

Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the National Association of Rocketry

January 29, 2021

The meeting was called to order on Friday, January 29, 2021, at 10:03 AM Eastern Time. The meeting was conducted online via Accelevents webinar due to the shift of NARCON from an in-person format to an online event.

Trustees present: John Hochheimer, President; Carol Marple, Vice President; Mark Wise, Secretary; Kevin Johnson, Treasurer; Randy Boadway; Becky Green; Ed LaCroix; Lynn Thomas, Jim Wilkerson.

Todd Schweim (NAR web designer and publisher of *Sport Rocketry*) provided technical support for the webinar.

Numerous observers were present throughout the day via the Accelevents channel.

John announced that 490 people were registered for NARCON, greatly exceeding the attendance at any previous NAR convention.

John announced that Todd Schweim is now an employee of the NAR. The change from contractor to employee status will save the NAR approximately \$35,000 per year.

Ed moved to accept the minutes of the July 2021 board meeting (held virtually due to COVID-19) and all subsequent monthly conference calls. Steve seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Trustee Election

While the NAR Secretary usually manages the annual NAR board election, Mark is running for re-election in 2021. Carol has agreed to manage the election to avoid a conflict of interest on Mark's part. Mark will send her a set of standard operating procedures and the text for the annual call for nominations. The announcement will run in *Sport Rocketry* and *The Electronic Rocketeer*.

Committee Reports

Sections

NAR currently has 227 Sections, with one new Section pending. This represents a net increase of 15 Sections over 2020, with 27 new Sections chartered and 12 Sections expiring. The annual Section renewal process will begin on February 1.

NAR issued 55 Section grants totaling \$13,430 in 2020, down from 70 grants totaling \$16,717.45 in 2019. Chuck Neff, Section Activities Chair, attributes the downturn to reduced activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. In his report, Chuck said that Ed Chess is doing a "fantastic" job of managing the grant program. In turn, Carol (who presented the Section Committee report) said that Chuck is doing a fantastic job as the committee chair.

At this time, about 63% of Sections have an insured launch site.

About 45% of NAR members belong to Sections, according to the NAR member database. Chuck believes the actual number is higher than the reported number due to members neglecting to include Section affiliation information with their membership renewals.

Steve moved that NAR allocate \$20,000 for up to 80 Section grants. Lynn seconded. After discussion, Carol and John suggested removing the “up to 80” restriction in case any Sections request less than the \$250 maximum grant. Motion carried unanimously.

Regarding the free NAR memberships that are allocated to Sections, about 14% of the available memberships are actually redeemed. We gave away 32 certificates in 2020, which did not meet our goal. Chuck would like the authority to give unused certificates to Sections that need them. He would also like the Board to consider ways to make more use of the free memberships that trustees can award.

The Board discussed approving up to 250 free memberships, to be administered as the Section Activities Chair sees fit. Steve said that he would rather not expand the program beyond the number of currently chartered sections. John said that most of these memberships have been given to Junior members, which represents an income loss of \$25 per membership, to which Steve responded that the program is no longer limited to Juniors. Carol asked about the out-of-pocket cost of a free membership, i.e., a subscription to *Sport Rocketry* and a membership card. Mark pointed out that a pro rata share of insurance premium was also part of a membership’s cost, and Carol said that was inconsequential.

Steve moved that the Section Activities Chair be given the authority to redistribute free membership certificates by reallocating certificates from Sections with no candidates, the total number of certificates not to exceed the number of currently active Sections. Lynn seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

National Events

In his capacity as National Events chair, Ed thanked all 490+ members who are participating in NARCON 2021. He reminded those members attending the board meeting that the National Events chair can always be reached at <https://www.nar.org/national-events-committee/>, and he welcomes any comments regarding NARCON.

National Sport Launch: The Board’s conference call on March 3 will include a COVID status check, to include what activities are allowed in Colorado. Matt Abbey, the NSL event director, is still moving forward with the event at Ed’s direction, and has secured an altitude waiver to 30,000 feet from the FAA. Ed suggested that people monitor the nar.org home page and the NAR Facebook page for updates. Ed and Todd will update the NSL website after March 1, and “go live” for registration around March 8 if we decide to proceed with the event. Ed and Matt are re-confirming the hotel arrangements. John asked if there was a hard date for a go/no-go decision to hold the event. Ed said that he would like to have a firm decision by the April conference call.

John asked Ed to submit an NSL status update for the next issue of the *E-Rocketeer*.

