

This board meeting was conducted virtually, via Zoom, on the evening of Tuesday, April 22, 2025. President Keith Schmidt was presiding. Vice President Ward Wells, Secretary Tom Marcussen and Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek were present. We had all four of our active Directors: Dan Grudzielanek, Ralph McClure, Neal Wegner, and Mike Yugas (one vacancy). Three members: Steve Thomas, Jim Sponholz, and Cathy Wegner was also present.

All eight of the active officers and directors were present (see above). We therefore had a quorum (which is six or more). Keith Schmidt called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm. That was the first agenda item.

The second agenda item was review and approval of the minutes from the previous Zoom board meeting held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025. Secretary Tom Marcussen had distributed copies of those minutes to all officers and directors on Thursday, April 17. The proposed final version is also posted on the Wisconsin Chapter web site. No one had any further corrections, additions, or other comments. Mike Yugas moved that the minutes be approved as distributed and posted. Ward Wells seconded the motion. There was no other discussion. The motion passed by a unanimous (voice and show-of-hands) vote.

The third agenda item was the Treasurer's report from Tara Grudzielanek:

- Our Landmark Credit Union statement dated March 31 showed balances of:
  - \$1372.49 in checking
  - \$2700.53 in savings
  - \$13,376.27 in 18-month CD that will mature on May 16, 2026
  - \$11,906.33 in 24-month CD that will mature on May 15, 2025.
- Our Heartland Mutual Fund was valued at \$104,366.49, as of March 31. It was noted that both the stock and bond markets have dropped significantly since then.

There were no questions on the Treasurer's report. Keith Schmidt accepted the report as presented. He noted that we will soon need to do a routine audit.

The fourth agenda item was the Membership Report from Membership Committee Chair Mike Yugas. We have 127 active paid-up members as of today. We had 25 non-renewals from 2024. That includes both those who passed away and those who dropped out. Mike expressed his opinion that we were doing OK. Some attrition is normal. There were no questions on the membership report. Keith Schmidt accepted it as presented.

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

The sixth agenda item was New Business. The agenda listed twelve sub-items under New Business. The attendees expanded that list to thirteen sub-items.

The first sub-item was the vacancy on the Board of Directors. President Keith Schmidt reported that he has had discussions with two potential directors. He reminded attendees that a director vacancy can only be filled by a special election open to the entire chapter membership, at any regular meeting, with reasonable advance notice. No election is currently scheduled, as no members have yet been nominated.

The second sub-item (under New Business) was potential Chapter sponsorship of a (teen age—14 to 18) Rail Camp attendee. Tuition is \$1575.00. That includes food, room and board. It does not include the cost of travel to and from the Rail Camp sites. There are 24 spaces in the East Coast Rail Camp, in Newark, Delaware. There are 12 in the West Coast Rail Camp, in Tacoma, Washington. Mike Yuhas reached out to the National Railroad Museum in Green Bay. On candidate from there sent in an application. National did not receive it in time—through no fault of the applicant. That person may or may not apply again in 2026. We will not be sponsoring any Rail Campers in 2025.

The third sub-item (under New Business) was the establishment of a Grant Committee. Member Jim Sponholz expressed interest in serving on it. He brings 30 years of experience in the solicitation and evaluation of grant proposals to Milwaukee County. Mike Yuhas had volunteered for the Grant Committee at the last Board meeting on January 7, 2025. Keith Schmidt appointed Jim Sponholz and Mike Yuhas to start the new Grant Committee. They are directed to look for other volunteers, elect a Chair, and take the work of developing a list of possible grantees away from the Board.

The fourth sub-item (under New Business) was an update on a bequest. The chapter was contacted by a financial services firm, which advised that one of their deceased clients had selected the Wisconsin Chapter as a beneficiary of a portion of his estate. The donation remains pending (the amount of the bequest is unknown at this time). President Schmidt and treasurer Grudzielanek have completed the necessary paperwork.

