

FRRS Mission Statement and A&D Committee

In January 1998, the FRRS Board of Directors approved the creation of a new committee to evaluate the historical significance and relevance of future equipment acquisitions and to examine the current equipment in the museum for historical relevance. It was called the Acquisition-Deacquisition Committee (A&D). It was formed as an advisory committee with the authority to make recommendations to the Board of Directors.

The committee chair, Peter "Doc" Lyman, placed a notice in the Train Sheet asking for volunteers for the new committee. By Summer 1998, five additional members had been added: Frank Brehm, Pat Brimmer, Bill Shippen, Kent Stephens, and Eugene Vicknair.

The first goal of the committee was to bring structure to exactly what the FRRS and the Portola Railroad Museum was about. This is by no means unique to our museum and this committee. Across the entire historical preservation community, organizations have been examining the goals and direction to better focus their efforts and create a standard around which to rally.

While the FRRS has always had a focus upon the Western Pacific Railroad, the extent of other activities and the breadth of the WP focus was often a source of confusion. It was decided, at the suggestion of Doc Lyman and others, that the Society needed a clear, codified statement of mission upon which to base the committee's evaluations and the future refinement and growth of the collection.

After much discussion, it was decided that the fairest way to begin determining the form of this mission statement was a poll of those whose time, effort, and money had built the museum: the members. Thus, the A&D Committee began shaping a comprehensive survey to allow the members to give feedback on where they felt the museum should go in the future and where it should focus. This survey was mailed to all current members in early August, 1998.

The first returned surveys began arriving on August 31, 1998. In the survey, members were asked to rank what areas they felt the museum should focus on. These were broken down into 8 categories covering such issues as what railroad, what time period, types of equipment, and other areas of concern. Members were also invited to provide written comments and write in votes (Which over ¼ did. All write-in items were reviewed by the A&D Committee and the Board of Directors). Any member requesting a personal contact to discuss the process and their thoughts was asked to provide their name and contact information. Those members were personally contacted by members of the A&D Committee by phone and e-mail.

In the end, 326 surveys were received, representing over 1/3 of the active membership. This was a phenomenal and totally unexpected level of response and was greeted with much enthusiasm by the commit-

tee.

Following the analysis of the survey results, a report was put together for the Board of Directors. This was weighed along with the needs of other groups which have a impact on our museum, such as visitors and the local residents. In mid 1999, the Board drafted and adopted an official Mission Statement and Statement of Goals for the FRRS and the Portola Railroad Museum.

These statements, as well as the important tool of the survey that shaped them, have been guiding the museum's acquisition and deacquisitions since that time. Potential acquisitions are reviewed by the A&D Committee to determine if they meet the needs of the Mission and have historical relevance to the collection. The committee has also reviewed items to determine if they do not well serve the collection and the mission. Most notably, this led to the deacquisition of the VIA Rail FPA4s and their sale to the Grand Canyon Railway where they have now been restored and are in regular service.

The A&D Committee is seen as playing an increasingly important role in the future. Currently, they are engaged in evaluating the entire collection and making recommendations placing items in various levels of status. While this may lead to some pieces of equipment being determined as surplus to the collection, it will also allow us to focus more resources on current items and provide openings for future historic pieces. The current A&D Committee is headed by Tom Mueller and is comprised on members Pat Brimmer, Peter Lyman, Chris Simpson, Kent Stephens, and Kyle Wyatt.

This process allows the museum to focus its efforts and funds on a coherent direction and to tell a deeper, more complete story. No organization can be all things to all people, a sad but true fact. But by taking our collective goals and finding and spelling out a common goal, we can build a strong museum that will deliver its message clearly for generations to come.

(Note for members: If you have any comments on an acquisition or deacquisition, please direct these to the Board of Directors and not the A&D Committee. Their role is to impartially judge issues based on their historical merits and relevance to the Mission Statement. It is a tennent of the creation of the committee that they be allowed to do this freely and without outside influence. For this same reason, the committee is considered "restricted", meaning that no member of a governing body, such as the Board of Directors, may concurrently serve on the A&D Committee. This allows the committee to function freely and advise the Board on issues based upon individual merit and not financial, personal, or political pressures.)

- Eugene John Vicknair