

## **Board Meeting – Northern Pacific Railway Historical Association – September 12, 2023 – Tacoma, Washington**

Meeting called to order by President Bill Zidel at 7:38 PM. Board Members present: Steve Fuller, Don Golde, Dave Hillard, Steve Joyner, Dean O’Neill, Bill Taylor, Jim Woodward, and Bill Zidel. Ken Zieska did not attend the 2023 Convention.

Guests included John Nimnick and Kent Sullivan.

Bill Zidel thanked everyone who helped prepare for this year’s convention and presented Board members with a 3D printed two-chime whistle.

### **Calendar Committee:**

Transition to the new Calendar Committee team seems to be going well so far, per Bill Zidel’s conversations with Kurt Armbruster, who will lead the committee. Other committee members include Doug Andreassen, John Fujii, Steve Fuller, Mike Lustig, Alan Manson, Dave Saldana, Chuck Soule, and Rich Wilkens. Jonathan Fischer, Dean O’Neill, and Jan Taylor will serve as advisors to the Calendar Committee.

Bill Zidel thanked Bill Kuebler for leading the former Calendar Committee’s efforts on past calendars.

### **NPRHA Website update:**

Dean O’Neill and Kent Sullivan reported on efforts to update the NPRHA website. Kent pointed out that while <https://research.nprha.org/> provides internet users with good access to a broad range of information that the NPRHA has collected about the Northern Pacific, it does not present a user-friendly access to information about the NPRHA as an organization, such as membership enrollment, convention locations and schedules, meeting minutes, etc. Most other railroad historical associations have significantly friendlier user portals on the web for information about their organization. On the other hand, few other railroad historical associations provide the broad and deep access to information about their related railroads that we have on <https://research.nprha.org/>.

So, Dean and Kent requested proposals from five web development firms relating to an improved NPRHA web site. They subsequently narrowed the proposals to two. After additional consideration, they settled on a proposal from Lighthouse Graphics and shared that proposal with the NPRHA Board via email on August 21, 2023. The new web site will be built on a Wordpress platform at a development cost of \$13,359.61, with an ongoing hosting and maintenance cost of \$99/month. Lighthouse Graphics will provide how-to videos to help NPRHA support the site. The new site will be separate from the current <https://research.nprha.org/> that provides access to photos, documents and other information that NPRHA has compiled; however, the new site will include a link for easy access to <https://research.nprha.org/>.

Eventually <https://research.nprha.org/> may be partly supplanted by AtoM, at least for access to photographs, documents, etc. However, AtoM is progressing quite slowly. Populating AtoM is laborious, especially when populators choose to provide detailed descriptive paragraphs for each photograph or documents they upload. Don Golde raised the possibility of using Flickr, Shutterfly, or a similar service for storage of photographic images. The primary reason that Gary Tarbox’s group originally chose AtoM is that it facilitates information interchange with other on-line databases, including the Library of Congress. Bob Kelly will provide a description and brief demonstration of AtoM to the Convention in a September 14 evening “Ted Talk”. Dean O’Neill suggested that Bill Zidel contact Virginia, Bill’s counterpart at PNRA for further discussion of this situation.

Dean commented that although the current Sharepoint NPRHA web site contains a wealth of information – photos, timetables, drawings, etc., users find it frustrating to use because the Search function currently does not work. So, we also need to address that situation. Additional discussion is required on this issue.

After positive comments from the Board, Dean O’Neill moved that the Board accept the recommendation of Kent Sullivan and approve the expenditure of \$13,359.61 to proceed with development of the Wordpress web site. Woodward and Zidel seconded. The motion was approved by all eight of the Board members present.

One aspect that NPRHA will need to address when we implement the new Wordpress web site is to establish someone to serve as webmaster. Kent Sullivan volunteered to be the initial webmaster. Ideally, the webmaster should be assisted by one or more people to act as curators / content coordinators for information on the Wordpress site. These persons should also be literate regarding Facebook, and perhaps other prominent social media sites, as we can also communicate with members and potential members via those media. Kent and/or Dean will also discuss this topic at the membership meeting on September 13.

Bill Taylor commented that we need to find ways to ensure that all NPRHA web sites are relatively user-friendly for users who are not sophisticated users of computers, the web, or the internet.

### **Modeling Committee:**

Dean O'Neill commented that the Modeling Committee will announce some exciting projects in a presentation the evening of Friday, September 15. It will include some great passenger cars, freight cars, and structures. One recent success was the sale of 650 Rapido boxcars, which resulted in a second production run for that model. There are currently 100 units of that car in the NPRHA Store inventory.

