

To: FRRS Board of Directors  
From: Paul Finnegan  
Re: *Train Sheet* Report  
Date: October 10, 2018

For a long time I, and many other society members, have been frustrated and disappointed by the lack of a regular and timely newsletter to the FRRS membership. The expectations established by the society calendar and the membership information, are there would be six issues per year of the *Train Sheet*. The last time we met this expectation was in 2003.

Realizing there are many contributing factors to the challenges of producing *Train Sheets* on a regular basis, I have spoken to several members of the FRRS Board over an extended period.

In September of 2017, I spoke with Matt Elems when we were both at the museum about the *Train Sheet*. Kerry Cochran and I had earlier implemented an automated reminder email to try and increase submission of articles. In my discussion with Matt, I inquired about the process of how he puts a *Train Sheet* together and his tool set. He told me he uses a tool called Scribus and sent me the files for issue 174 so I could understand how a train sheet is constructed.

On Sunday September 16<sup>th</sup>, after receiving the second issue for 2018, I sent Eugene Vicknair, the society's Membership Administrative Services Manager, an email asking for a phone call to discuss the *Train Sheet*. Per the FRRS Org Chart, the *Train Sheet* is under his direction. The phone call happened a few days later.

In the phone call, I expressed my disappointment and frustration with the lack of a regularly published *Train Sheet*. Being that I think it is not fair to complain without providing a proposal for a solution, I proposed the option of leveraging the synergy between the website and the society newsletter to see if I could help get the issues out in a timelier manner.

After more emails and discussions with Kerry Cochran and Eugene, Eugene scheduled a conference call with Kerry, Matt Elems, Eugene and me. This conference call took place on Thursday September 26<sup>th</sup>. After an open and frank discussion, it we agreed that Matt and I would team-up and put together the next issue, #178. In the phone call it was expressed that we would like to have the next issue contain Pumpkin Express promotional material and get it to the membership before the Pumpkin Train Express.

In preparation for these discussions, I had taken the Scribus files Matt had sent me from issue 174 the previous year and created a proof-of-concept issue 178. I sent the proof-of-concept issue out on Friday morning, September 28<sup>th</sup> to Kerry, Greg, Matt, and Eugene. A group we named the "review team."

Over the course of the next couple days we went through six draft copies as we shared ideas for improved content, format and corrections. Everyone on the team made inputs to the process. After the review process completed, I created the print shop PDF and gave it to Matt to transfer to the print shop on Monday October 1<sup>st</sup> for getting a quote. In discussions with Eugene and Matt, I learned that we have been ordering 1,000 copies of the *Train Sheet*. I didn't understand this since we only mail about 630 copies. After being told a previous print shop had a quantity discount that made this the appropriate decision, I suggested we get a quote from the new print shop for 750 and 1,000 copies to see if this is still the right thing to do.

On Wednesday October 3<sup>rd</sup> I called the alphagraphics office in Las Vegas and spoke with out account representative. It appears that although Matt got the automatic confirmation about submitting the PDF file, it never made it into their system. I resent the PDF file and asked for quotes for the two quantities. It turned

out to save us \$306.24 to print only 750 copies. Eugene directed us to request the formal invoice for 750 copies (estimated to be \$1903.12). The print shop does not actually start work on a project until the invoice is paid.

On Monday October 8<sup>th</sup>, issues were raised about whether we should proceed with this project, so the immediate distribution of issue 178 was put on hold.

It is my opinion that the primary motivation for getting an issue out quickly, i.e. getting Pumpkin Express promotional material to the membership before the event, is no longer feasible and we should stop and decide as an organization how we want to proceed. I contacted the print shop on Tuesday October 9<sup>th</sup> and instructed them NOT to print the file they have.

Matt and I, with the rest of the review team, were able to demonstrate we could work together and leverage the material from the ongoing website work to create a 20 page *Train Sheet* with current and recent information. I hope we can devise an approach that will serve the society membership and us well.

For your reference, the table of contents for the aborted issue is below. Most of this material is still appropriate for the next issue.

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