

Meeting summary for NMRA 4D Board Meeting (06/22/2024 10:00AM)

Board Members Present:

Bill Messecar, Bob Kenworthy, Ed Ives, Lee Marsh, Dennis Terpstra, Robin Peel and Kurt Laidlaw. Mike Stepner, the incoming Superintendent, was also present.

Quick recap

The team discussed budget planning for the next year, and strategies to address declining primary income. They also reviewed income and expenses, proposed budget adjustments, and debated on the allocation of funds for various projects and groups. Lastly, they deliberated on cost-cutting measures, the need for preventative maintenance for company trailers, and the reintroduction of Zoom meetings for leadership.

Next steps

- Robin to send out an email to all modular groups reminding them to forward any income earned to Robin for accounting purposes, and to submit receipts for reimbursement within 90 days.
- Robin to finalize the budget based on the discussion, send it to the board members for approval by the end of next week, and incorporate any additional feedback from modular group chairs.
- Kurt to discuss with Kevin Klettke and Bob Kenworthy about potentially discontinuing the in-person Tacoma clinic due to low attendance and explore alternative options like Zoom meetings.
- Robin to check with the European Train Enthusiasts group on their interest in becoming a sponsored group under 4D.
- Board to solicit ideas from members and review potential organizations to receive an annual donation of \$1,500-\$2,000 from 4D, starting in September.
- Board to continuously evaluate strategies for increasing revenue and reducing expenses, with a focus on retaining and attracting new members.

Summary

Zoom AI and Budget Strategies

Robin led a discussion about creating a budget for the next year while addressing the declining primary income. He clarified the team's financial position, stating there were sufficient savings to last two decades without new income. The team decided to strategize on long-term solutions to remedy the income issue before discussing the budget's specifics. Robin presented the organization's income and expenses over the

past years, highlighting changes due to the pandemic and recent asset write-off. Suggestions were made to add a line on the summary sheet to show the balance sheet total for each year and review budget areas that needed scrutiny.

Income Tracking and Group Expenses

Robin color-coded the income cells in a spreadsheet to track sources of income such as interest on investments, the NMRA rebate, and income from various shows. The possibility of charging a division fee for NMRA members was suggested but could be unpopular. The income generated from modular groups' shows mainly went into their own petty cash, and the \$1,800 earned from the Washington History Museum show was split between the NTRA and the modular groups. Mike Donnelly collected income from each group, while Robin proposed that Freemo-N group should manage their own expenses. All income earned by groups was agreed to be forwarded to Robin for accounting purposes. Robin explained a complex accounting process to ensure that groups' liability accounts balance with their expenditures.

European Train Enthusiast Group Sponsorship and Expenses

Robin planned to discuss with the leadership of the European Train Enthusiast Group about potentially moving forward with their sponsorship, which had previously been considered but not finalized. Meanwhile, Robin also presented an overview of the organization's internal administrative expenses, noting a slight increase due to the addition of a Constant Contact account for mass emails. There was also a discussion about the high mileage expenses for the group's trailers and the potential for adjusting the show schedule to reduce costs. Suggestions for further expense-cutting measures, such as switching to Z scale, were made in good humor.

HO Group High Budget Bid Discussion

Robin presented a high budget bid from the HO Group, totaling \$7,100, which was largely for improving their layout and purchasing new drapery. Robin questioned the high cost of drapery but noted it was a bid and they could decide on a more reasonable amount. The group's liability account has just over \$1,000, indicating they would need to borrow from 4D to fulfill this bid. Bill asked about the board's intentions regarding the bid, while Lee questioned whether the HO Group planned to spend the entire amount in one year. Robin suggested they could use the \$1500 excess from the N-TRAK Group's liability account, which had been reduced from \$6.5k to a \$5k cap, to help fund the HO Group's bid.

Budget Allocation for 4th Division Railway Module

There was a detailed discussion about the budget for the 4th Division's railway module project. Mike, Robin, Kurt, Dennis, and Bill debated the allocation of funds, specifically for the yard throat and staging yard modules. These were identified as crucial for group

operations, and their costs were discussed. It was agreed that the yard throat and staging yard modules would be supported this year, with funds for new curtains deferred until next year. This proposal was agreed upon by all participants.

Budget Allocations and Reimbursement Policies

Robin discussed draft budget allocations and expenditures for various groups within the 4D. He proposed to review and adjust the proposed budget, including adding funds for printing brochures and increasing travel expenses. Mike clarified his role and responsibilities, while Kurt emphasized the importance of reimbursements and the need for a finalized budget by the end of the month. Robin agreed to enforce a 90-day policy for reimbursements and to approach Lou and Andy about a realistic travel budget.

Preventative Maintenance and Company Priorities

Ed discussed the need for preventative maintenance for their group's trailers, estimated to cost \$1,200 annually. The Board agreed to start this program and consider adjustments based on its effectiveness. The Board also discussed various other topics including potential clinic expenses, the possibility of a "make and take" event, and the need for timely receipt submission. They decided to address these issues in subsequent meetings.

Addressing Leadership Meetings and Clinic Costs

Kurt discussed the lack of in-person participation at Tacoma clinic hybrid meetings and considered reintroducing Zoom meetings due to low attendance and potential cost inefficiency. Kurt planned to consult with Kevin, Bob, and others about this. Concerns were raised about the high costs associated with the West Side clinic, with suggestions for a more consistent policy across all clinics and possible cost-cutting measures like offering the clinic around \$500-\$600 per year or collecting a fee. Robin agreed with these proposals and suggested capping expenses at \$500.

Budget Discussion and Financial Adjustments

The Board discussed the members' feelings on a set budget for a yet-to-be-defined project, agreeing to a proposed 500 figure. Robin committed to adjusting the plan accordingly. They also talked about the Education Committee's occasional spending, with a decision to change the term 'education' to 'achievement program' for clarity. The team also reviewed their donations and expenses, with a discussion about the Golden Grab Iron award costing less this year.

Board Donates to Railroading Organization

The board agreed to donate \$1,500 to a historical railroading organization this year, with the possibility of increasing the amount in future years. The proposal was put forward by

Kurt and Bill suggested that the board should consider various organizations and direct a reasonable amount from the budget. Robin agreed to solicit ideas from the 400 members and review them before sending a revised proposal to the board for approval by email. The board also discussed the need for a more balanced budget, retaining and increasing membership, and boosting revenue. For the upcoming year, they considered the Washington State History Museum as a potential venue for their Christmas show.