

**BOD MEETING MINUTES OF GARDEN STATE DIVISION, NE REGION,  
NMRA**

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**Purpose:** Garden State Division (GSD) Staff Meeting  
**Date/Time:** Saturday, October 10, 2020  
**Place:** Telephone meeting by FreeConferenceCall.com  
**Attendees:** Chuck Diljak, Jim Homoki, Jim Walsh, Bob Dennis, Mark Moritz, Paul Harbord, Andy Brusgard, JP Mikesh, Tom Casey, Ciro Compagno and Steve Ascolese

Meeting started at 10:05 AM.

**No Motions Submitted at the Meeting**

**Reports were presented:**

President's Report – We are still in the midst of the pandemic and things are frustrating. We have our event planned for this month and then the NER has a virtual convention in December. Chuck mentioned that we need to think about officer positions for the next election since he is not running for President again. The elections will be for President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Paul, JP and Jim H for directors. Chuck will become Immediate Past President and Ciro will need to run for a position to remain on the board. Since Chuck is not running, he will be the election chair and responsible for the nominations. Elections will be at our spring meeting – hopefully in Hillsborough. Chuck will contact board members to determine their interest in running for positions. We still have room on the board for additional directors. Existing board members may run for officer positions. Mark has been taking over the responsibility for Constant Contact for the GSD because Chuck has been working Constant Contact emails for the Northeastern Region.

NER REPORT – The main focus is NERx and that will be discussed during discussion of events.

Vice President's Report – Mark had nothing additional to report.

Secretary's Report - Jim W previously sent out DRAFT minutes of the last meeting of 30 AUG 2020. There were no comments or corrections. The minutes were accepted as written.

Treasurer's Report – Bob D indicated that basically we have no change in the Treasurer's Report. We had no expenses and only received a check and a letter from the NER. The check was reduced by 27%. Chuck added that the reason for the reduction was to cover the NER expenses for the achievement program. We received \$174 but normally we get around \$220 to \$230. The check is our share of the funds that the region received from National based upon number of members. Bob will send a written report to Jim W. The treasurer's report was accepted.

Education Committee and AP Chair Reports – Chuck said that there were no evaluations since our last BOD meeting. For The Whistle Post column, we will recognize Jim H, Paul H and Alex Nawotka for the certificates that they received. Jim and Paul each received one certificate and Alex received three. Alex had the last evaluations. Division members are still working on certificates. Chuck, Tom Wortmann and Mark are working on Master Builder – Cars. Mark has all of his cars ready for evaluation. Bob D is working on Master Builder - Scenery. Jim H is working on Model Railroad Engineer - Civil. We need to determine how to do the evaluations for the cars. Steve A noted that he is still not up to traveling yet. Chuck expects that Steve will let us know when he is ready. Steve is looking forward to resuming his AP chairman duties.

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Events Report - FALL EVENT - Chuck spoke about our upcoming event on October 24. So far he has only seen photos for himself and from Kai. If anybody knows members working on their layouts or models, please contact them and get pictures of the work. Request photos and descriptions of their activities. Chuck needs a cohost for the next virtual meet since Paul will be unavailable that day. The cohost helps monitor things as we go along and especially when we get to the Q&A session. Since Chuck is giving a presentation, he will not be monitoring the questions or other items related to working with the free conference call application. Ciro volunteered to be the cohost. There will be 2 clinics. First is Chuck with JMRI Operations Pro and the second is Richard Wehr's clinic "Ghosts of Gasoline Alley". Chuck said that Richard has a good clinic and he hopes that we have a good turnout for the meeting. He wants a much larger attendance than the 24 at the previous meet. Tom Wortmann contacted Chuck and offered a video layout tour of his layout. Due to feedback from meeting attendees, we will try to limit the time for the video layout tours. This follows the experience of the NMRax. Chuck also mentioned some general good practices for the video layout tours. Similar to NMRax and NERx, we will request that the prerecorded layout tours be limited to about 15 minutes. Chuck also discussed this with Tom Wortmann. After Chuck's clinic we will have bring and brag and then a break. During this break, Chuck will make sure that Richard is set up for his clinic.

