

This board meeting was conducted virtually, via Zoom, on the evening of Monday, January 15, 2024. Vice President Keith Schmidt was presiding. The office of President has been vacant since the annual election at the last business meeting on Friday, February 3, 2023. Secretary Tom Marcussen and Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek were present. We had all five Directors: Dan Grudzielanek, Andrew Roach, Ward Wells, Neal Wegner and Mike Yuhas. Two other members were present: Cathy Wegner and Bill Becker.

Mike Yuhas started recording at 7:29 pm. He and Vice President Keith Schmidt confirmed that all officers and directors were present (see above). We therefore had a quorum. They also confirmed that the published agenda was still good. Keith Schmidt called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

The first agenda item was review and approval of the minutes from the previous virtual board meeting held on Monday, October 30, 2023. Secretary Tom Marcussen had distributed copies of those minutes to all officers and directors on Monday, January 8. Mike Yuhas moved that the minutes be approved as distributed. Ward Wells seconded the motion. No corrections were suggested. There was no other discussion. The motion passed by a unanimous voice vote.

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

- Our checking account at Landmark Credit Union was at \$3254.58 as of December 31. 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 \$17,489.14.
 - 24-month CD at 4.22%. Current value is \$11,295.92.
- We still have \$293.17 left in our US Bank checking account.
- Our Heartland Mutual Fund was valued at \$95,601.73 on December 31, 2023. It was at \$81,618.96 on December 31, 2022. It was at \$85,604.30 as of September 30, 2023. We had a very good 4th quarter.

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

The third agenda item was the Membership Report from Membership Committee chair Mike Yuhas. As of today, we have 103 members paid up through December 31, 2024. One member has pre-paid through December 31, 2025. We have 3 or 4 more renewals that have just come in and are not processed yet. We had 150-some members near the start of 2023. We have 61 who have not yet renewed, and whose membership expired on December 31, 2023. Mike plans to send e-mails to them in the next few days.

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

The fifth agenda item was New Business. The first sub-item was our new 501c3 status and Chapter responsibilities. The Internal Revenue Service approved our application in late October. Our 501c3 status exempts us from paying Federal income taxes, and allows contributions to us to be tax-deductible.

Someone asked whether that status exempts us from paying sales taxes on our purchases. The short answer is not automatically. Sales and use tax is charged by the State of Wisconsin. We would need to

get a “CES number” from them. The process is described in Wisconsin Department of Revenue Publication PB 206 Section 6. We would have to fill out a Form S-103 to apply for exemption. Once approved, we would provide either a Form S-211 (paper) or S-211E (electronic) to vendors. Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek will take on this procedure.

There had been some discussion on e-mail whether we now qualify for lower non-profit postal rates. Mike Yuhas said that is a mass marketing rate for advertising mail. News letters are borderline. He was unsure if Sparks & Cinders would qualify or not. There is a minimum of 200 pieces at a time. Our usual press run is 160. Not all of those are mailed out. Only selected larger post offices can process bulk-marketing mail. It is often significantly slower than first-class mail. Using it would tighten our deadlines for printing, labels and mailing. There was a consensus to not pursue bulk mailing rates, and instead continue to pay for first-class stamps.

Keith will be working on the February issue of Sparks & Cinders tomorrow (Tuesday, January 16). He needs all incoming material by no later than Wednesday, January 17. Mike Yuhas will do the labels quickly. Everything needs to be to Neal and Cathy Wegner by Friday, January 26, for mailing. Mike Yuhas said he will write a short article explaining what our new 501c3 status does and does not do. It might be bumped to a future issue because of limited page space (see below) or deadline time.

The second sub-item under New Business was our annual gifts to the North Shore Congregational Church and to its custodian. We gave \$750.00 to the church, and \$75.00 to its custodian, last year. Mike Yuhas moved that we do the same this year. Ward Wells seconded the motion. It was approved by a unanimous voice vote. We will give a \$750.00 check to the North Shore Congregational Church, and a \$75.00 gift card to its custodian.

