



THE PHILADELPHIA DISPATCHER

Official publication of the Philadelphia Division
of the Mid-Eastern Region,
National Model Railroad Association

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The Philadelphia Division is pleased to announce that we will be conducting a meet on Saturday, September 22nd at the Fairview Village Church of the Nazarene, located at 3060 Germantown Pike in Fairview Village, PA. Fairview Village is just north of Norristown at the intersection of Route 363 and Germantown Pike. The church is less than 1/4 mile west of the Route 363 intersection. The meet will be held in the Barn, the structure close to the road at the west side of the campus. Doors will open at 9:30 AM, and the meet will begin at 10:00 AM.

Our clinics for this meet include Roger Cason, who will present his clinic, entitled "Scenery; the hardest part is getting started". Roger presented this clinic at Keystone Junction, and it was well attended and many positive comments were heard from those who saw it. It doesn't matter how much time you put into wiring, do a little scenery and the comments will come, "been working on the railroad a lot lately, eh?" Steve Salotti will present our second clinic. Steve will give his presentation entitled Timetable and Train Order on the Susquehanna, Prototype and

Model. This clinic will involve a general overview of some of the basic principals of running a railroad by Timetable, with a look at several examples of actual train orders from the Susquehanna and several other railroads. We will then look at how Steve has adapted these principals to the operation of his own model Susquehanna.

Our popular vote contest for this meet will be freight cars. There will be two separate categories for you to enter, scratchbuilt and kit, so grab that favorite car or two and bring them along. We would like to see participation in the contests grow not so much to compete against each other, but to encourage each of us to strive to be better modelers.

We will also have some of our usual functions, including door prizes, Division raffle, and dealer tables. If you would like a table at this meet, please contact Steve Salotti at the number listed on page two of this issue. If you have any unused model items you would like to donate for future raffles, please bring them to the meet. Coffee and donuts will be available for a donation.

After the meet, there will be several railroads open for you to tour. We are always looking to add new layouts to the list, so if you have a layout or know of one we haven't seen, please let the officers know so we can try to get them open for your viewing.

It's Official!

We are excited to announce that the Philadelphia Division has been given final approval to host the 2006 National Model Railroad Association Convention. The board gave its approval for us to host **Independence Junction** at their meeting in Saint Louis. John Nawn and several other Division members made a convincing presentation on the benefits of holding the convention in the city of brotherly love, and now its up to us to show what the Philadelphia Division can do. While 2006 may seem like a long way off, time marches quickly, so we need to start working now. If you would like to be involved in this exciting event, contact John Nawn or Steve Salotti now and we will be happy to put you to work!

On page four of this issue begins the text of a letter from NMRA President Allen Pollock. While none of us likes to hear bad news, it is an unavoidable fact of life. The question that each of us needs to ask is "how am I going to respond".

It would be very easy to sit back and complain and try to find someone to blame. Or to point fingers at the "inept" management of the association. Yet in truth, we need to remember that these people are volunteers, who spend many of their hobby hours trying to make the NMRA the leading voice for this greatest of hobbies. Do we need to hold them accountable for what has happened? Absolutely, and to that end we invite you to come to the Division meet on September 22nd to join in a question and answer session with Mid Eastern Region trustee Eric Dervinis. Eric has asked to come and spend some time going over what has lead to the current situation, and what your Board is doing to solve it.

There is little doubt that the decision reached by the Board of Directors is not going to be popular with the general membership, and that some of you will choose not to renew your membership. Before you make that choice, I would ask that you take time to reflect on what the NMRA has done, both for you and the hobby in general, and what you might do to improve the Association in the future. An organization of this nature is purely a volunteer affair. It can be no better than the sum of what the members of the organization make it. On the Division level it is often very difficult to find someone willing to step up and lend a hand. Our cries for clinicians go unanswered meeting

after meeting, and the officers are left to scramble to try and find meaningful "entertainment" for the next meet. It can be very difficult to find suitable space for a meeting. Does your church or civic association have a hall that we could use? Home layout tours are often to the same layouts we have seen over and over. Is there a layout in your basement or attic we haven't seen yet? The list could go on, but I only want you to stop and think, "is there something I can do to improve the NMRA and the Philadelphia Division". In life, we get the most out of the things we invest the most in. How much have you invested?

