



NH Railroad Revitalization Association

March 22, 2004

Tonight's meeting was called to order by Stephen Piper for Peter Griffin at 7:10 PM at the Northfield Freight House.

Attendees:

Name	
Stephen R. Piper	Somersworth, NH
William Johnson	Wakefield, NH
Kathy Johnson	Wakefield, NH
Gary Kerr	Northfield, NH
Thomas Noel	New Boston, NH
Ken Milender	Warner, NH
Mark Richardson	Bedford, NH
George Katsakiores	Derry, NH
Gus Sheedy	Derry, NH
John Palmer	Derry, NH
Stephen Flanders	Weare, NH

- The February minutes were reviewed and accepted as written.
- Steve Flanders gave the Treasurer's Report stating that the NHRRA currently has a \$1,467.20 account balance. Steve has sent documentation to the IRS in Salt Lake City on behalf of the NHRRA as required for non-profit organizations. Recommended that a dues reminder be mailed out in April.

George Katsakiores has received the following names to date of those seeking office for the next three year term:

President: Peter Griffin
Vice President: Ken Milender, Tom Noel
Secretary: Stephen Piper
Treasurer: Steve Flanders

Ballots will be mailed to current paid members as an attachment to this meeting's minutes.

- Peter Griffin met with the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. He "met with Robin Comstock, her advisory committee and the new director of Greater Nashua Regional Planning to discuss the rail picture in NH. The director reported that the court case should be decided by the end of April. Robin Comstock will begin to work with the other chambers along the NH Main Line to build interest in rail. The Manchester Chamber will devote their next infrastructure summit to transportation. This will be a big deal for them."

Tom Noel recommended that NHRRA have a member present at every future Manchester meeting.

- George gave a legislative update. There was a meeting held in the House with Public Works on the recently submitted Flanders bill. Jim Marshall (NH DOT Public Works) will now allocate \$83,000 towards the 2nd phase of the Boston-Montreal High Speed rail study. This will be applied towards the NH's portion of the 20% match requirement to leverage the 80% federal funds already available. The State Senate has passed an amended Flanders bill to allocate \$100,000 from the Railroad Fee Fund, but it now needs to pass the House. It is expected that there will be little opposition as it does not impact the General Fund nor does it require the use of gasoline tax revenue. This Railroad Fee Fund currently has about \$500,000 that is used for maintaining state owned rail corridors and tracks.
Tom mentioned that the Nashua project is being held up by the lack of \$16,000 for the next engineering study. It's too bad that the Flanders bill was so narrowly written that this \$16,000 could not be obtained to get Nashua back underway.
- According to Commissioner Murray at a recent meeting, in addition to the increasing number getting older and not driving, there is a certain percentage of people of driving age who choose not to drive. NHRRA should find exactly what this statistic is and use it as a strong argument for supporting rail initiatives.
- George mentioned that the State Senate (via Bob Clegg) has passed an amended reorganization bill that would aim to restructure state agencies. Project requests will likely bypass the DOT Commissioner and go directly to Administrative Services. This could result in reducing the state's deficit by eliminating projects. It is very important that NHRRA continue to push our agenda hard. Mark Richardson added that any change will come as a result of political pressure. We, as a coordinated group, need to apply this political pressure on the Governor and get businesses on board. Tell them, for example, the top ten reasons why rail should be important to them. Steve Piper mentioned the outreach that we have done to date and that expanding on this is important. Bill Johnson stated that the lack of financial participation is troubling. This group needs financial support from the membership to run ads and make our position public. We need to grow our membership as well. Perhaps each attending member could strive to bring new members to the next meeting.
- Discussions ensued regarding the NHRRA web site. This should be a tool to inspire viewers to stay and seek as much information as we can supply. It needs to lay out our goals very specifically in order of priority on page one. It needs to tell why our initiatives will be beneficial. We need to incorporate graphics and links to corridor maps. Steve Piper mentioned that our current web site maintainer has been overly helpful in getting the site current with information and now just needs our direction and input.
- Other aspects of this group's focus should be on public relations (a dedicated NHRRA spokesperson to the media), networking with other organizations, and outreaching to supportive companies for financial backing. Bill recommended that we invite Guilford Rail System by letter to tell their positions on initiatives and see if any common ground exists. He also speculated that New Hampshire Northcoast might contribute if NHRRA shows that we are making an impact on public policy.

- Steve Piper read a write-up of the Conway Branch he received by e-mail. (*Note* As this is too lengthy to include in the minutes, a copy will be attached separately*). NHN is very aggressively behind the project and are willing to help fund subsequent studies.

Motion: A motion to write a letter to State Senator Joe Kenney on behalf of NHRRA supporting the restoration of this segment of the Conway Branch was made by Gary Kerr, seconded by Steve Flanders and all others present voted for, none against. Steve Piper will draft a letter for review in this regard.

- Tom Noel gave an overview of the National Association for Railroad Passengers (NARP) held March 20 in Exeter. Speakers included Kit Morgan (NHDOT Administrator for the Bureau of Rail & Transit), Ron Roy (Director of passenger Services for the State of Maine), Cliff Sinnott (Executive Director for the Rockingham Planning Commission) and Scott Leonard (assistant Director of NARP).
- Steve Piper brought attention to two authorizations that have been approved by the Executive Council.
 - 1) To expend up to \$41,000 from the Special Railroad Fund to reimburse operators on state-owned railroad lines for weed and brush control.
 - 2) To expend up to \$225,000 from the Special Railroad Fund to purchase new railroad crossties and other track materials for the continued maintenance of active state-owned railroad lines.

Other Business:

- Steve Piper distributed two handouts from Peter Griffin regarding the 2004 Wilton Scenic Railroad schedule (www.wiltonscenicrr.com) and the April 25th Model Railroad Show in Hooksett (hooksettrrshow@aol.com) .

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM

Next meeting: Monday, April 26, 2004 at 7 PM
Safety and Health Council of NH
163 Manchester Street
Concord, NH

Minutes by: Stephen R. Piper - Secretary