



# NH Railroad Revitalization Association

April 26, 2004

Tonight's meeting was called to order by Peter Griffin at 7:00 PM at the Safety & Health Council of NH in Concord.

## Attendees:

Name	
Peter Griffin	Windham, NH
Stephen Piper	Somersworth, NH
William Johnson	Wakefield, NH
John Magoon	Manchester, NH
Thomas Noel	New Boston, NH
Ken Milender	Warner, NH
Mark Richardson	Bedford, NH
George Katsakiores	Derry, NH
Stephen Flanders	Weare, NH
John Palmer	Derry, NH
Linda Johnson	Derry, NH
William DeVito	Derry, NH

- The March minutes were reviewed and accepted as written.
- Steve Flanders gave the Treasurer's Report stating that the NHRRA currently has a \$1,545.20 account balance.
- George tallied the officer election ballots with the results as follows:

Peter Griffin – President  
Tom Noel – Vice President  
Stephen Flanders - Treasurer  
Stephen Piper – Secretary

- Peter reported on the recent ruling of the Motor Transport Association lawsuit by the NH Supreme Court. The court found in favor of the MTA, eliminating any possibility of funding rail initiatives in the state with Highway Trust Fund money (gasoline tax revenues). Peter will continue communications with the NHDOT and the Bureau of Rail & Transit to continue investigating other funding options. He will also continue to seek out business community leaders who might support rail.

**Motion:** Peter made a motion to have NHRRA write a rebuttal to the lawsuit ruling to the following major newspapers in the state - Manchester Union Leader, Foster's Daily Democrat and Concord Monitor. Bill Johnson seconded and all were in favor, none was opposed.

- George gave a legislative update reporting that the House Finance Committee met with the Ways and Means Committee to try to arrive at some common ground, but all budget items are up in the air at this point. As reported last month, State Senator Bob Flanders introduced a bill to provide \$100,000 for NH's share of the three-state Boston-Montreal High Speed Rail study from the Railroad Fee Fund. This bill was subsequently killed in the Legislature as this money is supposed to be dedicated to the replacement of crossties and other maintenance needs of the state-owned rail corridors. The City of Nashua, however, will likely contribute the \$16,000 necessary to provide the matching funds for the next phase study of the Lowell to Nashua commuter rail extension to keep the project alive.  
NHDOT Commissioner Carol Murray does not like any other agencies tapping into the Highway Trust Fund. She did initially go to the Executive Council for the \$16,000, but got a negative response due to the impending lawsuit. No HTF money is currently going towards Manchester Airport reconstruction work.
- John submitted a copy of the Manchester Union Leader's editorial for review and asked why the state is able to purchase buses with the Highway Trust Fund when it doesn't seem like that would fit the definition of Article 6-A.
- Peter brought up the fact that Governor Benson removed the state's purchase of the last remaining piece of the Manchester & Lawrence Branch from his agenda stating that the "state should not be in the business of owning rail corridors", despite the state's already established rail banking system. However, the governor is pulling lots of things from his agendas and is not necessarily targeting rail initiatives. NHRRA feels that it would be unwise to allow Guilford Rail System to sell this last piece to abutters as this would just about kill any opportunity to reactivate the corridor forever. Peter mentioned that the town of Salem does not have rail service in their master plan.
- Steve Flanders reported that people attending the train show in Hooksett showed a lot of interest in returning rail service to the state. Steve was able to hand out many NHRRA brochures.
- Steve Piper submitted a copy of the corporate sponsorship letter for review. Steve questioned if there is a ceiling on money received from corporations according to the requirements of nonprofit status. George said donations need to be reported to the Attorney General's Office and we will need to fill out an application for such. George will follow up in this regard.
- Discussions ensued regarding the best approach NHRRA should take to be effective. Mark commented that we must prioritize our goals and work hard at achieving the most viable as Goal #1. This is how successful businesses get off the ground. We need to approach and meet with all the key players within Goal #1, find out who supports the project and show why it will benefit. We need to pursue a constant drip feed of our message into the public. We need to be current and in control of the facts.  
Bill suggested that the current organizational chart, as found on the web page, should be restructured to be more influenced by giving specific duties to members based on their strengths rather than their geographical location. We should have a marketing person who knows how to be successful at reaching a lot of people and businesses, a strong political liaison (George) capable of continually keeping this organization heard, someone who can be a competent media spokesperson and members who work for railroads who might have internal influence, etc. This way we can get one success under our belt, even if it's not a big one, and

something to build upon. This will lead to more community respect for NHRRA and won't become overwhelming. We need to mobilize more members of NHRRA by getting them to attend meetings and become active participants.

- Rich gave a presentation on how he believes rail can be marketed in southern NH. Situating the restored Flying Yankee in Nashua to act as a museum piece will create a public draw. Inside the Flying Yankee could be lots of information on the benefits of rail. Also, offering an excursion run from the Flying Yankee up the Milford Branch would help generate interest and allow people to travel from Nashua to the Wal-Mart in Amherst by rail. Rich has spoken with Kevin Dillon (Manchester Airport) regarding the potential for a light rail connection from Salem to the airport using a Hi-Rail bus or an ultra-light transit vehicle.
- John suggested that if NH money is currently not available for rail, why not terminate the Lowell-Nashua extension at the southerly end of the Pheasant Lane Mall, which is in Mass?
- Tom and Bill spoke about the High Speed Rail initiative in Florida that was passed by popular vote through a referendum vote and then shot down by Governor Jeb Bush. This has now been revived by the business interests of Alstrom and Bombardier. Tom and Bill will follow up on how this strategy might be effectively used in NH.
- Peter recommended that the next NHRRA meeting be held in Nashua to begin dialogue on what steps to take next. He will invite the new Nashua Regional Planner and the Mayor's office to ask what their approach is going to be and how NHRRA can help.

**Motion:** Peter made a motion to compensate the NH Conservation Law Foundation \$250 from the NHRRA account to help contribute towards their legal efforts made during the MTA lawsuit. Bill seconded and all were in favor, none was opposed.

#### **Other Business:**

- Tom will investigate getting a NHRRA member trip on the Wilton Scenic sometime in the fall. Members are encouraged to express their interest.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

Next meeting: Monday, May 24, 2004 at 7 PM  
Health & Safety Council  
163 Manchester Street  
Concord, NH

Minutes by: Stephen R. Piper - Secretary