As I write this editorial, the search committee is looking for members to step up and get involved. Due to the upcoming national convention we will be hosting, some of the current officers would like to step down in order to devote their full time to planning this great event. Are you willing to serve in some capacity? The job is not that difficult. It only takes a willingness to get involved and do a little work. And, none of the current officers are "going away", they will all be there to lend support. How about offering to fill a Regional or National position? In every list of officers there is that all too frequent word "Vacant". Let's see what we can do to make the NMRA, the Mid-Eastern Region, and the Philadelphia Division strong and energetic organizations that can have a positive influence on the future of Model Railroading.

Happy Railroading
Steve Salotti

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Editor

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Submissions: The PHILADELPHIA DISPATCHER welcomes any model railroad- or railroad-related material. Members are encouraged to send in articles, letters to the editor, reviews, etc. Submissions are preferred typed, double-spaced. The editor reserves the right to, when necessary, paraphrase small portions of the text in order to fit the space available.

Next issue: November 2001. Due out approx. October 20. Deadline: Sept 30.

Membership: \$5.00 per year. Address all membership applications, renewals, address changes, etc. to the Clerk. If the date in the upper-right corner of your mailing label is highlighted, your membership will expire soon. Please pay at the next meet or mail payment to the Clerk. Make checks payable to "Philadelphia Division, NMRA."

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Dues: \$8.00 per year

National Model Railroad Association

4121 Cromwell Road
Chattanooga, TN 37421-2119
(615) 892-2946

Dues: \$45.00 per year

From the Superintendent

Welcome back from a long, hot summer. Hopefully everyone had safe summer and the opportunity for a great vacation (to include shooting some great photos). If you have not heard yet, we (the Philadelphia Division) are the host division for the 2006 NMRA National Convention. John Nawn is the Convention Chairman. He'll be giving you more information later. Yet another opportunity for the rest of the nation to see what we can do!

We have a busy year ahead of us. First up is the Division meet in September, followed quickly by the fall convention, Dutch Junction, in Lancaster (October 5-8, 2001). Then in November we will be in Sharon Hill for another Division meet. Make your plans now to attend these

functions and be a part of the excitement.

In March of next year there be elections for a new superintendent. Dick Foley is heading up the nomination committee. If you would like to nominate someone or offer to serve yourself, please let Dick know. There is always room for someone that wants to lend a hand. We also are going to be revising the by-laws, to align them with the National and Regional by-laws. The revision will be sent to you for comment and we will vote on them in March.

We are also asking anyone who would like to present a clinic at any of the upcoming Division meets to let John or I know. If you would like to open your layout for the tours, let us know as well.

Glad to have you back! See you at the meet.

Timothy J Palmer
Division Superintendent

Amtrak Turns 30

As reported by KYW, plan those train trips soon!

Amtrak turns 30, but it still carries the burden of a troubled infancy.

Formed in 1971 to relieve freight railroads from the cash-draining responsibility of passenger service, America's national railway never resolved its core challenge: maintaining a national passenger system, while functioning as a bottom-line business.

The struggle continues, with new urgency. In 1998, just one of Amtrak's 40 routes made money and the U.S. Congress has ordered Amtrak to right

itself financially by 2003 or face dissolution. Amtrak supporters and critics alike say it's time to decide whether the nation wants long-distance train service, and at what cost.

Rep. Don Young, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, said Congress is finally ready to put its foot down if Amtrak does not make major improvements to its bottom line.

John A. Nawn, PE, PTOE

Editors Note: It is interesting to see the disparity in funding priorities in this country. If it is a highway project, there doesn't seem to be much trouble getting funding, no matter how much it costs (witness "the dig" in Boston), but if its passenger trains, forget it. If they don't make money, get rid of them. Maybe if we had a decent transit system people might ride it, then we wouldn't need so many highways.

Board Votes Major Dues Increase!

The following is the text of a letter from NMRA president Allen Pollock. While none of likes to hear bad news, please read this carefully.

On July 8, your board of trustees made one of the toughest decisions any NMRA board has ever had to make. It voted to raise our dues to \$45 a year for a full membership as of September 1. All other classes of dues have been raised proportionally as well. This means Sustaining Memberships are now \$90, the Additional Family Member rate is \$9, Youth Membership goes to \$30 and Affiliate Membership is now \$23 annually.