The sixth agenda item was an update on planning for our 75th anniversary celebration, coming up in 2025. Ward Wells has been working with Keith Schmidt on this. Some possibilities being discussed include:

- Bring out Soo Line 2-8-2 #1003. It is based very close to us in Hartford.
- Trip to steam restoration shop in Silvis, Illinois. This would probably require a charter bus and food. It is now the largest steam restoration shop in America. It is not that far away.
- New revised logo. The traditional symbol for 75 years is the diamond. It has a special significance (the crossing of two tracks) in railroading.

Keith Schmidt, Mike Yuhas and Ward Wells will hold a Zoom meeting on this subject in the near future. They may also discuss it the Mad City Railroad show in Madison (see below).

The seventh agenda item was our Chapter participation in upcoming train shows. The first sub-item there is the Mad City show in Madison on Saturday, February 17 and Sunday, February 18. Preparations for it are continuing. Mike Yuhas sent the logo for our new table cover to Ward Wells. Ward ordered it today. He expects delivery on or about Wednesday, January 24. Mike Yuhas slightly changed the format, adding a QR code, to the new banner. Mike ordered that today. It comes with hardware and a case. They are shipping it to Ward Wells’ Madison address. The Mad City show staff are currently working out floor plans. Ward Wells will arrive the afternoon of Thursday, February 15. Mike Yuhas, Brian Hechel, Tom Hoffmann, Dave Nelson, Neal and Cathy Wegner, and Keith Schmidt have all

volunteered to help staff our table. We can get in for set-up the evening of Friday, February 16, or early in the morning of Saturday, February 17.

Ward Wells and Mike Yuhas made up a one-page flyer to hand out. He asked how many copies we should have. There was a consensus that (the previously suggested) 100 would not be enough. The number of 1000 was suggested. There were 7000 attendees last year. We settled on 1000 copies. We can run out and get more on short notice if we run low. Do we want to hand out extra copies of Sparks & Cinders? We have a limited supply—14 left over from January, and a similar number from December. Those would go quickly. We could order some more in the February press run. How many? It was decided to order 500 copies for February, and hold those somewhat back—for serious inquiries only.

Discussion shifted to what will go into the February Sparks & Cinders. Keith wants to re-run the officer and director candidate (short) bios—with updates as needed. There may be pictures of the new (UP—former C&NW Shore Line) bridge over I-43 near Bender Road. Mike Yuhas is working on an article on our three presenters and their movies for Movie Night. Space is getting tight. Some of the above material may be delayed until future issues.

The second sub item was Train Fest. It is coming back, one week later than it was, on November 23-24. That is the opening weekend of gun deer hunting season, and the weekend before Thanksgiving. The location is unknown. It almost has to be at State Fair Park. Nothing else is big enough. There will be no charge to those not selling merchandise. We have no merchandise to sell. There was a consensus that we should be present. Any excess copies of flyers or S&C not used at Mad City could be used there.

The eighth agenda item was the annual election of officers and directors. All incumbents were willing to continue on into 2024. Keith Schmidt said he would serve as President if no other suitable candidate appears. Ward Wells said he will be moving to the Madison area in June, and would be willing to become Vice President. His doing so would create a Director vacancy on the Board. Some possible candidates were suggested. They will be approached. We will put a notice in February S&C. It should not take up much space (above). We will see who is interested. We will not pick a name tonight.

The ninth agenda item was the vacancy in the office of Chapter President. That was already addressed above.

The tenth and final agenda item was “Anything else for the good of the Chapter.” There was some discussion on arrangements for the Annual Business Meeting to be held on Friday, February 2. Mike Yuhas will prepare an agenda. Vice President Keith Schmidt will be there in person, presiding. Treasurer Tara Grudzielanek will be there in person to collect dues and process renewals. Dave Nelson and Sal Ciofani will work together on set-up and IT. There is a set-up diagram. All other officers and directors plan on attending. Some of those will be on Zoom. Mike Yuhas said he will for sure attend. He is unsure if it will be in person or on Zoom.

There was no further business to discuss. Keith Schmidt said that he would entertain a motion to adjourn. Mike Yuhas made a motion to adjourn. Ward Wells seconded it. There was no discussion or opposition. Keith Schmidt declared the board meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm. The Zoom meeting room closed at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Thomas W. Marcussen

Wisconsin Chapter Secretary