The Modeling Committee may need to seek additional funding from the Board to cover development and production costs. However, the Modeling Committee will also implement a reservation system for some of their future items, both to cover development and production, as well as to gain a better understanding of the potential sales volume for those items. Reservations will involve a per-unit deposit from each customer making a reservation.

It looks like 2024 and 2025 will be big years for the Modeling Committee.

### **Jackson Street Roundhouse:**

Bill Zidel reported that the Great Northern Railway Historical Society is moving out of Jackson Street Roundhouse in St. Paul, Minnesota. Since NPRHA subleases archive space at Jackson Street from GNRHS, this means that NPRHA must either move into new space (perhaps along with GNRHS) or see if we can establish a new direct lease with Minnesota Transportation Museum for space at Jackson Street Roundhouse. NPRHA's current sublease arrangement exists because the previous leadership of MTM said that they did not want to lease directly to NPRHA. However, Jackson Street Roundhouse now has a new leadership team, and perhaps they may be more amenable to leasing to NPRHA. We need to understand what plans Jackson Street has for the space currently occupied by GNRHS and NPRHA. If we were to stay at Jackson Street after GNRHS leaves (as suggested by Kent Sullivan), NPRHS would lose access to the large format document scanner that is owned by GNRHS. *If NPRHA must move to a new location, that will be a very large moving project. In either case, we must be sure that NPRHA information is still accessible to Hudson Leighton.* Moving to a location more secure than Jackson Street would be a plus. Ladd Siegfried would also like to get reinvolved with the NPRHA archives in St. Paul. He recently retired and has expressed interest in resuming work at Jackson Street, or perhaps at another location, if NPRHA moves along with GNRHS. *Money must be budgeted to pay a commercial mover to migrate GNRHS (and perhaps NPRHA) archives to any new location.* Bill Zidel will learn more about the GNRHS move and share it with the Board so we can make an informed decision.

### **2024 Convention:**

The convention will be at the Delta Hotel by Marriott in Everett, Washington on September 10 – 14, 2024. Kent Sullivan is leading the arrangements. The Everett convention will include a Friday visit to the Northwest Railway Museum at Snoqualmie, Washington, home of Northern Pacific 0-6-0 #924, which has been restored to operation, as well as Northern Pacific Railway Alco HH660 #125, the oldest surviving NP diesel, and several other pieces of NP equipment. GNRHS will have their convention at the same location immediately after the NPRHA Convention. GNRHS and NPRHA will have a joint swap meet on September 14.

### **2025 Convention:**

This Convention will be in St. Paul, Minnesota on September 16 – 20, 2025. This will be a joint Convention with the GNRHS and the SP&S. Steve Fuller is coordinating on behalf of NPRHA with counterparts in the other two organizations. Although the CB&Q historical organization had been involved in early discussions about joining this convention, they have opted out. However, some CB&Q members are also members of NPRHA, GNRHS, or the SP&S group, and they will be welcome to register for this convention.

### **2026 Convention:**

Convention will be in Toppenish, Washington at the home of the Northern Pacific Railway Museum, which houses a large collection of NP equipment. Doug Shearer is leading the effort.

### Post-2026 Conventions:

Dean O’Neill commented that the Conventions Committee is still interested in a Convention at or near Yellowstone Park, and perhaps one at Lewiston, Idaho. Bill Taylor commented that Xanterra (operator of Yellowstone in-park hotels) was amenable to hosting an NPRHA Convention, but that they cannot restrict availability of any Yellowstone lodge to an exclusive group during their busy season; so, if NPRHA were to do a Yellowstone Convention, it would need to be in October, when weather at Yellowstone locations might be a problem. Due to its popularity as a destination, any Convention at Yellowstone would need to be scheduled well in advance. Perhaps a better choice would be a location near Yellowstone, such as Big Sky, Montana or Livingston, Montana. Gardiner, Montana (immediately north of Yellowstone’s North Entrance) does not have a hotel with a large presentation / banquet space. Bozeman, Montana might also be a possibility, although lodging in Bozeman has become very expensive.

Dean O’Neill commented that bus transportation for convention events has become highly expensive, to the point that GNRHS has dropped any thought of using buses in their convention planning. He recommended that Convention planners get their transportation arrangements made well in advance.