NARAM-62: There has not been much movement. Ed will talk to the event directors after NARCON. Registration will open no later than May 10. John asked Ed to reach out to Bill and MaryBeth Clune (NARAM sport launch co-directors) relatively soon to coordinate with the local hotels to determine their flexibility. Ed said that there were no problems with Experient (our hotel contractor) cancelling last year, and that he has re-signed those contracts.

Future events: Ed has a “very firm” offer to host NSL in South Carolina in 2022, and he thanked Becky for connecting him with the section there. There is currently no candidate to host NARAM-63. Ed announced to the meeting attendees that he is interested in hearing about candidate sites and Sections for NARAM 63 in 2022. NARCON 2022 will be discussed under the “Virtual Events” agenda topic later in the meeting.

Education

Education Committee Chair Vince Huegele submitted a report via e-mail before the meeting. A summary follows:

- The committee requests no funding at this time.
- The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) conferences for 2020 and 2021 were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (NAR usually participates in the conference in cooperation with the Aerospace Industries Association.)
- The NAR Rocket Teacher Certification (narTcert) program continues strongly despite the pandemic.
 - Although the program requires the teacher to have their flight witnessed and signed off by a NAR member to encourage contact with a section, that point has been relaxed so that now a video of the successful flight can be submitted if there are “contact” problems.
 - The program had a first in August when a teacher, Robyn Jackson, created a narTcert class and group trained and certified eleven teachers in November. She has submitted an article about the class to *Sport Rocketry*.
 - The sessions were captured through Zoom and will be available by link from the NAR website soon. These videos will enhance the online resources. Robyn will do another narTcert training class in February.
 - It was always planned that teachers who were certified would go on to certify other teachers, and this is now taking place as an organized course.
- According to survey questions, most narTcert registrations come from new members who find NAR rocketry education in a web search. This suggests that our web presence is effective for teachers finding our rocket information and for new member recruitment.
- The Education Committee will be exploring how to contact the U.S. Space Force for mutual promotion as the Space Force Headquarters is subsequently built in Huntsville, Alabama.

Carol remarked that Education and other committees have been doing things virtually that we wouldn't have thought possible a year and a half ago. John concurred and praised Vince for his work.

Safety

In his capacity as Safety Committee chair, Steve has held discussions with the Level 3 Coordinating Committee (L3CC) and High-Power Committee regarding the establishment of a requirement to use launch rails instead of rods for high-power rockets. The consensus was that a requirement was not necessary.

Steve said that he appreciates any feedback on his monthly safety articles in the *E-Rocketeer*.

John said that he is dealing with issues regarding cars parked at launches. Reminder: NAR insurance is *additional* insurance, not primary insurance. Members with insurance claims should work with their homeowner's policy before going to the NAR. John also reminded the attendees that members with insurance claims are liable for any deductibles.

John expressed the Board's continuing concern over launch site fires. If a launch site is in an area covered by a burn ban, that overrides all other considerations. Sections should find out whether their launch sites are under burn bans and respect them. The NAR's policy is that launching rockets under a burn ban is a violation of the Safety Codes. On the other hand, if the local authority having jurisdiction over burn bans will grant an exception for rocketry activities, then flying would be permissible.

There have been no insurance claims in the past year. *We would like to keep it that way.* NAR's insurance premium was \$85,000 in 2020, and the way to keep the premium from increasing is to continue not to have claims. Even so, the world around us may drive increases in our premiums.

Historian

Kevin said that Jennifer Ash, the NAR historian, continues to catalog our acquisitions. Kevin submitted a budget request to continue reimbursing Jennifer's expenses.

High Power Rocketry

Jim said that we have tried to work with the Tripoli Rocketry Association (TRA) to work out a way to discourage "speed-run" certifications, where applicants attempt to complete multiples levels of HPR certification in a short time. We could not come to agreement, so we have included the following language in our HPR policy (excerpted from <https://www.nar.org/high-power-rocketry-info/>):

The expectation of the certification program is that members gain experience at each certification level prior to progressing to the next level. This would include building and flying several rockets that use one or more motors of the flyer's current certification level.

Steve has been attending meetings of the Experimental Sounding Rocketry Association (ESRA). They plan to hold their June launch as scheduled. One of their major activities is "10K COTS," which NAR members could support because the activity is consistent with NAR Safety Codes. (Most ESRA events involve experimental rocketry, which is outside the scope of the NAR.)

Ed said that TRA has contacted him for advice on starting a "Tripoli-con." He will help as best he can.

Treasurer's Report

Kevin said that we are doing fairly well with our main bank account. He plans to move all funds out of the AmeriChoice accounts and into our USBank accounts.

