

# WHEEL REPORT

## From the Desk of the Superintendent:

By Dan Mulhearn

There is certainly excitement in the air as we approach the holiday season. Of course, for us, a big part of that is trains. At the Quincy Village club we are decorating and sprucing up the layouts in anticipation of our November 30th Holiday Open House. Over at the Waynesboro club we are also working on the railroad for our series of open house events in December and January. Many other clubs and museums are also in the holiday mood at this joyous time of year.

The South Mountain Division's November meeting was hosted by Larry Daily. Before the meeting we were able to look over Larry's Piedmont Subdivision C&O Railway layout and enjoy socializing. A brief business meeting was followed by Larry's program on the development and "raison d'être" for his layout. Larry extensively researched the prototype Piedmont subdivision in order to plan the layout he desired, operate the trains that ran, and construct the buildings seen along the right of way. Many of the structures on the layout are representatives of the actual buildings along the line. The overall effect is a beautifully done representation of the C&O in the 1970s. Well done Larry. Thank you for hosting.

Rick Keller has invited us to his home for our December meeting, which is much appreciated.

Pete and Jane Clarke have proposed the we consider our February or March meeting to be at the East Broad Top RR in Robertsdale, PA. They do acknowledge it would make for a long day. We would meet at the museum. Those wishing to could ride the afternoon train. Keep in mind the early season trains will be powered by the diesel. Should the members not wish to do that, Pete and Jane are willing to host one of those months at their home. We have a couple of other volunteers in the pipeline for future meetings, but it never hurts to have some players on the bench. Please let me know if you are willing to be a meeting host.

I have finally seen the new NMRA National logo. In my opinion it is crisp, clean and modern but there has been a lot of negative feedback. If you've not seen it the NMRA is in bold type in a squared off rectangle shape. There are two dots below each end so it forms a symbolic rail car. The plan is for each Region or Division to place their own logo in the blank space between the "wheels." It's OK with me but we will see if they decide to "Cracker Barrel" the new design.

To each of you, your families and your friends I wish you a joyous, peaceful and a fulfilling holiday. See you at the December meeting

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## December Meeting:

The December meeting will be hosted by Rick Keller in Martinsburg, WV.

Rick writes, "I am working on modeling the Pennsylvania Railroad in about 1952 (steam to early diesel transition). I am halfway through tearing down an old layout and rebuilding the new. The new layout is located in my basement and is housed in two rooms (one 12'x16' and one 12'x41'). It will be a three level layout, connected with a helix, and the "L" shaped portion is nearly complete in the 12'x16' portion except there is no scenery anywhere yet.

The layout will be loosely modeled after the PRR's Lurgan Branch which will include Chambersburg to Marion (about 6 miles) and the Mercersburg Branch, which will be the main focus. The Mercersburg Branch leaves the main at Marion and goes to Mercersburg Jct. where it split at a wye. South went to Mercersburg and North went to Richmond Furnace. Beyond Richmond Furnace was a Logging RR which I will have modeled as well."

As usual, the meeting starts at 2:00 p.m.

Please email [southmountaindiv@gmail.com](mailto:southmountaindiv@gmail.com) to obtain the street address.

## Reminder:

SMD membership meetings are always the 2nd Sunday of the month at 2 p.m. The only exception is due to Mother's Day in May, which will take place one week later, on the 3rd Sunday.

Please consider hosting a meeting sometime during the 2025 - 2026 program year. Email [southmountaindiv@gmail.com](mailto:southmountaindiv@gmail.com). We try to avoid back-to-back repeat visits so if you have never hosted, or it has been a year or so since you did, give it a thought.

## Hosts Needed:

As of this writing we do not have any meeting hosts signed up for January, February or April of 2026. We need volunteers to step up as hosts. Your layout doesn't need to be large, or finished, or even operational. Without hosts we cannot hold our meetings. Repeat hosts (within the past year) are okay but we really would like to see some layouts that we have not visited for a couple of year or never seen at all. If you would like to host, or have any questions concerning hosting please contact your Division superintendent at [southmountaindiv@gmail.com](mailto:southmountaindiv@gmail.com).

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## Mini-Clinics:

It has long been the policy of the SMD to present mini-clinics at each meeting. In some cases clinics are conducted by the host. However, not every host is in a position to do so. We are asking for members to volunteer to develop and present mini-clinics at meetings to fill these gaps. If you can to do a mini-clinic please contact your Division superintendent at [southmountaindiv@gmail.com](mailto:southmountaindiv@gmail.com).

## Wheel Report Content:

We are always looking for Wheel Report content from the membership. Articles addressing prototype railroading (including your experiences while visiting a prototype location) and model railroading (how you designed / built your layout, modeling structures, model railroad operations, etc. All of this adds interest to your Wheel Report and builds membership enthusiasm.