The fifth sub-item (under New Business) was the action to be taken when our 24-month Landmark Credit Union CD matures on May 15. The default option—if we do nothing—is automatic renewal for the full balance amount. That might leave us without enough cash for upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary events and expenses. The consensus seemed to favor transferring the entire amount into savings, and then re-investing in another CD, or adding to our mutual fund, when the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year is over. We will decide what to do then based on market conditions at that time.

The sixth sub-item (under New Business) was an update on our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary promotional apparel sales. We have been selling some—not a whole lot. Some items are on back order. Most of the blank (before embroidery) pieces come from non-US suppliers. They may now be subject to new tariffs that are changing quite often. Their impact is hard to predict. No one was sure what we should do about that. We now have a flat \$10.00 per order fee for postage / shipping.

Mike Yuhas proposed adding a seventh sub-item (under New Business). We have another opportunity to tour the Christopher Transportation Museum (on the grounds of the Christopher Farm and Gardens) north of Sheboygan. The museum, which is not open to the public, features an extremely large collection of railway dining car china and other transportation memorabilia. There are two Saturdays still open this summer, June 7 or July 19. July 19 is the Wisconsin Chapter Day at the East Troy Electric Railroad (see the eighth sub-item—directly below). Mike proposed reserving the June 7 date. The consensus was in favor.

The eighth sub-item (under New Business) was the “Wisconsin Chapter Day” at East Troy Electric Railroad on Saturday, July 19. Steve Thomas was in attendance to provide more information. He is the new Chairman of the Board at East Troy, and also a Wisconsin Chapter member. It will be a regular Saturday of operations, with only cars that operated in Wisconsin. They are OK with our setting up Chapter table to offer information and for membership recruitment.

There was a longer discussion on the proposed Chapter donation and ticket sales incentive. We are looking to give somewhere in the range of \$1000.00 to \$1500.00. East Troy usually sells between 100 and 250 all-day ride tickets on a typical Saturday. Sales are light in the spring, mid-range in the summer, and peak in the fall. Steve suggested an incentive of a \$5.00 donation per ticket sold to the public, in addition to a base donation. There may instead be a straight amount per ticket, with a minimum (floor) and a maximum (ceiling) amount. The formula is still being worked out.

Members' all-day tickets are included in the charter fee for the end-of-the-day excursion. Keith is looking into flyers to hand out or send out, possibly with *Sparks & Cinders*, to identify members (and guests). We might send a PDF image by e-mail that riders can print out. The package deal includes a 10% discount at the gift shop at the East Troy station. There will be no charge to members to participate.

There will be photo opportunities with the newly restored North Shore Line merchandise car, during the lower-sun-angle late afternoon or early evening hours, for an extra fee. There will be no night photo session to avoid the high cost of night lighting.

There was some limited discussion about a possible 2026 event at East Troy. There were no details and no decisions on that today.

The ninth sub-item (under New Business) was the possible outing / trip to the Railroading Heritage of Midwest America (RRHMA) (former Rock Island) steam restoration shop in Silvis, Illinois, just east of Rock Island in the Quad Cities area. Keith Schmidt will be attending their open house on Saturday, April 26. He will meet with their leadership and work out a date, plus other details. He hopes to have much more information by the time of our next regular membership meeting on Friday, May 2. We can expect that our tour date will be a weekday. RRHMA is a working shop—not a museum—and are normally closed—do not work—on Saturdays or Sundays.

The tenth sub-item (under New Business) was the possibility of firing up Soo Line (1913) 2-8-2 #1003. The significant expenses would be shared with another event at the Schlesinger Museum in Slinger. What would be happening is that the #1003 would be running from Hartford to Horicon WI and possibly north to Burnett WI. This would not be a photo charter it would just be the locomotive and short consist running to have people enjoy. The two dates to avoid were June 28th and July 19th. July 19th is the day of the East Troy event. No reason was given for avoiding June 28th. The run to Burnett would be in the morning. Then the #1003 would come to Slinger and sit on display for the Schlesinger Museum. There no more details at this time.

