

Mid-Continent Railway Historical Society, Inc.
Minutes of the November 16th Special Board of Directors Meeting

Date: November 16, 2013

Location: Buttonwood Partners, Madison, WI

Roll Call:

Directors:

R. Anderson, Treasurer
J. Bloohm, President
S. Brist
K. Burbach – Absent
A. Doering
R. Duresa
P. Endres
G. Lavrenz -- Absent
C. O'Brien
D. Schumacher, Vice President
J. Sorrel -- Absent
K. Thomsen
R. Wagner

Other Officers:

K. Bauman, Secretary

Meeting called to order at 1:15 PM by president Bloohm.

Discussion of Mission Statement

The Mid-Continent Railway Museum is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the railroad legacy for the educational benefit of the general public. Its primary focus shall be on railroading of the Upper Midwest during the Golden Age of Railroading, 1880-1916. The Museum adheres to the following principles:

- 1) to collect and preserve rolling stock, structures, and other artifacts that meet the Museum's focus;
- 2) to restore the equipment based upon sound scholarship;
- 3) to operate a demonstration steam passenger train in an historically accurate environment of a turn-of-the-century rural railroad;
- 4) to interpret, through Museum display and educational programs, the history, equipment, skills, and the human facets of the rail industry;
- 5) to maintain a library and archival collections in the interest of promoting historical studies of the industry;
- 6) to hold the Museum's collection in the public trust, ensuring long-term care of historic objects entrusted to its collections.

The board has the following concerns about the statement:

We need to have more flexibility in the time period specified in the mission statement. However, it was pointed out that the statement only says that the “primary” focus shall be 1880-1916. The question was brought up if these dates were still relevant to today’s society?

President Bloohm felt it was important for the board to understand the history of the old statement of purpose and how the current mission statement came to be. The statement of purpose was originally replaced by a previous board without member input or any voting.

Our primary collection currently holds to these dates of 1880-1916. There are also secondary collection pieces and work equipment items. But that still leaves the question of is the era too narrow for relevance in this more modern era? Should we broaden the focus of the mission? And if we do, do we want to accept more items in the collection, given we don’t have enough storage space as it is. Should we wait and allow for the Members Meeting to allow for their input first?

Action Item: Get copies of other railroad museum mission statements.

Other comments: Regarding item 5, is our library and archive open to the public, to members?

In item number 3, does this allow any passenger trains without steam? Especially since steam expenses are going to out price our ability to operate steam on a daily basis.

For consideration, Instead of changing the existing statement, what if we added a line 7 that your allow the substitution of equipment as required by needs.

We must remember that our main focus is education of the general public, not the members. This is why we are a non-profit.

General Board Performance: Does the board need to meet more than four time per year? Do we need to consider going to perhaps six times per year at least on a temporary basis, to allow us to respond faster in this tight financial environment we find ourselves in? The board needs to set direction and make sure that that direction is followed by the society. There is a greater need to set and keep the strategic direction. Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin State Statutes point out that the board is the policy making body of organization. The lack of a manager is impacting our ability to govern the organization efficiently and effectively.

Key Results: (What to do to succeed)

- Hire effective professional manager for a non-profit organization,
- Board polices must be followed by everyone. And it must be enforced.
- We must maintain Focus
- We need to recognize our strengths, weaknesses and our opportunities.
 - For example we have PR opportunities but our weakness is lack of money.
 - Email marketing as part of new system.
- Relations with membership in general.

What Are Our Key issues?

- Policy Education

- Lack of Manager
- Disconnect with Membership
- Lack of Steam
- Policy Enforcement
- Need to Increase Number of Board Meetings Temporarily
- Flood Ordinances
- Asset Allocation Inventory Funding
- Funding of Privately Owned Equipment with Museum Funds
- Funding and Debt Loads in General, both short and long term
- Visitor Educational Experience
- Alternate activities With the Dells
- Economy
- Infrastructure
- Our Facilities and Our Presentation to the Public
- Security of our Facilities
- Location
- Declining attendance
- Marketing /social media/website

2:40 PM – Break was called.

2:53 PM – Meeting was recalled to order.

Issues of Governance

- Coordinated Bidirectional Communications
- Positive communications
- Discipline / Adherence to Policy
- What Needs to Be Done
- Reach out to Membership
- Educate / talk to membership
- Enthusiasm
- Transparency

Action Item creation of the Governance Committee

O'Brien, Doering, Wagner, Bloohm

At the December Meeting the committee will publicize the process. Should we release draft minutes? Or provide other status updates? Discuss strategy for professional management.

Issues of Funding

- Sell off un-needed assets
- Manager that can raise money
- Restricted funds

- Grant Writing and investigations
 - Non-Profit and Governmental
- Short Term vs. Long Term funding
- Identify Long Term needs
 - Infrastructure
 - Maintenance
 - Equipment
- Short Term Emergency funding needs
- Donor Relations
- State Historical Society relationship source of donor list?
- Estate planning beyond the membership

Action Item: Creation of a Funding Committee:

Anderson, Thomsen, Wagner

Action Item: Add increasing meeting frequency with additional special meetings to the agenda for December's meeting.

Send any additional items for the December meeting agenda to president Bloohm.

4:01 PM -- R. Duresa moves and D. Schumacher seconds to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Kelly R. Bauman

Secretary

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