In November we are publishing the third of a four-part article written by Division member Andrew Dodge, MMR. Note that Andrew's feature piece will only be available to members via the emailed distribution of the newsletter.

## Wheel Report Submission Guidelines:

If you would like to submit an article please email [southmountaindiv@gmail.com](mailto:southmountaindiv@gmail.com). Wheel Report editor Ron Polimeni would like articles formatted in a Microsoft Word compatible file or pasted into the body of the email. Please do not submit PDF files. Pictures for articles should be attached to the email, with their corresponding captions clearly labeled with each picture's file name so they can be matched to each image. Do not paste images into a Word document. All submissions and pictures must be the property of the author to be considered for publication.

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## Notes from the Editor:

By Ron Polimeni

For this month I will once again climb on my soap box to advocate for developing a traveling promotional show for our hobby. With the demise of our beloved Mini-Con, it is my contention that we should replace it with another form of promotion. Our Mini-Con was unusual for a model train show in that it wasn't a flea market. There were no vendors at the Mini-Con. It was, in fact, sponsored in part by Mainline Hobby. The point of the Mini-Con was to promote the hobby. Rather than vendor tables, our members demonstrated various aspects of model building and model railroading. We engaged the public, showed our enthusiasm and shared our interests. We engaged with the public in the interest of demonstrating what model railroading is all about.

I would propose we continue in that vein with a portable show designed to educate the public as to what model railroading has to offer as a hobby. Whenever I describe what we do at an operating session, people are generally fascinated. I feel that if we could put together a show that would demonstrate what model railroading has to offer, it would be well received and would be a good replacement for the Mini-Con.

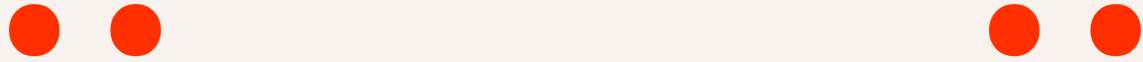
To that end, I would like to gather a committee to develop a presentation that we could take to various venues and engage the public. Along with designing the display, the committee would also look into venues for the display and discuss promotional possibilities.

It needn't involve a great deal of work and it could be fun. To that end, I will be rattling cages in an effort to get this off the ground. We put one together for Hobbytown in Frederick some time back and, despite having dropped the ball on promotion, it was a success and we had fun doing it. Again, anyone interested or having thoughts on the matter, please feel free to contact me I would very much like for us to have something going to replace the Mini-Con.

Till next month, here's wishing everyone a happy turkey day (I hate that term). Anyway, we'll be having ham.

Contact Ron through the Division email, [southmountaindiv@gmail.com](mailto:southmountaindiv@gmail.com).

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## Renew On Line:

You can renew your NMRA membership on line at the following link;

<https://www.nmra.org/store/membership>

Remember that your national membership automatically includes membership in both the Mid-East Region and the South Mountain Division and you will receive the NMRA Bulletin electronically on a regular basis. Membership is a requirement for insurance purposes but guests can attend one or two meetings without joining. There is also a trial membership category available at a reduced cost.

## SMD Officers and Officials:

Superintendent:	Dan Mulhearn
Clerk/Paymaster:	Ray Price
Webmaster/Digital Assets Manager:	Tom Fedor
Wheel Report Publisher:	Bob Johnson
Wheel Report Editor:	Ron Polimeni
Wheel Report Assistant Editor:	Andrew Dodge, MMR
Division Achievement Program Coordinator:	Jane Clarke

# **SUPPLEMENT**

## **South Mountain Division Mid-Eastern Region – National Model Railroad Association Draft Meeting Minutes – 05/18/2025**

Division members met at Dan Mulhearn's residence in the Quincy Village senior center north of Waynesboro. The Superintendent called the meeting to order at 2:40 with 15 members in attendance.

The Superintendent thanked Dan for hosting the Division. The senior center has an extensive model railroad complex, which was open for the Division to tour.

### **Draft Minutes & Paymaster's Report**

- There was no April meeting due to the Mini-Con.
- Treasurer Ray Price reported a balance of \$3646.66, but noted there is outstanding compensation owed to Mini-Con Coordinator Grant Berry for Mini-Con costs; Ray is waiting for receipts before disbursing.

### **Old Business**

- Superintendent Bob Johnson called for volunteers for the Clerk position, so that Ray Price would not need to function as Clerk-Paymaster.
- Acting assistant-to-the-Clerk Alex Polimeni elaborated that the role of Clerk requires only to attend meetings, take notes, and enter those notes into a simple template (which you are now reading) for distribution.
- The superintendent asks for volunteers to host meetings, and says he will pick up the October meeting.

