

# KEEPING TRACK

Official Newsletter of the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

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Editor: Jim Gibson

## ***The Word From the Prez***

### **February Turns Out To Be Exciting Month For ASMR**

This month's president's notes may end up sounding more like an editorial than my usual observations and comments, but here goes.

During the past 30 days a lot of things have transpired. First off, we are looking at a major redo of the club layout with a couple of different options for track plans. One option would double the mainline run and the other would triple it. We decided to have a mid-February follow-up meeting and in the middle of the layout discussion we had three options come up for new club locations. Needless to say, the layout revisions were put on hold while we sort out which direction the club members want to go. One of the options was ruled out rather quickly while the other two are still on the table. Stay tuned and stay involved to see which one we decide to go with.

Even with differences of opinion among the members on the choices at hand, it is an exciting time. I love seeing the excitement generated when members want to explore doing new and better things. I love seeing new members coming on board and becoming involved, and we welcome a new family that joined this month. I want to see this club be a vibrant and active organization, and that definitely requires active and involved members.

***Your President, Ken Riediger***

## **ASMR Meeting Notes**

The February ASMR business meeting was opened at 10:08 by President Ken Riediger. Minutes of the January 2 meeting were read by Secretary Cody Hilliard and approved. Ken England reported a total club account balance of \$3920.75, and his treasurer's report was approved.

Ken R. invited everyone to another operating session at his layout on Feb. 20 at 1:30 p.m. Ken E. brought up the future ASMR train show idea and said that when he was at Plano's train show several vendors he talked to seemed interested in attending an event in Abilene. He also reported

that several members were past due on dues, and the secretary was asked to send a letter to two members regarding this matter.

The issue of electrical problems with the layout was brought up, and a discussion ensued on problem specifics and how to solve them. Cody said he plans to install the new command station and radio receiver after the meeting, and he believes it will help to fix several gremlins. Since Jim Gibson was absent, no update on the city presentation he's working on was available.

In New Business, Lyn Thomson asked if he could take over the turntable area and finish it. All members seemed in favor of this. Ken R. said that several members expressed an interest in renovating the layout so he drew up some basic plans to see if the rest of the membership would be interested. He showed three different sketches and the members picked one they would like to see in more detail. Cody said he would draw it up with his computer, and Ken E. then requested a special meeting in two weeks to see the track plan and have a vote on proceeding further with change planning. Members agreed to the special meeting.

Ken R. reported that he and Jim G. taught the Boy Scout Merit Badge class again this year and had four enthusiastic students. He also said he had sent off a broken club UT4 controller to Digitrax for repairs and it came back fixed at no charge. Ken E. reported that he has updated the club's car color code chart.

The meeting was closed at 10:58 a.m. by President Ken Riediger, with the next meeting scheduled for Feb. 20.

## **Report on Special Feb. 20 Meeting**

A dozen or more members showed up at 10 a.m., Feb. 20 for a discussion on major changes to the club layout. Cody Hilliard showed plans for and explained two layout designs he had made on his computer, both of which would fit in (and fill up) the present HO-scale layout room. Both were major, multi-level departures from the present layout, and one was extremely complex. After a preliminary discussion of the layout plans, Ken England said he had talked to the landlord, Bill Smith, about other locations for the club, and there is a space on

Treadaway he would rent for \$500/month, plus utilities. Ken suggested that everybody drive over and take a look at the property, and the meeting adjourned while this was done. After that, members were shown some spaces in the present location as other possible alternatives. When everybody had returned to the meeting room, a lively discussion ensued, with some members expressing feelings that they felt overwhelmed with options. The choices were winnowed down, but making a major decision on anything was postponed pending further research and deliberation. JG

### The Editor Speaks

## How a Tucson Train Club And Museum Operates

I was able to contact a member of the Gadsden-Pacific Division Toy Train Operating Museum in Tucson, AZ named Ivan English, and he candidly provided some interesting information in response to my questions. The GPD started in 1980 with 25 members. From 1988 to 1997 they were given free space for their layouts and displays in the Foothills Mall, which enabled them to raise and save lots of money with virtually no expenses.

The mall exhibit closed in 1997, but they had already purchased land in an industrial park, and construction of a building on it was completed in 1998. An architect who belonged to the club did the plans and got all the permits for the structure, which ended up being a 100 X 60 (6,000 square-foot) steel building. Through members who had very useful "contacts", great deals on materials were obtained. Members did some contractor-supervised manual labor on construction and all the non-structural interior work. At one point several thousand dollars of low-interest bonds were sold to members to help pay the additional cost of a larger than originally planned building, but these were repaid within five years.

Once the museum had its own home, annual expenses became a huge issue, totaling \$18 to \$20,000 a year! Here are some recent examples: Insurance = \$5,300. Landscape maintenance = \$4,800. Utilities = \$4,300, even though the museum is only open about 30 days a year and closes for two months during the summer. Other

things include a gift shop inventory of \$1,500, general and layout maintenance costs of \$1,000, \$1,000 for printing and advertising, and various other smaller costs like an accountant's fee of \$800, for one. Special expenses also crop up, like \$7,500 last year to repave the parking lot. Additionally, redoing a bathroom and other remodeling cost \$4,000.

The GPD museum doesn't charge visitors, and annual dues for the +/- 100 members are pretty low, I thought. Those living within 50 miles of the museum pay \$60/year, while those outside that area pay \$25/year. According to English, fund-raising is an ongoing necessity to keep the museum afloat. Among other things, there are a couple of big annual meets and they sell custom painted model train cars. Low interest bonds sales or loans from members have provided quick cash on more than one occasion – most recently to pay for moving a real caboose to the museum. English said that the museum has "stayed clear" of help from charitable foundation grants because "they often have all kinds of accounting and reporting requirements and too many regulations and restrictions".

A seven person board composed of museum members governs the GPD, and according to English, on it are several professional movers and shakers such as an architect, charter school owner, retired State Dep't. employee, and some high powered engineers. Members elect the board and the board elects seven officers. From all this information, you can easily see that there are a lot of factors to be taken into account if a train club decides to go the non-profit museum route. JG

## Model RR Meets & Events

May 20-23 – Railway & Locomotive Historical Society  
Annual Mtg. Fort Worth, TX

### New Members Welcome

Coming on board this month to share the fun and fellowship of model railroading at ASMR is the King family, which includes Phillip, Tammi, and their son, Jordy. The Kings reside in Coronado's Camp, and we look forward to them being active participants in all our club activities and projects.