

FEATHER RIVER RAIL SOCIETY

DATE: October 2017
ITEM: Director Report
FROM: Eugene Vicknair

INCOME IMPROVEMENT / MARKETING

As you will see from the marketing report, Big Fish and I have been working to analyze and research marketing strategies for the Society. We will have more information in upcoming meetings.

LIGHT PLANTS

The hunt for two used towable light plants, as authorized by the Board last meeting, proved fairly difficult. It turns out that the rental companies, which had dozens listed for sale and acted like their were ready for viewing, actually were listing units that were out on long term rentals and would not be available for months in many cases. (Why they were listed for sale...) I did not discover this until I tried to line units up for inspection.

One rental company did a search and their nearest salable unit was in Rock Springs, WY. It had a little over 5,000 hours on it (the units listed in California for the most part had 9,000 plus hours). They were asking \$2,900 for the unit (5,000 hours units in California, Nevada and Oregon were listing for around \$5,000 to \$5,400) and offered to ship it to the museum for \$3,000. We decided to take it as the total price was within the limits set by the Board and in line, once we factored paying for transport, to units I was finding listed in California. It arrived at the museum with a broken alternator bracket (repaired by David Elems) and a blown bulb (replaced by Bil Jackson) and it needed an oil change, but overall is a clean and well cared for machine.

During those negotiations, I found an identical model with only 2,100 being offered by a small rental company in Sacramento. Frank Brehm kindly inspected this one for us and reported it to be in excellent shape with just some dirt and cosmetic issues due to outside storage. It did have a broken tow latch which was replaced with a new tow receiver by Charlie Spikes and Bil Jackson, who also drove to Sacramento to pick up the unit. The cost on this unit was \$4,333 including sales tax.

By Thursday evening, the second light plant should be at the museum. Considering the higher number of evening events we are doing and the prior cost of renting these plants, they should pay for themselves within 3 years. Thank you to Frank, Charlie, Bill, Fritz and everyone else who helped with this.

GRANTS

This week, a grant for \$12,000 to help complete the WP 165 restoration was submitted to the Tom Dailey Foundation along with a letter of endorsement from Congressman Doug LaMalfa.

I have been working with Grant Management Associates and with Robert Meacher on the overall grant strategy. We are looking at a series of 6-8 grants ranging in amount from \$50,000 to \$2 million. These cover projects including the Whitman Building, Old Town Extension, Land Acquisition, new Entrance Road, WP 165 support, Zephyr Project restorations and Charles Sweetwood restoration.

A new grant supporting passenger rail preservation is being reviewed for submission in the spring of 2018. Current thought is to use this grant (amount range around \$40,000) to create new window frames and windows for the dome cars, now that a likely vendor to create replica frames has been identified.

LAND ACQUISITION

We have a preliminary plan for the land acquisition to the west. I am working with the City of Portola, the developers and the grant company on funding options. Hope to have a complete report next meeting.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Last Friday I flew to Reno (at my own expense) and drove to the museum to discuss Pumpkin Train details and attend some community meetings. I met with Berger Benson and Chris David for about 2 hours to discuss revitalization plans for Old Town Portola and, with the help of Robert Meacher, shared with them the long term vision for the museum and archives. This meeting went very well and we are discussing further how their committee and the Society can help each other reach their goals. Their committee is leading the project to design and build a public gathering and performance space where the bowling alley stood, including a wall mural of 5 WP locomotives through the railroad's history. Frank Brehm, Patty Clawson and I have been providing information and support to the committee on the mural.

Later that night, I also attended Congressman LaMalfa's town hall in Loyalton and had some discussions with his aide, Shane Starr.

LONG TERM VISION and OROVILLE TURNTABLE

With the recent discussions of the Oroville Turntable, I would like to point out an item that I think is very important to consider.

In my recent discussions with local developers, business persons and political figures, the master plan as adopted by the FRRS has been heavily touted as showing our long term goals and vision. The roundhouse and turntable are portrayed as centerpieces of the eventual museum development and have generated a lot of excitement and interest. These are also part of the grant strategy discussions.

Aside from my feeling that it would be a historic waste to deaccess the turntable, we must be aware that we are building a coalition and excitement toward our master plan with the community and region. If we then start selling items which are so central to the plan we adopted, I feel we will be undermining our own message and exhibiting a lack of commitment to the vision we are putting forth.

Yes, we may not see this happen within 10 or even 20 years, but we have a cohesive and well thought out vision that is garnering excellent reviews from professional architects, our political supporters and the community's movers and shakers. Robert Meacher, Portola City Manager, even singled out the turntable and roundhouse in my recent discussion with Berger Benson and Chris David. They found the idea of a working roundhouse exciting.

Thank you to the Collections Committee for its work and deliberations, but in this case I think the Board has a public image and vision consideration that must be thought through carefully on top of the criteria the committee was asked to review. I strongly believe that we will not earn the trust of these stakeholders if we start shortchanging our message of the museum's future.