

**Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Inc.**  
**Executive Committee Meeting - Virtual**  
**Thursday, Dec 18, 2025**

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**I. Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 PM MT by Don Stewart, Chairman.

**Executive Members Present:**

Don Stewart - Chairman	Bill Lock	Melissa Sellers
Rick Marsden - Ex-officio, non-voting	John Engs	Steve Jorgensen
	John Ferrell	

**E.C. Members Absent:** Caroline Tower

**Board Members Present:**

Don Atkinson	Jim Ewbank	Jim Herron
Ed Beaudette	Scott Hardy	Ian Kelly
Paul Davenport		Tom Stewart

**Minutes:** Melissa Sellers, Secretary

**II. President's Report – Rick Marsden**

- Fall photo charter expected to make a \$15,000 net profit.
- The railroad will be clearing the equipment from behind the Night Watchman's Building. This is the new designated area for the friends to set up (and leave set up) our lunch tents in Chama. The Friends will need to put gravel in the area to make the footing stable for the tents and volunteers.
- Steven Butler is talking to an electrician regarding the cost and installation pathway to restore power at the coal tipple.
- Steve B. also said that the telegraph display wires had to be removed to allow the crane to lift locomotive #492. The wires can now be replaced, but the poles are decaying and should be replaced first.
- Pay Car F will be removed from its existing engine shed area in January and transferred to another covered facility. The Friends have not yet agreed to work on it.
- The Friends and the railroad are collaborating on marketing efforts, coordinating through Robert Stefanowski to include Friends messaging that will be placed on the railroad website. The plan is to include a section about our mission, volunteer programs, how to become a member, and past and current projects.
- The Friends and the railroad are also discussing ways to potentially share customer email addresses as a way to help gain visibility to our organization.
- Robert S. has asked if the Friends would participate with the railroad on a planned Colorado 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary statehood celebration to take place at the Antonito Depot. Rick has confirmed that the Friends would like to be involved in this celebration.

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- The Friends received a \$25,000 donation for the photographic library.
- Current Memberships as of December 17, 2025 are 1,760 based on the present 15-month criteria. Actual paid memberships per “Sales Force Active Members” is 1,549. (This is the difference between an exact paid member level and active member renewals that are still due / lapsed but still in that 15-month window).

### **III. Financial Report – Rick Marsden**

#### **A. Budget vs Actual:**

- Campaign proceeds through December 17th for FY2025 are \$198,953.
- General Donations through December 17th for FY2025 are \$ 208,564.

#### **B. Detailed Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet):**

- Total Net Assets are \$1,863,159.
- Unrestricted Net Assets are \$1,412,935

### **IV. Projects Committee – John Engs**

- Team is working on making changes to the registration forms with a January 12<sup>th</sup> target date to get it on the web.

### **V. Membership – Steve Jorgensen**

- Working on membership cards. Steve sent out some examples to a group of people. We can purchase 2000 membership cards for about \$580 plus the time to print them out and stuff them into envelopes.
- Membership grace periods were discussed, with Rick proposing a 30-day grace period as opposed to the current 3-month grace period that is written into the bylaws. The group agreed to let the membership committee handle this matter.
- We need *reminder to renew* emails or letters sent out in a predictable way, telling members that their membership is about to expire on “x” date and then a follow-up communication if they have not renewed within a month of their expiration date.
- We are down 500 members from last year.

### **VI. Education – Melissa Sellers**

- Two Jeopardy games on railroad terminology had been uploaded to the education section of the website.

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**VII. Media – Ian Kelly**

- Ian is going to try to get the Dispatch Extra to Simply Design before they shut down for the holidays.
- We would like to get a list of the 2026 projects on the website so people can start seeing what we will be working on, but the list is not fully determined.

**VIII. Communications – Tom Stewart**

- Tom will and a few others will be doing outreach to the local and regional chambers of commerce, visitor centers, and fraternal organizations in order to connect with the community, let them know we exist, and get them interested in our program.
- Town-Hall online meetings will be starting tomorrow (December 19<sup>th</sup>) on Teams. Craig McMullen will be the speaker. The committee will be advertising the online meetings on narrow-gauge discussion forums, social media, and through an email blast. They plan to create a schedule so that people will know, months in advance, when the next town-hall will be and who will be the speaker.
- Monthly communications meeting starting in January. The group will be focusing on how to make everyone speaking as one voice with common branding. This will also help each group to know what the other groups are doing.
- The group is looking to make changes to the website where there is a web blog to supplement the old forums. The group is hoping that the analytics will help us better understand what people are interested in and what topics we should be focusing on for future communications with members.
- A tree fell down and knocked out some electric poles, including two of our webcams. The only one running is the one on the depot. Tom discussed plans to restore webcams in the spring and use them to create content for YouTube and Facebook, with the goal of generating revenue through monetization.
- A few of our docents are leaving but there are about seven potential new docents.
- The docents are trying to update training materials. The railroad has requested our docent training material for their ticket agents and car attendants.