NERx – It takes place Dec 1-4 each evening 6:30 to 10:30. Chuck hopes that everybody can make it. NERx will use the NMRax social media team to help produce it but our virtual convention will include contests. We will have photo and model contests with a period of November 1 -15 to submit entries. Information is on the MillCity2020.org web site. Models will not be evaluated for merit but they will be judged from the submitted photographs and information. Judges will evaluate the models based on their construction quality, level of detail, prototypicality and overall appearance. Provide 1 to 4 photos of the model and maybe a prototype photo or two and the forms. For the photo contest there are 4 categories prototype-color and black and white and model-color and black and white. Award winners will be announced throughout the convention. Each night there will be one or two categories. There will be some special awards announced as well. The plan is to have between 6 and 12 layout tours. Jim H will do a 15 minute tour of his layout. There are 16 clinics identified so far and they may add more. They are trying to work out the schedule. They need to figure out the run time for the clinics. They want the clinics to run for 30 minutes but some may run longer. After the convention, the clinics are available on YouTube. Jim W asked Chuck about getting photos for the NER Coupler coverage of NERx. Chuck suggested contacting Ken May who is collecting photos for both contests. Jim also asked about photos for layout tours. Chuck needs clinic and layout photos for Constant Contact emails to promote NERx. Peter Watson is clinic chair and the contact for layout tours is James Van Bokkelen.

WINTER EVENT - Chuck is not sure what we will be doing for the winter but noted the three options are: The Model Railroad Club, Oakland or virtual. At the time of our last BOD meeting, The Model Railroad Club was closed to the public. Chuck is not sure when we will be able to meet in person. Paul asked if there was any direction from National. Chuck was not aware of any guidance in this matter. Mark made the point that the pandemic may not get under control until we get a vaccine and that may not be until spring. The consensus for the winter event is that we should plan for it to be a virtual event.

SPRING EVENT - The spring is too far out to plan now. However, the options will be virtual or in Hillsborough NJ. For the spring meet we previously discussed a make-and-take clinic. Chuck approached Bill Grosse of the NJD and Bill thought that the make-and-take clinic is a great idea. That was an option for an in person meet in Hillsborough because it has lots of space. Bob D is looking at Fos Scale, Bar Mills or ITLA kits for the make-and-take clinic. We need to determine which model kit and who will lead the build. He received a kit from Fos Scale and one is coming from ITLA. He needs to speak to Bar Mills but he had trouble making contact. Bob said the potential kits are all around the same price. Chuck asked about the ITLA kit. Bob does not know the specific kit but it is a small kit that has been used for clinics. That is an option for Hillsborough and we will make that call when we are closer to the winter meet or just after the winter meet. Right now it is hard to say just where we will be with this pandemic. Bob will act as coordinator for the make-and-take clinic.

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Clinic Report – Chuck said that we can start planning on clinics for a virtual winter meet. Jim W asked Jim H if he will have a clinic on creating a timetable. Jim H responded that he could have it by then. Jim W is working with Joe Valentine who is developing a clinic on building his freight house. Kai's clinic will not apply for a virtual meeting. Jim W asked Chuck about the clinic he was planning relating his efforts for the Master Builder – Cars AP certificate. Chuck noted that with all the work involved with NERx he will want to take a break. Jim W described two clinics that he is developing: one on rust colors and the other about bonding and filling for models. He is considering doing an Edutrain clinic and he is exploring information for a general introduction to operations. Jim asked Chuck if NERx needs another clinic from us. Chuck said that they seem to be good for clinics.

Membership Report – Andy B cannot locate the last attendance sheet. He updated email addresses but he doesn't know where he put the sheets. He has been keeping track of email addresses and sending out emails to members who are past their renewals. He also sends emails to people who are renewing. Tom C had a question regarding the membership reports. Tom generated reports following new members and new Rail Pass members for several years. It was requested by a prior GSD President and Tom wanted to know if the information is still needed. Mark said that it is good to do as long as it results in some actionable information. Tom C responded that he has not seen any action resulting from those reports. Jim H does not see the report useful for action. It seems to be very similar trends – picking up some members and losing some members. Bottom line, it does not seem to make much difference in the end. For Tom C it seems that the retention rate is the same no matter how they joined. He said that more people start their NMRA membership with the Rail Pass program. Overall, members who join without the Rail Pass tend to have a higher initial retention rate than those who started with the Rail Pass but several years down the road it really does not seem to make a difference. For Chuck the statistics are useful only if they help to tell a story. We must understand what drives the statistics. That is a reason for reaching out to members and take a proactive approach and not wait until we see statistics like number of past due members. Contacting members gets the feedback of what they like or dislike. Also for new members we want to find out why they joined. We need a call log to record noteworthy information from the contact. Statistics are good only when you know the context and that requires contact with the members. Why they joined, why they left or why they continue to remain as members – important information to supplement statistics. Ciro asked Tom how often he works on these statistics. Previously every month but more recently it is quarterly. Ciro was trying to determine if we can benefit from this report. Chuck likes tracking membership increase/decrease and being able to understand it through contact with members. He thinks outreach is more important because it provides a context for the increasing or decreasing of the membership. Jim W added two items to look at with respect to retention. One is member activity indicated by our GSD event sign-in sheets. The other is interaction with us through the outreach that could be recorded by the call log. That is one reason for Chuck's interest in the sign-in sheets. The other reason is to keep track of visitors. People can only be visitors three times and tracking this is important for our insurance. Chuck advised Andy B and Tom C to make a plan for recording attendance and accounting for visitors when we resume our face-to-face meets. On a quarterly basis, Tom C will keep track of member retention rates based on how they joined. He anticipates that effort will be winding down. Tom started working on keeping track of those members who fell off the list and seeing if they remain off our membership list or whether they come back. He will address if they are deceased or moved out of our region. Chuck reminded Tom that calling a member may determine if a person passed away or moved out of the region. That is another benefit of membership outreach and we need a membership call log on Dropbox that we update when a member is contacted. Andy and Tom C will set up the call log in the membership folder on Dropbox. Chuck also spoke about an NMRax session with the NMRA board. During that meeting, Jack Hamilton mentioned an initiative with membership quotas for regions and divisions. Chuck does not know about implementation but he wanted us to give us a heads up.

