

**MINUTES**  
**Called Board of Directors Meeting**  
4th Division, PNR, NMRA, July 13, 2023

**Attendees:** Bill Messecar, Russ Segner, Ed Ives, Robin Peel, Alex Brikoff, Dennis Terpstra, Bob Kenworthy, Magnus Christerson

Superintendent Bill Messecar called the meeting to order via Zoom at 10:10 AM on July 13, 2023.

**Background:**

There are many changes currently being proposed by the NMRA going forward. Especially in regard to National Convention format. National recognizes the need for change in response to a changing market and declining membership. It is believed that we are in a unique position to be able to propose a shortened National Convention along with other convention format changes in response to current trends and member preferences.

**Introduction:**

This was a special Called Meeting of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division Board of Directors called by Bill Messecar to discuss the possibility of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division proposing and hosting the 2026 NMRA National Convention. The goals of this meeting were to explore and review the following three topics:

- 1. Convention Location, Hotel Prices and Determining Available Exhibit Space for the National Train Show**
- 2. Leadership Roles and Likely Candidate Selection**
- 3. Format, Dates and Convention Duration**

**Convention Location, Hotel Prices and Determining Available Exhibit Space for the National Train Show**

Russ Segner and Bob Kenworthy reported that they determined the 100,000 square foot requirement for the National Train Show was NOT a firm, driving requirement at all. With that new information in hand, they toured slightly smaller venues that would still meet the needs of a national convention. Those being the fifth floor of the Tacoma Convention Center which has 50,000 square feet of space available plus additional 5,000 square feet of space in the lobby area of the Convention Center. The Marriott, which is connected across an adjoining skybridge from the Convention Center, has an additional 30,000 square feet. The recommendation from Russ and Bob would be that the Tacoma Convention Center would adequately meet the requirements of the National Train Show. The Tacoma Dome and the Puyallup Fair Grounds, although adequate in size, have other disadvantages that would exclude them from consideration for the National Train Show. The Murano and Marriot hotels are both in close proximity to each other and the Convention Center. There are approximately 600 rooms between the two hotels that would be available. There would be between 1600 and 1800 anticipated attendees with a large number of them being local and not needing overnight accommodation. Room prices, if booked today, would be about \$160 to \$190 per night. However, negotiated blocks of rooms would be about \$165 to \$175 per night.

## **Leadership Roles and Likely Candidate Selection**

Bill Messecar reported that leadership roles need to be defined and people identified prior to submitting Convention proposal to the NMRA. At a minimum, a Chair and Co-Chair need to be identified and selected. A Treasurer or Finance person also needs to be selected. Additional Committee Chairs will also need to be selected as Convention planning continues. A small selection committee will be assigned the task of identifying and selecting such individuals. The Chair and Co-Chair need to be strong leaders, enthusiastic about their tasks and support new and innovative ideas for format changes of the Convention. There are some distinct “groups” of attendees that are also changing their attendance habits. The SIGs, Clinic Goers and Socializers are all changing their attendance habits that the convention leadership needs to be aware of. Instead, the convention needs to be structured so that it not only encompasses the traditional features of a convention but also the uniqueness of the locale. What is it that makes the Pacific Northwest unique? We’ve got outstanding layouts for operating sessions, railfanning opportunities, incredible non rail sightseeing destinations. All of these could be applied to those people bringing their families as well.

## **Format, Dates and Convention Duration**

The Convention has two parts. There is the NMRA National Convention portion and, traditionally, the National Train Show portion of the NMRA Convention.

### **NMRA Convention**

The NMRA Convention has traditionally lasted seven days and included the National Train Show on Friday through Sunday of that week. Changing trends and member preferences dictate a change from this traditional format. A new format proposed and summarized by Bill Messecar would reduce Convention length to four days with registration beginning on Tuesday and the Convention between Wednesday and Saturday. Clinics would be primarily on Wednesday and Thursday intermixed with layout tours, op sessions and other activities as the Convention schedule is developed. The Train Show would remain on Friday through Sunday. This Convention is proposed to take place sometime after July 19<sup>th</sup> or possibly through first week in August 2026. It was agreed that the 4<sup>th</sup> Division will drive the proposal for revising the traditional National Convention format.

### **National Train Show**

Although the Train Show usually follows the NMRA portion, there is not much relation between the two. This was told to Russ Segner by Donna Orr, 2023 NMRA Convention Chair. The Train Show is not directly related to the hosting NMRA and Convention Committee but rather loosely associated to another entity. This association between the NMRA and the National Train Show needs to be better understood. The Train Show is held in a large exhibition area, usually separate from the NMRA Convention location. It features national level vendors, some local vendors and lots of operating layouts. It was proposed that the Train Show might be held at the Washington State Convention Center and possibly the Convention itself but was dismissed due to the high price point of the facility along with poor transportation between Seattle and Tacoma as well as with surrounding safety concerns.

**Action Items:**

- **Robin Peel will draft a preliminary summary of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's proposed revised National Convention format.**
- **Bill Messecar, Russ Segner and Jack Hamilton will talk to an as-of-yet unidentified person(s) of the NMRA Executive Committee and informally discuss the key points of the draft summary prepared above by Robin Peel. This could possibly be done before the National Convention in Dallas later this summer.**
- **Bill Messecar will ask Jeff Herrmann and Russ Segner will ask Jack Hamilton who we need to talk to at NMRA to discuss our Convention proposal.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Alex Brikoff  
Secretary, 4<sup>th</sup> Division