The eleventh sub-item (under New Business) was the question of our Chapter hosting the 2025 NRHS National Fall Conference, in coordination with our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary banquet (see the 12<sup>th</sup> sub-item directly below). Mike Yuhas suggested—if we want to do that—we need to submit a proposal quickly. The Spring Conference is in Johnson City, Tennessee over Thursday, May 1 through Saturday, May 3. The business meetings are on Saturday, May 3. We really should have a proposal ready for them. The main thing that the hosting chapter needs to provide is activities for the attendees to do. They usually have one day of meetings, and a day of other events. The first suggestion was a ride on the East Troy Electric Railroad. Steve Thomas said they already pretty well booked up for October. They might be able to do something on Friday, October 3. Saturday is typically the business meeting day, so that might

work out. We will also need some other events. Typical attendance at spring and fall conferences is 50-75. Mike Yuhas agreed to take charge of preparing a proposal, and presenting it at Johnson City.

Mike Yuhas shared that the 2025 National Convention will be headquartered in Lansing, Michigan over July 12-17. That city is the home of Michigan State University, which results in a good supply of reasonable prices hotel space in the summer. NRHS got a really good deal on a hotel for \$134 per night. That city is reachable via Amtrak, on the Michigan-state-supported Blue Water service, daily from Chicago.

The twelfth sub-item (under New Business) was our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary (2025) banquet. This should be something special, beyond our typical annual banquet. It will be held on Saturday, October 4, at the Polish Center of Wisconsin at 6941 South 68<sup>th</sup> Street (north of Rawson) in Franklin. They have a very nice private banquet hall, with a variety of good food. We are trying to get NRHS National President Tony White to attend and speak. Mike Yuhas thought we might have a better chance of getting him here, and also making the banquet work financially, if we also host the 2025 NRHS National Fall Conference (see the 11<sup>th</sup> sub-item above). There was some concern over the legal capacity of the banquet hall. We are currently expecting about 60-70 Chapter attendees for our banquet. Typical attendance at spring and fall conferences is 50-75. The Polish Center has some overflow rooms (which are less desirable—but may be necessary?) Dan and Tara Grudzielanek will reach out to the Polish Center to ask if they can accommodate a total attendance of 100-150.

Mike Yuhas is working on booking a keynote speaker.

The thirteenth (and last) sub-item (under New Business) was Chapter participation in Train Fest 2025. This will again at the Baird Center in downtown Milwaukee, with a much earlier date of November 1-2. (The plan to go back to State Fair Park was changed when they wanted \$40,000.00 more than the Baird Center.) The National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) will be directly running the 2025 show. We will be looking for volunteers to staff our table. Plentiful parking is available. Some of it is pricey. Some model railroad clubs had issues with the distance that they had to hand-carry heavy modules. We do not have any of those. Those issues will not affect us.

The seventh agenda item was “anything else for the good of the chapter.

Dave Nelson found a big box of old issues of Spark & Cinders. That find will give us a good opportunity to add new material to our monthly “From the Archives” column. We might be able to add some more historic material to the rest of S&C for our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We are looking for someone to host the remote Zoom part of the monthly membership meeting on Friday, May 2. Mike Yuhas and Ward Wells will be at the National Spring Conference in Johnson City, Tennessee, on that date. Neither of them will be able to host the May 2 meeting from their personal Zoom accounts. Keith Schmidt said he could do both the live presiding and the Zoom hosting. That can be a real challenge / stretch. Dan Grudzielanek volunteered to look into setting up a Zoom account for the Chapter, so someone else could use it to serve as host. There was some further discussion of the Chapter purchasing a Zoom account, at least for the May 2 meeting. We will need Zoom meeting connection information in order to send out the e-mail announcement and links for the May 2 meeting.

We are trying to make the next Board meeting an in-person event. There is a new Pizza Ranch on the west side of Town Line Road in Lisbon (east of Sussex) just south of the UP / ex Chicago & North Western Adams line. We are looking at a date in July or August.

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. Mike Yuhas made a motion to adjourn. Ward Wells seconded it. There was no discussion or opposition. All were in favor. Keith Schmidt declared the board meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm. The Zoom meeting room closed at 7:44 pm.

Respectfully Submitted  
Thomas W. Marcussen  
Wisconsin Chapter Secretary