This decision by your board was not any easy one, nor was it made without considerable deliberation, negotiation and hard thought. You should also know that it has the full support of myself and all the other officers of the NMRA. Your first reaction might be why now and why so much? The reason it must be now is because under the current budget, the NMRA is spending approximately \$150,000 more than it is taking in. This does not mean bills are going unpaid. It does mean that the association has been depleting cash reserves and investment income at an alarming rate and that if the situation was not reversed, the association would cease to exist within a matter of a few years. Something needed to be done and it needed to be done now.

The "good news" is that the increase was not as high as it might have been. As you know, the initial motion for a dues increase, made at our last board meeting in February, called for an increase of up to \$48. This figure was based on projected spending levels at the time. Fortunately we did not have to go that high, thanks to the hard work of the Financial Recovery Team I appointed after the initial dues increase motion was passed by the board. This team made up of NMRA board members, officers and volunteers with professional financial backgrounds, dug deep into every aspect of the association's finances. Their mission was two-fold. To find immediate cost savings in the proposed budget for next year, and to find the root causes of the NMRA's continued financial slide. As to savings, the team's probe turned up a number of areas where cost containment could be implemented immediately. Accordingly, a freeze has been placed on all expenses not necessary for the day-to-day operations of the association. Two open office staff positions will not be filled. The Bulletin has been cut by eight pages per issue. Slow-selling NMRA merchandise will be sold off at reduced rates, where necessary, and not re-ordered. Even the library's special air handling system will be re-configured to reduce utility bills while maintaining near-ideal temperature/humidity conditions for our collections. These are but a few examples of the lengths we went too in order to affect cost containment and better use of our people and resources. Space restrictions prohibit me from detailing all of the reductions we made, but taken together they are substantial. In addition, every department budget received further scrutiny from the team that resulted in still more savings over what had already been agreed too for our next budget. This extra belt tightening was instrumental in reducing the new dues rate from \$48 to \$45 a year.

Now lets talk a bit about what caused our deficit to begin with. First you should know that for the most part, the NMRA has been in a deficit financial position for several years. There are many factors that have led to this, but first and foremost has been the expanding and improving of NMRA services to our members and to the hobby. Along with this expansion and improvement have come expanding costs. Unfortunately, income from dues and other sources have not kept pace as we had expected them too. Every budget contains two basic components, income projections and expense projections. On the expense side, we have actually been doing a far better job than many realize. For the most part, the association's various departments have been able to live within their assigned budget limits. However, there have been cost increases that simply defied our expense predictions. Costs for printing the Bulletin are a prime example. The paper market has become extremely volatile. As the cost of paper goes up, our printer must pass that increase on to us. In addition, postal costs are spiraling upward. A two cent per piece increase was announced July 1. More are expected, particularly for magazine delivery. Each increase adds an estimated \$25,000 to our annual expenses. That's over \$1 per member per year!

But it is on the income side of the ledger where we have had the most challenges in our quest to reach a balanced budget. As you know, we have been steadily increasing income from sources other than dues. This is largely in the form of investment income, monetary gifts and grants, plus the sale of NMRA- branded merchandise like Heritage Cars, and programs such as Modeling with the Masters. Other income programs include the annual calendar and mailing label programs, which depend on voluntary contributions. As part of the budget process, every income-producing program requires a projection of what its earnings are likely to be. Unfortunately many of these projections proved to be well off the mark, with the result that the income they were expected to produce just wasn't there when it came time to pay the bills. That, in turn, has caused us to dig deeper into our cash reserves and investments. Eventually these reserves would be gone...and so would the NMRA! Then too, with the softening of the economy

Dues increase (cont.)

