

**Executive Committee Retreat Minutes
Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers
Capitol Area District Library Downtown Lansing
05 Dec 2015 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM**

Present: Larry Krieg (Chair), Jeanie Merckel (Treasurer), John Langdon (Gov't/Public Affairs Coordinator), Adam Tauno Williams (Meetings Coordinator), Kay Chase (Communications Coordinator), Don Monteith (North Region Chair), Steve Vagnozzi (East/Central Region Chair), Chuck Merckel (Outreach Chair)

Absent with Notice: Jim Wallington (Vice-Chair), Rosemary Horvath (Acting Secretary), Kathleen Newell (Membership Coordinator), Robert Patterson (Detroit Metro Region Chair), Warren Fritz (West Region Chair)

In the absence of Rosemary Horvath, Chase agreed to take notes for this meeting.

Reports

Chair Krieg opened the meeting with the thought that it may be time to rethink MARP's current organizational structure, aiming for greater clarity of roles as well as greater flexibility in delegating responsibilities.

Langdon moves, Vagnozzi seconds, **committee approves the August 29, 2015, Executive Committee Retreat minutes** with the corrections suggested by Krieg.

J. Merckel presented the **Treasurer's report** for November. Memberships received include 1 adult, 1 senior, 2 family and 1 recurring monthly donation. For November, receipts totaled \$112.00, disbursements \$1,410.79, leaving \$12,791.99 available for operations. The Pratt Fund rebounded from the August decline and stands at \$18,534.83 as of 11.30.2015.

Monteith moves, Chase seconds, committee approves Treasurer's report as presented.

J. Merckel reported that an unused display rack in the Ann Arbor station has been made available to MARP. To encourage students to use Amtrak for their holiday travel, Chuck Merckel created a poster that was distributed on the campuses of Wayne State University, Western Michigan University, Hope College and University of Michigan-Flint.

Meeting Coordinator Report

Adam Williams intends to balance meeting topics among three areas: advocacy, station preservation and history, and member engagement. A priority is to make contact with young people. As a model, the Millennial Mayors Alliance has been effective in recruiting younger people to run for office. The Congress for a New Urbanism (CNU) and Friends of Transit groups are organizations with which MARP could make contact.

Langdon moves, Monteith seconds, committee approves the meeting goals presented by Williams. This will serve as a checklist as meetings planning goes forward.

Other meeting plans (not all finalized) include: January 16, REO Town Depot in Lansing; no meeting in February; March 11 at Cleary's Pub in Howell; April 16, joint meeting with Indiana rail groups at the New Buffalo Township Library with possible discussion of the Indiana Gateway project and the South-of-the-Lake Reroute; June 11, Dearborn station with historian Radford Jones as speaker; July Executive Committee retreat; August 17-18 in conjunction with the 4th Annual Michigan Rail Conference at Northern Michigan University, Marquette MI; September 24 Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station;

October 8 at Dowagiac city hall, with a visit to the Dowagiac Area History Museum; November at a SE Michigan location; December, Executive Committee meeting.

For the New Buffalo and Dowagiac meetings, Langdon has spoken with Amtrak's Gary Israelson about stopping #351 to allow MARP members to detrain. For New Buffalo, MARP will arrange shuttle service from St. Joe and Michigan City. Meeting start and end times will be set accordingly.

Langdon has spoken with Amtrak District Manager of Stations, Dave Kuhn, and he has cleared the way for use of the Dearborn station for the June meeting. Chuck Merckel suggests speaking with Barry Murray, City of Dearborn's Director of Economic and Community Development. The City of Dearborn owns the station.

Langdon has learned that Dave Kuhn is retiring as of February 29, 2016.

Project Updates

Steve Vagnozzi cites some of the challenges in going forward with his proposed "Station Care" project. It is not clear how far he can go without sitting down with MDOT and/or Amtrak. He will look at the ridership and staffing at each station and determine who administers each station and how daily operations are handled. Krieg would like the focus for now to be on the lack of with signage that we know exists.

LUNCH BREAK 12:00 - 12:40 PM

Presentation of proposed 2016 Budget

Copies of the 2016 budget as proposed by the Finance Committee (Merckel, Langdon, Fritz) were distributed. As a basis for the new budget, the current year's budget and actual spending are shown.

Changes from the 2015 budget reflect changes in responsibilities or procedures or the fact that actual 2015 spending was less than budgeted.

- (1) Gov't Affairs down from \$8,500 to \$2,750 due to winding down of Coast-to-Coast project (funded by a grant from MEC)
- (2) Outreach down from \$2,725 to \$2,250.
- (3) In-house printing down from \$795 to \$500
- (4) Monthly meetings up from \$525 to \$600
- (5) Membership down from \$1,100 to \$900 due to cut in mailing costs with use of Pay Pal
- (6) Chicago Union Station Passenger Action Taskforce (CUSPAT) down from \$500 to \$0 due to good progress at the station
- (7) Dues paid to other organizations down from \$700 to \$600 due to elimination of payment to TRU
- (8) Total expenditures are anticipated to be \$15,480 as compared to actual 2015 spending of \$14,834.65.
- (9) Total income from 2015 carryover, dues, donations and annual meeting is anticipated to be \$15,480 compared with actual 2015 income of \$14,385.

Langdon moves, Williams seconds, committee approves the 2016 budget as presented.

J. Merckel ask for discussion of increasing member dues. Chase opposes raising the dues, feeling that there is plenty of flexibility in the budget. Langdon, too, feels there is no immediate need to raise dues. By consensus, the finance committee is directed to study the matter further.