The general checking account stands at approximately \$54,000, and the committee account has a current balance of about \$20,000. We have \$176,000 in the primary USBank account.

Our bottom line, including NARTS inventory, is about \$280,000. Kevin said that this amount remains relatively steady from month to month.

Membership dues continue to be our main source of income. NAR took in \$23,000 in dues this month, plus some donations through Amazon Smile.

John has been looking at NAR's long-term recurring costs. He made a quick fix by researching our phone service and cancelling services we have not been using, which resulted in a reduction of our AT&T bill from \$1200 per month to \$250.

Continuing on the topic of telephone service, John asked whether we need to maintain our toll-free ("1-800") telephone number. Lynn asked how much use the 800 line gets. John replied that most initial calls that Marie receives are on the 800 line, since that is the first number that people see when they go to our webpage. That number is dropping, since we are not emphasizing the 800 number on the website.

Steve said that more data would be helpful. Do the calls on the 800 line come from members? Non-members? People who are interested in the hobby? It would help to know the nature of the calls.

John's impression is that the per-minute use of the 800 line costs us about \$75-100 per month.

Moving on, John said that in an effort to continue improving efficiency and create some redundancy in our ability to shift duties and cover HQ operations, he would like to subscribe to Google Workspace (formerly known as "G-suite"), a Microsoft MS Office-like suite offered by Google. His concern is that we have files scattered widely on people's individual computers. John, Kevin, Anne Heacock, Marie, and Todd have files stored on their computers, but we need a central repository. John suggests Google Workspace for board officers who need it, plus Todd, Marie, and Anne. We would use existing nar.org e-mail addresses. Our cost would be \$4.00 per user per month.

Three members observing the meeting suggested using MS Teams or Sharepoint. Kevin and Lynn pointed out that Sharepoint is problematic. Todd pointed out that backup is important. Carol said that moving to something centralized is important, whichever platform we select.

Ed asked about a due-out date. John would like to implement this as soon as possible.

Kevin moved that NAR institute a web-based cloud storage solution for document sharing for officers and board members and employees. Steve seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Mark moved to approve the 2021 NAR budget as presented at the December 2020 board meeting. Lynn seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Carol said that we need to close out acknowledging donations for 2020. John asked her to work with Ann.

The Board stood in recess from 11:45 AM to 12:17 PM Eastern Time.

Electronic Publications

Sport Rocketry

Sport Rocketry is now available electronically and in print. In December, the Board discussed in the possibility of offering an electronic-only option, which has been requested by a number of members. This

would cut down on some costs, especially if we applied it to members paying reduced dues (Junior, Leader, free memberships). John can work with Todd to develop a flag in the member database that would suppress mailing labels for electronic-only members.

We would not save significant costs with an electronic-only option, because our print run is already so small relative to other magazines that the per-copy cost is only small part of the total expense. NAR would save perhaps \$1 per member by not mailing them a copy of *Sport Rocketry*.

John asked the Trustees if they would have issues with an electronic-only option if there were no dues reduction associated with it? Lynn, Carol, and Becky said they would all be fine with that.

The Board discussed the possible disadvantages of releasing *Sport Rocketry* as a PDF rather than a “flip book” at the same time the hard-copy magazine was released. It was pointed out that we lose control of our intellectual property if the publication is downloadable immediately.

Another concern is that if the magazine can be downloaded immediately, it will be re-posted all over the Web. If the content becomes available so easily, will that cost us members? A member in the chat room pointed out that making it more broadly accessible might spread the word about NAR more effectively.

John asked Ed how the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) handles the options.

Todd said that *Sport Rocketry* is one of the major benefits of NAR membership. If we just give it away, it detracts significantly from the value of a NAR membership. The flip-book format was only intended to be an interim solution to make the publication available online quickly.

John asked whether it would be worth broadening distribution options to see what happens. Kevin said that he would prefer keeping *Sport Rocketry* as a member benefit and restricting access in some fashion so that not just anyone can download. Carol concurred.

The idea of reducing the two-year embargo (during which NAR membership is required to access *Sport Rocketry* content) to six months had broad support among the Board. Carol, Becky, and Kevin asked whether it made sense to reduce the embargo to one back issue. Ed would like at least a brief restriction to preserve *Sport Rocketry* as a member benefit.

John asked if the Board would be comfortable with a restriction of one issue-cycle as a reasonable compromise? Carol said that would be reasonable as a test.