### Pacific Northwest Railroad Archive:

Dean O’Neill has become the coordinator of NP-related activities at PNRA. He has two interns who will be doing data entry and related tasks.

Dean commented that PNRA has established a good working relationship with the Inland Northwest Rail Museum in Reardan, Washington, home of several pieces of NP rolling stock, as well as equipment from other railroads that serve or served the Spokane, Washington area. PNRA has begun to digitize portions of the INRM drawing document collection.

John D Phillips Collection: PNRA has also begun processing the JDP3 Collection, but it will be slow going because that collection was not well organized. However, it contains materials ranging from the mundane to some true gems, so it will probably be worth the effort in the end.

Bill Baker Collection: Dean will present Bill Baker’s 1950 – 1960 era slides to the convention on the evening of September 13. Many are color scenes NP steam locomotive operations.

### Current Convention Issues:

Bill Zidel asked if there were any issues to date with the 2023 Convention. Kent Sullivan mentioned that Chuck Soule will make a presentation on Friday night instead of Pete Replinger, who is unable to attend the Convention on that date.

### Board Election at Wednesday evening’s Membership meeting

NPRHA members will need to elect two new Board Members at the September 14 Membership Meeting to replace Jim Woodward and Ken Zieska, who are retiring from the Board after this convention. Bill Zidel will retire from the Board after the 2024 Convention. Current By-laws call for a 9-member Board of Directors, so we cannot simply reduce the Board to seven members.

Current Board Composition:

Person	Current Position	Last Elected	On Board through	Willing to serve another term?
Steve Fuller	Member	2022	2024	Yes
Don Golde	Member	2022	2024	Yes
Dave Hillard	Treasurer	2022	2024	No
Steve Joyner	Member	2021	2023	Yes
Dean O’Neill	Member	2021	2023	Yes
Bill Taylor	Member	2022	2024	?
Jim Woodward	Secretary	2021	2023	No
Bill Zidel	President	2021	2023	Yes
Ken Zieska	Vice President	2021	2023	No

If re-elected, Bill Zidel will serve as president after 2024, so the Board will need to identify an appropriate replacement for that position from among those who are on the Board at the 2024 Convention.

Dean O’Neill commented that the NPRHA really needs to establish a Nominating Committee to seek and vet candidates for the Board. Since we do not presently have a Nominating Committee, candidates for this year’s Board election must be identified via other means.

Bill Taylor commented that among the current Board members, a few have taken active roles in leading the organization, while others are less active. He went on to say that each of the NPRHA Committees (e.g., Calendar, Conventions, Modeling) should include a Board member to serve as a liaison with the Board, and to allow those persons to gain experience in dealing with the organization. We also should consider asking non-officer Board members to participate in or perhaps lead other projects that NPRHA might take on. This might allow them to gain familiarity and confidence in preparation for a future position as an NPRHA officer.

**Membership Promotion:**

Bill Taylor commented that we may need to consider establishing a greater digital presence in order to entice new membership. He noted that other organizations have increased membership by offering digital publications that feature member activities as well as publishing technical and historical information. We also need to consider becoming more involved in social media such as Facebook. We should identify one or two people to serve as content coordinators on the NPRHA Facebook page.

Dave Hillard commented that he needs help with membership management, perhaps via a contracted resource. This function will still need to be resourced when Dave retires from his Treasurer position next year.

**Warren McGee Statue:**

Bill Taylor and Bill Zidel reported that Livingston, Montana, will soon have a statue of Warren McGee. As pointed out by Livingston native Dave Hillard, an article in the September 8, 2023 edition of the Livingston Enterprise states that Warren's statue will be displayed at the Livingston Depot Center. The statue will be created by artist Mary Michaels, the same artist who created a Sacajawea statue that currently resides in Sacajawea Park in Livingston. In addition to his NP-related activities, Warren was very active in the promotion and development of Sacajawea Park. The Livingston group has sufficient funding for the statue. Perhaps we should find a way to relate NPRHA to this event. We can discuss this at the September 16 Board meeting.

**Montana Historical Society:**

NPRHA contributed \$5000 in 2022 toward construction of the new addition to the MHS building in Helena, Montana, which is still under construction. MHS needs more funding to complete the new addition. We can also discuss this further at the September 16 Board meeting.

**Adjournment:** Jim Woodward moved to adjourn the meeting; Steve Joyner seconded. Adjournment approved unanimously at 9:22 PM.

Jim Woodward – Secretary, NPRHA