

## **BAGRS Board Meeting – 19 December 2009**

10:05 AM meeting called to order

### **Board members present:**

- Don Watters, Chip Gierhart, Russ Miller, Dennis Mack, Frank Lucas, Johannes Hoech, Richard Murray, Nancy Norris, and two guests from Santa Cruz

### **Topics:**

- Secretary's Report: Minutes:
  - Johannes read the October 2009 minutes, which were approved
- Membership Report (Frank Lucas):
  - Frank recapped Sept 08 to Eof 09 membership numbers
  - We're now 300 members for 09 !! Yeah ;-)
  - We have had 57 renewals for 2010 so far, with 13 more pending
  - Action Items: None other than to recruit more members
- Treasurer's Report:
  - Financial Condition:
    - The checkbook is well used right now, we have about \$3,950 in the bank after we moved \$5K in the Fall to prepare for the trailer and SFCOF
  - 2009 Budget vs. Actual:
    - Overall we spent for regular, recurring year-to-year activities right on target, e.g. picnic and other regular stuff. Overall, we were pretty lean and mean, and so far it's not too high
    - We wrote checks for about \$3,850 for the trailer
  - Conservatory of Flowers:
    - We've spent gross about \$10,500 for SFCOF
      - \$1K for an unused daylight train
      - \$2.8K for the Thomas exhibit

- \$0.5K is promotional
  - The rest is for the main exhibit:
    - The rock was expensive ~ \$1.5K
    - \$350 on food
  - Not counting club members' labor
  - We expect to get back \$X for the daylight train, plus SFCOF reimbursements and other refunds to be around \$4,500 to \$4,800, netting about \$6K
- There was considerable discussion around whether or not it makes sense for BAGRS to put up the exhibit again next year
  - Don reviewed the organizational dynamics of this cooperation, and what would be do-differentlies if we were to engage with SFCOF next year
  - We're estimating that the SFCOF gets about 50K in incremental, additional visitors to the conservatory as a result of having the exhibit there compared to the past, i.e. they're making an extra \$300K off this. This led to a discussion of whether or not costs and benefits are evenly distributed in our relationship with the conservatory
  - The engineering of the main exhibit is very solid and the exhibit is working almost flawlessly
- CD:
  - Was not discussed
- Action Items:
  - There was discussion about showing the membership where the money that used to be spent on regular activities went (i.e. point out lower annual dues, alternate projects such as trailer and SFCOF, etc. - > Write it up in the newsletter or report on the annual meeting (**Chip**))
  - Work with Brent to figure out how to throw together a train docent program (**Chip**)

- Recruit 3 volunteers among the membership, pending Frank or Chip's willingness to coordinate (**ALL**)
- Vice President's Report (Russ Miller):
  - 2010 Annual Meeting:
    - We'll have the Orchid room
      - Please note that by being able to the Orchid room for free, we're saving \$3K compared to past annual mtgs
    - The bathrooms can't handle a lot of people as the plumbing is 100 years old
    - Need additional chairs and tables
    - We talked about buying or borrowing from existing tents or 10x10 Easy Ups for the live steamer exhibit
    - Parking is another big concern, that needs to be explained well in the newsletter
    - Chairs will be set up in classroom configuration
    - We'll offer docent led tours of the conservatory
    - Very well thought out agenda
    - The meeting will be from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with doors open at 8:00 a.m.
  - Newsletter:
    - Date "for submitting articles" is bumped to the 20th of the month
  - 2011 Regional Meet:
    - Nothing yet
  - Action Items:
    - Johannes field test his projector to make sure it works inside of the Orchid Room (**Johannes**)
    - Ensure we have tents / Easy Ups for the steamer setup (**Russ**)
    - Contact Bill Allen (sp?) to help volunteer (**Russ**)

- Contact Bob Treat to invite him to come up here (**Chip**)
  - Call conservatory to ensure we have Internet access (**Chip**)
  - Create table center pieces, spend up to \$100 (**Nancy**)
  - List of 12 other action items was discussed by Russ (e.g. chairs, lining up trains, expenses, who mans the welcome desks, etc.)
- Public Outreach (Nancy Norris):
  - Trailer Progress:
    - “Trailer has been born”, it’s available to be built
    - Nancy will schedule a work party
  - Action Items: None
- Scheduling Coordinator’s Report (Russ Miller gave the scheduling coordinator's report for Ray Turner)
  - We had 63 open houses this year
    - Possible Changes:
    - Russ noted the idea of dropping the annual meeting swap meet. In the following discussion about the source of this idea, he attributed it to Ray Turner as the idea was discussed at the District Superintendents' meeting in November. Since Ray was not present, it was suggested and agreed to defer the discussion of the scheduling of the swap meet for the new board
  - Another issue that was discussed was the issue of re-sizing the districts
  - 2010 Schedule:
    - July 29 to August 11 – Nat’l Garden Convention in Tacoma
  - The 2010 open houses were discussed
    - South Santa Clara & San Benito Co – June 26<sup>th</sup>, 9 to 4 (Dale McAnally)
    - Russ discussed having a swap meet including BBQ on September 11<sup>th</sup>
    - Sunnyvale/Santa Clara and San Jose/Milpitas will be combined
  - Action Items:

- **Don** to follow up with Ray
- Market Segmentation Report (Johannes Hoech):
  - SFCOF:
    - Have postcard data for first week of operation when 4 to 7 postcards were picked up
    - After two weeks ~25 postcards were picked up
      - Dolores not responsive after first report
    - SFCOF drives good traffic to site and also got some PR value, under-delivers in terms of driving new members
    - Developed list of possible additional initiatives to drive interest in BAGRS:
      - Make a historical SF train exhibit vs. a generic garden RR
      - Can we start and stop the train, add sound, make the cars more dynamic (lights on and off, smoke, voices, signs, passengers, etc.) to compete better for attention?
      - Can we replace Southern Pacific with [www.bagrs.org](http://www.bagrs.org)? Add other BAGRS signage on the cars?
      - Leverage Thomas for kids; kids love the button, can we do something similar for the other trains?
      - Can we add content posters in the SFCOF look but with BAGRS relevant themes (i.e. gardening with a railroad, garden and train photography, history of SF railroading, the transcontinental RR, etc?)
      - Make little quizzes about the display for kids that we hand out. And find other ways to entertain the kids that are there. All with BAGRS written on it.
      - Staff on weekends with volunteers to explain the display and the garden RR, and that are dressed in BAGRS garb
      - Run Google ads driving traffic to the SFCOF exhibit
  - Analytics and Calls to Action:

- Unique visitors to site peaked on Opening day of SFCOF: ~90
- Trending up again, currently around 70 per day; renewals?
- Steady state rate ranges from 20 to 40 unique visitors per day
- Most popular pages by unique page views over last month:
  - 22% - Home Page
  - 15% - Various SFCOF Pages
  - 7% - Photo Gallery
  - 4% - Member Section
  - 3% - Meetings & Events
  - 3 views of the SFCOF unique “Join” Page -> 5 to 10% click-through rates from picked-up postcards
- 4 members joined since 11/15, unclear if through SFCOF
- Other Marketing:
  - Placed SFCOF posters and postcards in three stores (Train Shop in Santa Clara, Just Trains in Concord, and Dollhouses and Trains Novato) – Results pending
  - “New Members Marketing Project” that is building on the summer 2009 marketing analysis and survey we did:
    - Identified team:
      - Confirmed: Don Watters, Chip Gierhart, Ray Turner
      - Pending / Suggested: Todd Williams, John Carlson, Tim Csabanyi
    - Some initial ideas suggested (e.g. by Frank Lucas)
    - Scheduling kickoff meeting for January
- Action Items:
  - **Chip** to set up meeting with Brent and Johannes
  - **Johannes** to set up marketing team meeting

- Baggage Car (Dennis Mack):
  - 198 items are left
  - Planning to sell the remaining items at annual meeting
  - Also discussed handing them out at the SFCOF
  - In the future we're planning to also go online with the merchandise
  - Action Items: None
- Live Steamer Report (Richard Murray):
  - Lots of good progress
  - Next steam up is at Richard's house, after that at the annual meeting
  - Steamers are a strong source of new members
  - No bills were submitted to BAGRS in 2009 !
  - Action Items: None
- Old and New Business (Don Watters):
  - Don Watters and Russ Miller are at the end of their terms, Russ wants to run again
  - Nominating committee was selected to consist of folks not running this year and consists of Don, Chip and Johannes
  - Willing to serve are Bob Evans and Bill Allen
  - We're only considering 1 candidate per position per slate
  - The nominating proposal to nominate Russ and Bob as Directors was approved
  - Action Items: None

#### **Next Board Meeting:**

- The next Board Meeting was not discussed but usually it is held right after the Business Meeting at the Annual Meeting, i.e. on February **TBD** at **TBD location** from **??** am 'til **??**.

**Adjourned** at 1:45 p.m.