Lynn moved that the NAR change the current embargo of *Sport Rocketry* to the current issue only and make all past issues available for download via PDF. Becky seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Member Guidebook

Should NAR change the Member Guidebook from a print format to electronic-only? This would allow us to publish more content, as we have been limiting the page count to hold down printing costs. Mailing the Member Guidebook has always presented problems. There can be an extended delay in receiving a copy if a member’s renewal cycle is out of sync with the publication cycle, and distribution to Life members (who are obviously not tied to a renewal cycle) has been problematic.

An electronic-only Member Guidebook can be updated much more rapidly (the current update cycle is two years). Furthermore, an electronic-only Member Guidebook would save NAR approximately \$15,000 per year.

Steve said that he liked the idea. Kevin said that he liked the idea of a more rapid update cycle. Carol said that she thought this was the way to go, especially with respect to the upgrade cycle. Lynn said that she likes having a hard copy but admitted that she's fond of print books. Ed said he saw no downside to going to an all-digital guidebook.

In the Q&A area, Don Carson asked whether content would be updated frequently enough, citing slow updates to other areas of the NAR website. Todd replied that the most recent editions of the Member Guidebook have not had much new content, either.

Mark said that he likes the feel of a printed book in hand but agreed that electronic-only is a better way forward. Jim said that he could see both sides but agrees that a digital format is preferable (maybe not immediately, but eventually).

Kevin moved that the NAR transition the Member Guidebook from a printed magazine format to PDF. Ed seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Content Sharing

As a result of having a virtual NARCON, we will have a “virtual treasure trove” of content from the sessions. With permission from the presenters, how should NAR handle content sharing to people who did not pay to attend NARCON? Should we post the content to the Members Only section of the NAR website? Should we post it on YouTube?

Ed said that he has discussed the use of a virtual platform with Todd quite a bit and would value his point of view. Todd said that giving registered attendees initial access to the content, followed by NAR members, then the general public, seems appropriate.

Carol said that the Board meeting and Town Hall should be uploaded as soon as possible for the benefit of members who did not register for NARCON. She suggested that might be appropriate for the Manufacturers' Forum, too.

One week, 30 days, and 90 days were some suggestions for registered-attendee only access.

A real-time poll in Accelevents was 94% in favor of making the content available. A follow-on question regarding the duration of the restriction was 50-50 for one week versus a longer period.

Another poll, regarding the duration of the embargo, was 50-50 for a week versus a longer period.

Lynn moved that session recordings (not including Board meetings or the Manufacturers' Forum) be restricted to NARCON registrants for 60 days following the event, then be made available to all NAR members. Mark seconded. Ed suggested reducing embargo to 30 days. Lynn and Mark agreed to the amendment. John asked Ed and Todd whether 30 days would be enough time to post the content. Todd said that he did not know how long it would take. **Lynn amended the motion to specify a minimum of 30 days, then as fast as technically feasible thereafter. Motion carried unanimously.**

Jim left the meeting at 1:47 PM Eastern Time. (He was in New Delhi on business, where it was already midnight.)

The Board stood in recess from 1:47 to 2:15 PM Eastern Time.

John announced that the NAR had 7446 members as of 2:00 PM Eastern Time. Ed added that there were 512 registered attendees for NARCON.

Virtual Events

The Board discussed how NAR should move forward with online events. Do we want to continue them after it becomes safe to hold in-person events again? Do we want to stage “hybrid” events, with mixed in-person and virtual content?

Lynn said that she wouldn't like virtual-only events. For her, “Being around other people is a big part of the attraction.” Interaction between presenters and audiences tends to be easier in person. Some parts of an in-person experience cannot be replicated in a virtual event, and Lynn would hate to miss the face-to-face interactions.

Kevin pointed out that we have run a couple of ad-hoc virtual events. We have had our growing pains, but we're getting the hang of staging these events. He suggested putting on some events in hybrid format, live-streaming where it was practical to do so.

Ed said that he has had some discussions with Todd regarding the simulcasting of events. It may not be easy because of the requirements for equipment and staffing. Livestreaming requires high-quality audio and video gear, and cell phones are not adequate for the task. Each room would need to have someone operating the video and audio equipment. Another question is whether a hybrid event would cost us too much in-person attendance? Ed remarked that if the virtual tours planned for Saturday work well, the difficulty of finding a site with an attraction (places such as the Kennedy Space Center, the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, etc.) becomes a non-issue.

Mark said that he recognized Ed's concerns, but he would prefer a hybrid event to give members as many options as possible.

Carol likes making national events available to members who are unable to travel. She proposed continuing with NARCON as a virtual event and including virtual content in NSL and NARAM as appropriate.

Becky would prefer a live event, since some things cannot be replicated virtually, but she agreed that hybrid events were appropriate.