**IX. Interpretation – John Farrell**

- For the Hollywood car project, the committee is planning on collecting first-hand accounts of movie-making experiences on the railroad. John F. is reaching out to Earl Knoob, John Bush, Ian Kelly, and hopefully Roberta, and Abby Martinez to participate in interviews.
- Images will be pulled from our historic collection for use in the car. Jim E. is also talking to a copyright lawyer to find out what we can use under fair-use law.

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- The text for the Hollywood car signage is currently being reviewed by members and should be approved and sent to Fossil Graphics for printing this spring.

**X. Plan to Raise Funds and Increase Membership – Rick Marsden**

A. Raising Funds

- Fundraising Committee:
- Rick and Jim Ewbank discussed expanding the fundraising committee to have a vice chair. Caroline would be the chair, with Jim as the vice-chair, if Caroline is willing to be the chair. She was absent from the meeting, so Don S. will ask Caroline if she is willing to be in charge of the Fundraising Committee, and if she can commit time to create a plan by the March board meeting.
  - The suggested committee would include Steve Jorgensen and the recruitment of as many members as possible, because we need a lot of ideas and foot-work.
  - Internally, the committee members would break tasks down along targeted dollar groups, with some members focusing on donor opportunities over \$100k and other members focusing on grant and donor opportunities under \$100k.
  - Jim would like to seek input about fundraising from members of the Friends so the committee can make a list of ideas, prioritize them, and allocate responsibilities for the objectives identified.
  - Ian stated that he would put something in the Dispatch Extra asking the membership for volunteers to join this committee to give ideas and help procure donations and grants. He will tell people to contact him and he will forward contacts to Caroline and Jim.
- Rick provided suggested goals for fundraising for FY2026.
  - General donations: \$220,000
  - PNGPF donations: \$200,000
  - Year-end campaign: \$35,000
- A couple members of the board expressed concern that these numbers were similar to what we are currently raising and don't meet our yearly needs.
  - It was also discussed that we need a concrete plan for improvement and growth with measurable goals that would enable the board to measure success on a monthly or quarterly basis. The PNGPF and year-end campaigns have been going on for years. What steps will be taken, besides forming a fundraising committee, to increase funds? The question is what new ideas will be implemented as a way to increase our revenue? The board would like some new and measurable ideas and goals that will increase revenue.
  - We also need to resurrect our finance committee so we have a better understand of what money, both historically and currently, we are raising and where we are spending it.
  - Jim E. suggested creating 1-year, 3-year, 5-year plans so that we can slowly work up to the goal of covering some of our losses and then increase our

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- income. He stated that we need to cut expenses in the short run while also increasing revenue and developing our long-term plan.
- Jim stated that it takes 90 to 120 days of hard work to create a 1-year plan, and creating a 5-year plan is a 1-year project. He hopes to spend 3 or 4 days in the Albuquerque office to go through records so that he can get a better sense of where we have been to help the fundraising committee plan where we can go.
  - There is concern that our contract work is costing extra expense that was not planned and this is driving up costs and contributing to us spending more than we are taking in each year. This issue needs to be addressed with either increased revenue or an increase in volunteers so we don't have to contract out work. We are also losing members, which hurts revenue.
  - Share Campaign goals across media outlets:
    - Suggested to share our desired goals in the Dispatch Extra, on the website, and on social media.
    - Rick purchased an "extra seat" with Simply Design so we could get "designated names and better content" for better analytics.
    - Add a tab to the website under Donate for Estate Planning.
      1. This tab used to be on the website but appears to have gotten lost during the refresh of the site. Ian thinks he has a copy of the original website and will look for it to see if he can get that page up there again.
      2. The tab should have estate planning materials and information on how to name the Friends as a beneficiary. This would fall under the fundraising committee.
      3. This is not an item we can budget for, but it is a source of fundraising income.

**B. Increasing Membership**

- We need more volunteers because hiring outside help is costing a lot and really hurting our ability to break-even on our yearly income and financial output.
- Rick suggested that the organization develop a seven-minute professional video to share our story.
- Steve stated that we need to be able to explain to people why they should join us, give them a reason, and how it benefits them.
- Jim suggested developing a message that resonates with people: example, the 100th birthday of the locomotives... you can help the RR be here another 100 years.
- Other suggestions included:
- Go back to the people who have dropped their memberships and try to get them to renew.
- We need to implement auto-renewals for membership so we don't have to remind people that their membership is expiring.

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- Every board member needs to get involved in regular committees that happen every month. These meetings should be regularly scheduled so it is easier for people to attend.

**XI. Adjournment**

7:12 adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ Melissa A. Sellers*

Melissa Sellers  
Secretary