### **New Business**

- The Superintendent notifies the Division that Brian Wolfe's Main Line Hobby Supply may be closing this year, which will signal the end of the Mini-Con at the fire hall location.
- Suggestions were made of other venue options but they will need to be explored further. Question was raised about the cost of renting the BRS fire hall, but the rental fee is not known because Brian Wolfe always handled it. Furthermore, there is no reason to hold the Mini there without Main Line Hobby Supply.
- Suggestion was made that we could solicit vendors if the Mini is not in competition with a hobby shop, and that vendor fees could defray the cost of renting a venue.
- Ron Polimeni has volunteered to be Wheel Report editor with assistance from Andrew Dodge and Bob Johnson.
- The Superintendent says he intends for more Division representation at local

train shows, and asks the membership to talk up SMD whenever possible and raise awareness that we exist.

- The Superintendent says we are at 64 members as of the meeting date, and highlights that our meetings are typically well attended for our Division size.
- The Superintendent says that 2027 MER convention planning needs to begin this summer, with ideally Hagerstown or Frederick MD as a venue location. Steve King, Bill Martz and Alex Polimeni have volunteered to scout venue locations. The superintendent asks layout owners to consider hosting open houses, as well.
- The question was raised about what role MER plays in the Convention. Superintendent clarified that MER fronts all of the venue negotiations and sales, but retains more of the profits as well.
- Dan Mulhearn provided an update on the Central Division convention, saying the NMRA wants to go to smaller cities with lower costs.
- The question was raised about the Division's tax exempt status, as Potomac Division is struggling after the member handling their affairs passed. Ray says the Division is with Truist through BB&T, which is a multi-state bank.
- Bob Pursell says the Cumberland Valley MRRC is having their annual yard sale June 14th. Pursell also highlights that he is being published in the NMRA magazine, and has two more certifications to complete in order to earn his Master Model Railroader certificate.
- The Superintendent makes note that the NMRA is working to modernize the Achievement Program with an internet portal, and the rules are being updated with more practical criteria and standards. The Superintendent also notes that there are several AP judges in our area who can help members earn AP certificates. Conversation followed about expectations to meet certificate criteria.
- Outgoing Superintendent Bob Johnson asked incoming Superintendent Dan Mulhearn about scheduling an off-season planning meeting and forming a new Advisory Committee.
- John Madden called for a round of applause for outgoing Superintendent Bob Johnson.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and carried at 3:37pm

# **SUPPLEMENT**

## **South Mountain Division Mid-Eastern Region – National Model Railroad Association Draft Meeting Minutes – 09/14/2025**

Division members met at Steve King's home in Pond Bank, PA. The Superintendent\* called the meeting to order at 2:32pm with 12 members in attendance. \*Bob Johnson was asked to preside over the meeting as Superintendent Dan Mulhearn was out sick and unable to attend.

Bob thanked Steve for hosting the Division. Steve has been rebuilding his N-scale layout since moving into the home a few years ago.

### **Draft Minutes & Paymaster's Report**

- Draft minutes from May were not approved as former assistant-to-the-Clerk Alex Polimeni had not provided them.
- Treasurer Ray Price reported a balance of \$3364.66.
- Bob asked Alex to take this meeting's minutes.

### **Old Business**

- Bob asks for volunteers to host meetings and raises the concern that we do not have meeting hosts for the 2025-2026 season past October.
- Superintendent Bob Johnson called for volunteers for the Clerk position, so that Ray Price would not need to function as Clerk-Paymaster.
- Acting assistant-to-the-Clerk Alex Polimeni elaborated that the role of Clerk requires only to attend meetings, take notes, and enter those notes into a simple template (which you are now reading) for distribution.

### **New Business**

- Bob raises the proposition of the 2026 Mini-Con, stressing that attendance and participation have been declining since before the pandemic and that we may no longer have access to the fire hall, as Brian Wolfe has not reserved it on our behalf this year.
- The promotion we did at Hobbytown USA was raised as the type of event the Division could host instead in order to promote the Division and the hobby.
- Stores, shows, libraries and breweries were all raised as possible venues.
- Bob says Main Line Hobby Supply will now stay open through until 2026 but will now be closed Sundays and Mondays.
- Main Line's layout tours are scheduled for the coming weekend of the 20th/21st, with several new layouts including former SMD Superintendent Mike Shockey's home layout for the very first time.
- Bob yielded the floor.

- Don Florwick expressed his appreciation for the way his layout's legacy has continued on in the community, and that while he enjoyed sharing it, he does not miss it. He went on to discuss how his wife Betty took a fall shortly after their move, but she is doing well after a month in rehab and they are getting settled in their new home.
- Rick Keller reports that he is retiring in three weeks and will be more active in the Division. He says he is tearing down his previous layout and started a 3-level, L-shaped layout. He continued to elaborate on his Mercersburg branch inspiration and research in assembling the new layout.
- John Pursell talked about changing his layout scale mid-project, with Bob Van Zant chiming in that he changed scales because of his eyesight at his age. Further discussion of layouts and scales followed.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and carried at 2:52pm

# **SUPPLEMENT**

## **South Mountain Division Mid-Eastern Region – National Model Railroad Association Draft Meeting Minutes – 10/12/2025**

Division members met at Bob Johnson's home in Jefferson, MD. The Superintendent called the meeting to order at around 2:40pm with 14 members in attendance. The Superintendent thanked Bob for hosting the Division.