Carol and Ed suggested that the Research and Development presentations and Scale display would be two events at NARAM that would be suitable for livestreaming.

John said that these suggestions were not outside the realm of what he thought he would hear, but he wanted to challenge the Board a bit further: How can we think about this in a different way? We are thinking about how NAR can fit virtual events into our existing paradigm for national events, but how about thinking of merging existing tech and doing things in a new way? The Board doesn't have all the answers, but where can we go to get the answers? John suggested that we find someone to run focus

groups with NAR members to find out why they attend (or don't attend) events, whether they would participate in virtual events, and what types of events they would participate in. John believes that the virtual NARAM in 2020 did more to encourage contest flying than anything else NAR has done in the past 10-15 years. Could we re-craft competition flying to have a host field for an in-person NARAM, but competitors could also fly from their local fields? Lynn said, "If we don't try, we won't learn."

John went on to ask what we could do as a Board to explore how we change the way we present these events to our members. Ed suggested that for NSL, we could find a volunteer with adequate equipment to stream events on a schedule, with a tour through the vendor tents in one time block, a walk along flight line during another time block, etc. Carol said that that this would have the advantage of the events being recorded. As an example, Carol said that the recording of the Manufacturers' Forum on our YouTube channel has been popular. Carol likes Ed's idea of starting tentatively to see how well things work. Lynn said that equipment for recording a launch can be rented for not too horribly high a price. Carol, who owns the appropriate equipment, says her skills are pretty basic but might be sufficient to try things out.

John asked each Board member to identify at least one item that we could post as virtual content between now and NARAM. It could be as simple as having someone walk around with a GoPro camera at NSL. He added, "Let's push ourselves to get going and be innovative, and spur others to be innovative." We should come up with some quick and easy guidelines and identify easy-to-use editing software. Lynn said that newer phones have some pretty good cameras and can even take decent video. Ed said that used DSLR cameras are available at reasonable prices. Kevin countered that the issue is not in recording, it's in post-production, which is a specific skill set. Also, bandwidth is critical for livestreaming. Todd wants to talk to other organizations to find out how they create online content from their live events.

In the Q&A area, member Kenneth Weaver said that many people in the Sections forum indicated they would be interested. Another possible source of volunteer assistance would be high school students looking for a project. Many middle and high schools have studios that rival most broadcast studios.

Bylaws Refresh

Carol and John have discussed the NAR bylaws. The last revision was published in July 2011, and Carol and John agree that the bylaws need to be updated.

Several issues were readily apparent:

- Provision needs to be made for members to make motions during meetings.
- The NAR website should be recognized as the official site for posting information (i.e., Twitter and Facebook are not the best methods).
- It would be appropriate to specify in Article XI, Section 10 (Public Affairs Committee) that social media sites be maintained as deemed appropriate, but the language should not be so specific that particular sites require Board approval.
- The Nominating Committee (Article X) should be reviewed. A nominating committee has not been appointed in many years, and it may need to be formally disestablished.
- The bylaws should be reviewed with an eye toward incorporating gender-neutral pronouns.

Ed suggested that we clarify the meaning of Article III, Section 9. ("Members of all classes shall be entitled to attend all business and other meetings of the Association. However, as later provided herein, only voting members of the Association need be formally notified of meetings. In addition, all classes of

members shall be entitled to participate in the rights and privileges of the Association except as expressly provided herein.”) For example, is membership in the NAR Facebook group or other social media a “right and privilege” of membership?

John suggested that we look at the membership categories in Article III, Sections 3-7, and consider aligning them with our dues structure.

John asked whether all the committees specified in Articles IX, X, and XI need to exist in the bylaws, and whether some of them could exist at the pleasure of the Board.

Ed said that the language regarding the National Events Committee (Article XI, Section 11) should be updated.

Does the NAR still need The Joint Manufacturers’/Association Council (Article XI, Section 13)?

Lynn suggested creating an Educational Institution membership category separate from Manufacturer and Corporate Supporting membership. Many “Corporate” members are schools, museums, etc.

John suggested that Carol set up a committee of at least three members to come up revision proposals to bring to the summer meeting.

Members may access the current bylaws at <https://www.nar.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/bylaws.pdf> for reference.

Miscellaneous

John said that it may be time to purge the NEON member database. He asked Kevin and Jonathan Rains, with input from Todd and Marie, to come up with requested improvements for NEON. John wants to look at NEON as a whole, with an eye to organizing it better and making it more functional.

Kevin moved to adjourn. Lynn seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 3:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Wise, NAR Secretary