Vagnozzi suggests appealing to our members for year-end donations. Krieg will compose a letter and Chase will send it out on marprail@yahoo.com in the next few days.

Vacancies on the Executive Committee

Krieg announces that the press of other responsibilities has made it necessary for three committee members to resign their positions: Vice-Chair Jim Wallington, Membership Coordinator Kathleen Newell, and Acting Secretary Rosemary Horvath.

Vagnozzi is willing to accept the Vice-Chair position, but asks that a new East Central Region Chair be found.

Williams moves, Monteith seconds, **committee agrees to appoint Vagnozzi to fill the position of Vice-Chair** vacated by Jim Wallington.

Krieg asks that Chase accept the secretary position. She declines, but agrees to take meeting minutes until a permanent appointment is made.

Chuck Merckel has indicated his willingness to accept the vacant Membership Coordinator position.

Vagnozzi moves, Monteith seconds, **committee agrees to appoint Chuck Merckel to fill the At-Large Executive Committee position of Membership Coordinator.**

Discussion of Executive Committee Tasks and Responsibilities

Krieg initiated a discussion about making changes in the roles of the At-Large Executive Committee members, expressing the feeling that more flexibility is needed. He proposes looking at the tasks that need to be done and consider how best to spread the work around. Stating that he is proposing a major change, he hopes this be viewed as an opportunity and not a challenge. The goal is to create a situation in which any Executive Committee member who feels they have the time and ability to take on a task may step forward. Chase asked that the committee remember that the four At-Large Executive Committee Members, until the adoption of Resolution #4, did not have specific duties. Resolution #4 was intended to assign responsibility for certain tasks to committees (governmental/public affairs, membership, communications, meeting planning) each of which would be chaired by one of the four at-large members. If things are not working quite as intended it may be because the committee structure has not been fully realized.

Krieg asked committee members to consider the current system and possible changes to improve MARP's operations, and discuss the matter more fully at a later meeting.

Best Practices Guidelines

Langdon distributed copies of Best Practices Guidelines: Paying MARP Expenses. The Finance Committee began working this out at a meeting in Lansing during the summer. Krieg wrote the original draft. The intent is to define what expenses are reimbursable and what are the procedures involved.

Vagnozzi moves, Monteith seconds, **committee approves the Best Practices Guidelines: Paying MARP Expenses.**

Krieg distributes 2 other Best Practices Guidelines: (1) Scheduling Meetings and (2) Managing a Meeting. Committee feels more time is needed to look over the documents and agrees to an email poll to gain consensus on these guidelines.

Endorsement of Groups Advocating for Public Transportation

Langdon moves, Vagnozzi seconds, **committee approves that MARP endorse the following groups advocating public transportation: Ann Arbor to Detroit Rail Alliance (A2D), Friends of WALLY (the Ann Arbor to Howell commuter train), the Ann Arbor to Traverse City rail project (A2TC), and Transit Riders United (TRU).**

Langdon points out that A2TC, along with the Coast-to-Coast project (C2C) are under the umbrella of Michigan By Rail of which MARP is founding member.

More Project Reports

Langdon reported that 16 **Coast-to-Coast (C2C)** public engagement events have been completed. The final report from the consultants, TEMS, Inc., will be out early in 2016. There are tentative plans for a series of media events to announce the study findings. Until the final recommendations are made public, there is uncertainty about next steps.

The idea of a **Wolverine Corridor Coalition** modeled on the Westrain group was first proposed by Krieg and Chase two years ago. The first formal event for this effort was held at the Niles Public Library on December 2, 2015, with about 25 people (elected officials and interested citizens) in attendance. Rick Harnish gave a presentation highlighting the goals of the Chicago-Detroit/Pontiac Passenger Rail Corridor Program, a study currently in progress under the auspices of GreatLakesRail.org and led by MDOT's Office of Rail. The study envisions increasing frequency to 10 round trips per day and track and signal work to improve on-time performance and reliability. Two tracks dedicated to Amtrak trains are proposed for the South-of-the Lake section of the route through northwest Indiana. Planning is underway for similar meetings in Battle Creek and Dearborn, with a future event in an Oakland county location (Pontiac, Troy, or Royal Oak).

Jim Wallington, Larry Krieg, John Langdon and Hugh Gurney met on November 20 in Owosso at the **Indian Trails** office with Gordon Mackay, Indian Trails President, Chad Cushman, VP for Business and Properties, in Owosso. Also at the meeting was Noah Bradshaw, assistant to Adam Krom who is Amtrak's Director for Transportation Connectivity, responsible for Thruway Motorcoach coordination. Indian Trails loses money on the unsubsidized southern routes, but does very well with its charter bus services. Discussion included better signage, the desirability of better bus-train schedule coordination, and Indian Trails' use of a bus-locating smartphone app for the AirRide/Michigan Flyer service. Thruway Motorcoach services will soon enjoy e-ticketing as Amtrak rolls out a system to make that practical. Amtrak and Indian Trails are eager to work together solving mutual problems.

C. Merckel has prepared the **2016 schedule of Outreach events**. He wants to have a presence at the larger outdoor summer events attended in the last two years. He also expressed a desire to have a table separate from Friends of WALLY when they are at events together.

The meeting ended with a consensus that member care and recruitment needs to be a focus of MARP in the upcoming year. Williams also would like to see MARP do a better job of getting the word out about meetings. He suggests placing public service announcements in local news media.

Respectfully submitted,

Kay Chase
Kay Chase, Acting Secretary

Larry Krieg
Laurence Krieg, Chair