025. It is unknown how many of those are also National members.

Mike Yuhas had also included his National Representative report. He was at the NRHS Spring Conference—over the first weekend in May—In Cedar Rapids, Iowa with Chapter members Ward Wells and Cate Kratville-Wrinn. They got a rare-mileage ride (on the former Rock Island) and headquarters tour from the Iowa Interstate Railroad, and a tour of the Railroad Heritage of Midwest America (former

Rock Island) steam restoration shop in Silvis, Illinois. The 2024 National Convention will be held from August 26-31 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Most events still have some open space. Mike is a candidate for a position on the National Board of Directors. If he is successful, he will have to resign as our National Representative, because the NRHS National Constitution prohibits any individual from serving in both positions. In that case, President Keith Schmidt will need to appoint a new National Representative. Members should consider whether they are interested in that opportunity.

There were no questions on either report. President Keith Schmidt accepted them as presented.

The fifth agenda item was Old Business. The first sub-item was our dinner train outing at the East Troy Electric Railroad. The date is set for Saturday, August 24, 2024. Running time is 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Food cost estimate is \$85.00 to \$150.00 (depending on what entrée is selected) per person. That does not include a \$5.00 per person surcharge for offering two choices of entrée. It also does not include the \$600.00 excursion fare cost, which if split 30 ways would add another \$20.00 per person. These would raise the cost of the entire package to \$110.00 to \$175.00 per person, or \$220.00 to \$350.00 per couple. There is a minimum participation of 30 people. The question was then asked—Are we likely to get that many? Or are these prices too expensive for too many of our members? The consensus was that there is a very high risk of not signing up the 30-person minimum, and that we should at least explore other options for that date. Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek will take the lead role in doing so.

The second sub-item (under Old Business) was the following night photo session. That will run from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Estimated cost is \$100.00 to \$150.00 per person. Keith Schmidt is working with Jee from the East Troy museum on this event. We will probably be able to use the Trent siding. We will probably have the newly restored North Shore Line merchandise car and TMER&L freight motor L8. We are trying to get some antique police, fire, and other vehicles. Mike Yuhas is looking into getting lighting equipment. Keith asked for extra help with arranging all of the details for this event. Dan Grudzielanek volunteered to help.

The details for both of the above events need to be resolved quickly, so that we can send out a special mailing and/or e-mail announcement, and start accepting reservations, before the general membership forgets about them and makes other conflicting plans.

The third sub-item (under Old Business) was the 2024 annual chapter banquet, to be held at Pallas Restaurant on 108th Street in West Allis, on Saturday, October 5, 2024. Neal and Cathy Wegner have taken the lead on that event. They confirmed that we have reserved that date. Mike Yuhas and Keith Schmidt are still working on recruiting a speaker.

The fourth sub-item (under Old Business) was our participation at Trainfest, to be held at the newly remodeled Baird Convention Center in downtown Milwaukee the weekend of November 23-24, 2024. We are getting a booth for no charge, and table for \$10.00, as a non-profit organization who are not selling anything. If we were selling, we would have to register as a retailer, which would cost \$200.00. There was a report that the \$6.00 parking spaces are limited to 300 vehicles. Ward Wells volunteered to take the lead role in organizing our participation. Ralph McClure volunteered to assist him.

Trainfest will return to being an annual event, and return to State Fair Park, starting in 2025. It will be jointly sponsored by three groups of the National Model Railroad Association—the Wisconsin SE

Division, the Madison Division, and the National organization. They just signed a contract with the State Fair. They have been reports that charges / costs are going up significantly from 2025 on.

The fifth sub-item (under Old Business) was an update on our 75th anniversary next year—and specifically ideas for promotional items. Keith Schmidt had brought samples of a white sweatshirt, polo shirt, and baseball cap with our new 75th anniversary logo. Keith also asked for a price on a button-down dress shirt. All of these can be ordered in sizes up to 4X, in either white or light gray. Predicted prices are \$23.00 for the baseball cap, \$38.00 for the polo shirt, and \$45.00 for the sweat shirt or dress shirt. These prices do not include sales tax, which we would have to add.

The sixth agenda item was New Business. The first sub-item was a continuation of discussions on promotional merchandise (see above). Should we offer any other promotional items? If so, what? There was little interest in pens, coffee cups or mugs. There was some discussion of other clothing items, and commemorative pins. Keith Schmidt said he would look into the feasibility of producing those.

The second sub-item (under New Business) was special 75th anniversary outings. We are considering chartering a bus to tour the Railroad Heritage of Midwest America (former Rock Island) steam restoration shop in Silvis, Illinois. Chapter Member Cate Kratville-Wrinn is on the board there. They will probably want a donation. Buses typically hold about 50 people. An April or May date was suggested. They should be no snow, and it should not be too hot yet. Easter is on Sunday, April 20. We are looking at Saturday, May 3—to start with. The trip would run from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. We would have to pick a single point of departure. The Park & Ride at State Fair Park in West Allis was suggested. We will probably need at least one food stop. Keith Schmidt will take on exploring costs / prices.

There was another suggestion to explore doing something with 1913 Soo Line 2-8-2 Number 1003, based in Hartford. Somebody said that would be a minimum cost of at least \$10,000.00. There was not much other discussion after that.

The third sub-item (under New Business) was if we should do anything special for our 75th anniversary banquet. There was a consensus that we should invite our NRHS National President—currently Tony White. We should try to keep the October date if practical. The Polish Community Center in Franklin was suggested. They did a good job with Trains editor Jim Wrinn's celebration of life. We shall need to start organizing that, reserve the space, and explore costs soon. They offer multiple options—sit down or buffet with 6 or 7 different caterers. There will be a number of decisions to be made. (Question—Is anybody taking the lead on this?)

The seventh agenda item was “anything else for the good of the chapter.” No one had anything else to discuss

There was no further business to discuss. Keith Schmidt said that he would entertain a motion to adjourn. That was the eighth and final agenda item. Ward Wells made a motion to adjourn. Ralph McClure seconded it. There was no discussion or opposition. All were in favor. Keith Schmidt declared the board meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Thomas W. Marcussen
Wisconsin Chapter Secretary