

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY – AGENDA REPORT

DATE: August 6, 2013
FROM: Gail McClure, Director
ITEM: Department Report
SUBJECT: Gift Shop Operations

We continue to review and refine the merchandise carried in the Gift Shop, and have added several new items which show a good degree of success. These items include new adult and infant/toddler shirts, with additional adultwear and children's items.

We continue to see low visitor numbers, although the spending per visitor/visitor group is up considerably (on average). If we can get enough bodies through the gates for Railroad Days, we might have a good revenue weekend – obstacles include the Quincy Fair (same weekend) and lack of publicity of any kind from the Railroad Days Committee. The revenue hurdle we are looking to best is the roughly \$5,000 weekend we did when the TTOS/LOTS group visited.

It has become painfully obvious that we need to get the word out in the form of advertising. We have had a number of visitors from the Reno/Sparks area and the Lake Tahoe Basin/Truckee area who said they essentially either found out about us by mistake or through word of mouth. Boosting visitorship, combined with attractive gift shop items, will result in revenue growth. If we manage both issues effectively, I believe it is possible to double gift shop revenue within 2-3 years, not including webstore dollars.

It has also become clear to me that I need to do a better job training gift shop personnel and providing them with expectations/procedures as well as holding them accountable for them. I assumed several things which have proven incorrect and have resulted in confusion and substandard performance. I will be working on procedures and additional/expanded training to address these concerns. This has been a tough summer with the incredibly small number of available volunteers (specifically David Elems and me).

We need to actively pursue a new telephone system. The wiring between the building and A-15 has been replaced by the phone company, and all wiring inside the building is our responsibility. The original system is nearly 30 years old, we have no idea what and where much of the wiring is/goes/does. The sound quality on all incoming lines is poor at best and we are now having problems with the credit card and internet lines being so noise polluted that data is becoming corrupted. I will obtain and provide a report to the board in the next 2-3 months for review/consideration.

Additionally, it is important to note two interactions with which I believe the Board should be aware. The first was with a former member banned from the property who was called in by a current member to assist with movement of locomotive parts purchased from the organization. I confronted the individual, advised them they were banned from the property and had knowledge of same, and told him to leave. This request was made several times, specifically, each time the individual made commentary including derogatory remarks but was slow to enter his vehicle and leave. The individual subsequently left the property and has not been back since.

The second interaction was with a current member with whom we have had problems and received visitor complaints regarding harassment and behavior which bordered on stalking. This individual has been approached and counseled by organization management regarding this behavior in the past, was told it was inappropriate, and that it was to cease immediately. On this particular day, having knowledge of current complaints regarding his behavior but not having witnessed it personally, I observed he was once again following guests and expounding about subjects they were obviously not interested in but did not want to be rude in excusing themselves. This was confirmed by the guests once directed away from the individual and brought into the gift shop for payment of admission. With an FRRS member as witness, I approached this individual and advised him that in addition to complaints regarding annoying behavior toward museum guests, knowledge that this had been addressed with him before, and having witnessed the behavior in question personally, that he was once again being counseled to cease it immediately, or that we may have no choice but to “take this issue to the next level”. He asked if he could say “hello” to guests and was told yes. He asked “what if they have questions” and was told to direct any visitors with questions to the gift shop – nothing more. I asked if he understood what was expected and he confirmed in the affirmative. He has been on the property once since, and was again witnessed “corralling” guests and going on ad nauseum despite having been counseled against such behavior and acknowledging the potential consequences. The Board will need to address this issue soon as it will continue to grow in frequency and intensity as the WP 165 continues on the road to restoration.

Once again and on a more positive note, I would like to thank the following people for their contribution to the gift shop in the form of working the register, answering phones, folding/labeling shirts, stocking shelves, providing operating crews for caboose trains, and RAL instructors (please forgive any omissions):

David Elems	Matt Elems	Greg Elems	Deanna Fecko
Matt Parker	Deb Baer	Tom Carter	Alicia Carter
Tim Carter	Bill Parker	Fred Elenbaas	Ethan Doty
Charlie Spikes	Craig Simmons	Jack Zygnier	Rick Gruninger

I would like to give special thanks to Charlie Spikes for coming over from Reno at 3 p.m., with no notice and one phone call, to do a walk-in RAL for a group of 18 kids from a local religious camp (their sixth year in a row including a visit to the museum as part of their camper’s experience). Another batch of special kudos goes out to David Elems who has been more than willing to cover the gift shop, often with short notice, in my recent absences. It is this positive, go-getter attitude that had allowed us to keep the facility open and operational to the public with less than an acceptable minimum of volunteers. Way to go, Charlie and David!

Respectfully Submitted,

Gail A. McClure, Director and Gift Shop Coordinator