Whistle Post Report – Jim H admitted that he is behind on it but expects to have something put together by the middle of the next week. He does not have much content on member activities. Chuck

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asked Jim about progress on his own layout and Jim admitted that he may have something to show. We have photos from Fred and Kai and Chuck provided photos of his latest car. Tom C submitted an article about upgrading older Athearn equipment and he never got feedback. An article by Scott Dunlap for the winter issue cannot run until after Scott's other article appears in the next NER Coupler issue. The two articles are complementary but we do not want to run the articles at the same time. Jim thinks that he has what he needs for the next issue. Jim mentioned previous discussions about having a fancy cover photo but he thinks that getting a large size cover photo will be a challenge.

### Old Business:

- Monitoring our Facebook is ongoing. Chuck hasn't posted anything about our next event but he will do it. Chuck will post it to the GSD page and the NER group.
- Revamp The Whistle Post – We already spoke about The Whistle Post and the front cover.
- GSD web site – JP sent Chuck some links with different formats and JP needs feedback.
- Erie Limited files – Chuck has flash drives and waits for a face to face meeting to distribute them.
- Train show at Mother Seton HS – We wait until November 2020 to see if they are having the show.
- Membership outreach – We spoke about member outreach during our membership discussion. Chuck said to reach out to the members to try to get a good turnout for the October 24 virtual meet.
- RPM/Craftsman Structures Meet – This is on hold for now.
- GSD T-TRAK modules for the NER – John Doehring did not bring it up and Bob D is not sure if we are doing it. If we do, he hopes that Steve A will help when he gets better. Right now it is on hold.
- Make-and-take clinic – We spoke a little about the make-and-take clinic earlier. Bob D is working with kit vendors but it depends on the pandemic. We will make that decision in early 2021.
- GSD online apparel shop is on hold until Steve recovers and is well enough to do that.
- We will close the item about the previous attendance sign-in sheet since Andy cannot find it. However, as discussed earlier we need to keep track for the future.
- Raffle clarification – Bob D did more research on the raffle/auction. He submitted paperwork to Jim W in an email on 3 SEP 2020. As he noted before, the State of NJ is not interested in the small raffles that we have. They are looking for the big prizes where they can generate income. The documents indicate that we do not need to get a license from the state for our raffle. Our prize is well below the \$400 threshold for a 50/50. This item is now closed.
- Chuck contacted Bill Grosse and that can be closed.
- NMRA At Risk Policy - Chuck noted that as written the policy would require an affidavit for a grandparent. Ciro asked how we plan to inform the membership of this requirement. Chuck said that it is mentioned in the NMRA magazine but it is something that needs to be refreshed often. Chuck is not sure what would be the best way to do that. Chuck will include something about this At-Risk Policy in an upcoming column in The Whistle Post. Mark would like to see a clarification of the case with a grandparent. A discussion followed directed at how we can execute and implement the policy. At the next NER board meeting Bob D will ask about implementing the At-Risk Policy.

### New Business:

- Chuck is the election chair and will contact BOD members. Jim W will add Election to the agenda.

The next virtual BOD meeting will be Saturday January 9, 2021 or some time during that weekend. Chuck will offer some day and time options for us to provide our availability. From that information he will determine the best day and time for the meeting.

The meeting ended around 12:05 PM.

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Respectfully submitted,

*Jim Walsh*

Jim Walsh, Secretary NMRA/NER/GSD