

Volunteer Railroaders Association

A New Jersey Nonprofit Corporation
80 Royal Avenue—Hawthorne, NJ 07506



February 2006

Dear Friend,

As you may be aware, over the course of the past couple of years the Volunteer Railroader's Association has been undertaking some changes to its corporate structure. The "Benign Dictatorship" that began our group many years ago, and has so ably guided its fortunes through good times and bad, has expressed a desire to shed the larger portion of the load inherent to its administration. As a consequence and with the willing assistance of several other members, they have firmed up the VRA's corporate structure. They have applied for and received federal tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service, and have written, reviewed and approved formal by-laws to guide our group into a new era. Within the next month or two, the membership will be asked for the first time to nominate and elect a slate of candidates to act as directors and officers for the group.

Before that can happen, we must have members. As you are also well aware, up to this point in time the VRA has never assessed dues. Historically, our "membership qualifications" have consisted almost solely of showing up and "getting your hands dirty". Getting your hands dirty has been construed as anything from being the Easter Bunny to car hosting to cutting brush to lifting rail to restoring track cars to selling hot dogs to flagging grade crossings. Any attempt at a complete list of the things our members have done in support of our group would easily fill this page. Obviously, this is how you've come to be included in our open and inclusive definition of membership.

From a financial standpoint, we have traditionally relied almost entirely on our fund raising efforts to provide whatever funds might be needed to support our routine operations and special projects. While this has usually worked out, we desire to have a least some stable baseline revenue to fund the newsletter and other mailings, provide a meeting place, maintain the web sites, and generally "keep the lights on." Having some basic funding should help forestall some of our "running on nearly empty" treasury reports as we approach our regular fundraisers. Therefore, effective this year we are assessing dues as a condition of membership. Many of you have already paid up during 2005, knowing that dues were an upcoming reality. Thank you for your advance support and be advised that your dues money will be applied to the 2006 membership year so there is no need for further action on your part. For the rest of us, myself included, its time to get out the checkbook if we'd like to maintain our status as a regular member.

Lest "the new order of things" appear somewhat distressing, be assured that while the administration of our business affairs will of necessity be somewhat more formal, the friendship, camaraderie, and "hands-on" spirit of accomplishment that make this group so much fun remain unchanged. I sincerely hope that you will continue your support through a regular membership. A copy of the membership application is on the back of this letter and can be used to send in a check or if you wish you can visit our web site at www.vratrips.org and click on the "Get Involved" button and pay for your dues with a credit card or Paypal.

See you trackside!

Mark Schmitt
Crew Caller