### **Draft Minutes & Paymaster's Report**

- Draft minutes from September were not approved as acting assistant-to-the-Clerk Alex Polimeni had not provided them.
- Treasurer Ray Price reported a running balance of \$3364.66, but stated that may change if the Division is required to reimburse Alex for the now-cancelled Division Zoom account. Alex reported that he could not find the Zoom payment on his statements, and it remains unclear how and by whom it was actually paid.

### **Old Business**

- Inquiry was fielded about the MER convention SMD has been asked to host in 2027. Alex reports that Steve King, Bill Martz and himself volunteered to scout venues but have not yet done so. Alex stated that he would follow up with the others.
- The Division will still need to line up clinics, speakers, layout tours and a prototype visit. Steve, Bill and Alex are not responsible for these, so new volunteers will need to step forward.
- The superintendent extended thanks to everyone who has contributed to the Wheel Report newsletter.
- The Superintendent appealed for volunteers to be Division Clerk. Alex Polimeni has been acting as Clerk in the interim. Superintendent and Alex note that Clerk requires only to attend meetings, take notes, and enter those notes into a simple template (which you are now reading) for distribution.
- The Superintendent reports the Division has hosts for the November and May meetings but will need other volunteers for the remaining meetings.

### **New Business**

- The Superintendent announced the 2026 Mini-Con has been cancelled. Reasons for this included less-than-hoped post-pandemic attendance, and Brian Wolfe's partial retirement losing the Division access to the fire hall across from Main Line Hobby Supply.
- The suggestion was made that we could hold smaller appearances, such as we did at Richard Benjamin's Hobbytown location last year.

- The point was raised that average age of SMD membership is not getting any younger.
- The point was raised that we need to go where younger demographics are in order to appeal to them.
- Discussion followed about how and where to reach them, with concerns about the difficulty accessing schools and churches.
- The Superintendent inquired about the possibility of working with the Lions Club in Mt Alto.
- The point was raised that the Division should not prioritize the Millennial/Gen Z demographic to bolster Division membership, but rather find ways to reach out to the untapped Gen X market, as many are near retirement age with homes and steady incomes.
- The Superintendent stressed that volunteers in any capacity are always valuable to the Division.
- The Superintendent called for volunteers to hold clinics at meetings. Typically the host will present something about their layout or projects, but the Superintendent stressed that clinics do not need to be formal. Volunteers are welcome to speak about anything related to railroading, historical or otherwise.
- The point was raised that meeting hosts do not need to have layouts of their own.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and carried at 3:05pm.

# **SUPPLEMENT**

## **South Mountain Division Mid-Eastern Region – National Model Railroad Association Draft Meeting Minutes – 11/9/2025**

Division members met at Larry Daily's home in Shepherdstown, WV. The Superintendent called the meeting to order at 3:07pm with 12 members in attendance. The Superintendent thanked Larry for hosting the Division.

### **Draft Minutes & Paymaster's Report**

- Draft minutes from October were not approved as acting assistant-to-the Clerk Alex Polimeni had not provided them.
- Paymaster Ray Price reports a continuing balance of \$3364.66

### **Old Business**

- The question was raised about who was scouting locations for hosting the 2027 MER convention. Steve King, Bill Martz and Alex Polimeni had previously volunteered.
- Superintendent Dan Mulhearn raised the concern that the Division is still struggling for meeting hosts in the immediate future.
- Rick Keller volunteered to host the December meeting. Rick asks for a clinician, and conversation followed regarding how a "clinic" can be almost anything of interest related to model railroading.
- Discussion followed of other possible non-member home meeting venues including the clubs in Quincy Village and Union Bridge, as well as the Winchester club's former building (now re-opened as the Railway Cafe) and other possibilities.

### **New Business**

- Superintendent Dan Mulhearn reported that he attended the MER convention and spoke about it.
- The Superintendent inquired about volunteers scouting venue locations for SMD's 2027 MER convention. Steve King, Bill Martz and Alex Polimeni had previously volunteered.
- The Superintendent yielded the floor.
- Discussion was raised about what to replace the Mini-Con with, namely the proposition of replacing it with smaller public-facing presentations highlighting facets of the hobby, such as the Division has previously done at Hobbytown USA.

- Points were raised about how the public enjoys hands-on activities, and how this format would allow SMD members to attend each other's clinics, which was always nearly impossible at the Mini.

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and carried at 3:41pm.