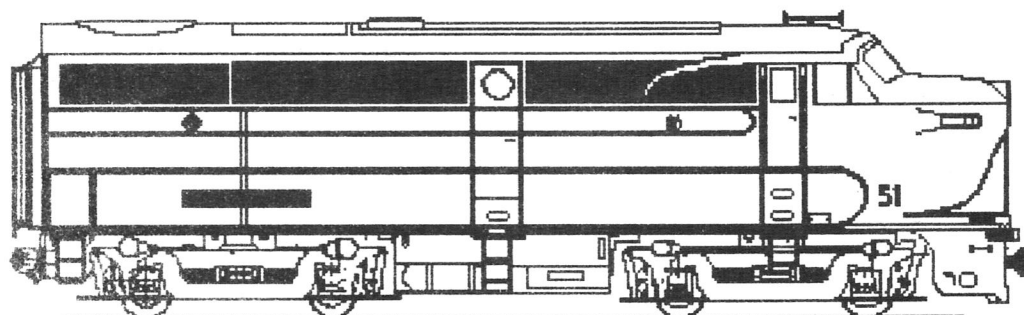
came under performance in our investment portfolio. I'm sure many of you have experienced that phenomenon yourselves.

Obviously something needed to be done. Therefore the following actions have been taken. Every income program has been explored in depth to find its true earnings potential. The best of these programs will be left alone, others will be modified to perform better, some will be cut back, and some will be eliminated entirely. Every program's earning potential will now be assessed based on its previous earnings record, or in the case of a new program, on the results of the most similar program to it. Most important of all, any spending against the earnings of these programs will not occur until the income actually materializes. In other words, we have stopped deficit spending dead in its tracks. We have also retained new advisors for our investments in the hopes that our portfolio earnings will improve. Will what we have done cause some loss in services? Yes, but we hope to keep those losses to a minimum. Will the dues increase be unpopular? Emphatically yes. Will we lose members as a result? Without doubt. In fact, that certainty was carefully considered as part of our dues increase deliberations. But hard choices had to be made. Otherwise we would ultimately lose all of our members, because the NMRA would cease to exist. But will the actions we've taken here lead to a more secure financial position and the future growth of the association? A resounding yes! Costs have been contained. Deficit spending has stopped. Non-dues income projects have been rethought. Strict oversight of NMRA finances is in place and your association is now poised to move into the future with confidence. This will mean we can continue to provide the level of service you deserve plus new programs to make membership more valuable, not only to you but to generations still to come. In short we have done far more than just ask you for more money, we have re-engineered the financial structure of your association from top to bottom.

I commend the members of our Financial Recovery Team for a job well done. But most of all, I commend our Board of Trustees for having the courage to make this extremely difficult decision. Now you have a decision to make. You must decide whether NMRA membership is worth ninety-two cents a month more. That's still well below the dues of other major hobby organizations. It's also still well below the rate of inflation. Had we adjusted our dues level for inflation over the last 25 years, your dues would now be over \$50 a year. Looking at it another way, you probably spend more on a single visit to the hobby shop or for other things you enjoy like golf or bowling. I think one of our trustees put it best when he said, "I spend more per year on toilet paper than on my NMRA membership and I have no intention of doing without either!"

This report has only scratched the surface when it comes to the factors we weighed in order to make this decision, so chances are you still have questions. I urge you to ask them...of your trustee or of me. In fact I have asked our webmaster to set up a special web address, dues.discussion@hq.nmra.org so you can do just that. Of course your letters are also welcome; please mail them to our headquarters address in Chattanooga. I can't guarantee individual answers, although there will be some. However we will collect the most frequently asked questions and provide the answers both on the NMRA website and in a future issue of the Bulletin. I am taking this unusual step because I want every member of this association to have a clear understanding of what we have done and why. You deserve nothing less. Obviously we are going to hear from many that are not happy about this dues increase. But I would also like to hear from those of you who support it as well. Your thoughts and opinions are important to us too. I look forward to hearing from many of you in the weeks to come.

Allen Pollock
President
National Model Railroad Association



Dutch Station

October 5th, 6th, and 7th 2001
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

For more information and a registration form, see the last and next issues of the Mid Eastern Region Local



A personal note from Bob Martin, MER Executive Convention Committee Chairman

I just came from Division 11 summer get together (picnic). One of the things discussed was the upcoming MER Convention be held in Lancaster, PA October 5-7. The next edition of the LOCAL will contain registration and other information regarding the convention but, I need to add some personal comments.

The Lancaster convention promises to be a great convention. The folks in Division 11 have arranged for tours of the back shop at the Strasburg Railroad, a tour of the back shop and restoration shop at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, and a "backstage" look at the operating panel for the Choo Choo Barn (large, animated, operating toy train layout). All of these activities plus the TCA Toy Train Museum are located in Strasburg, PA, in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch Country.

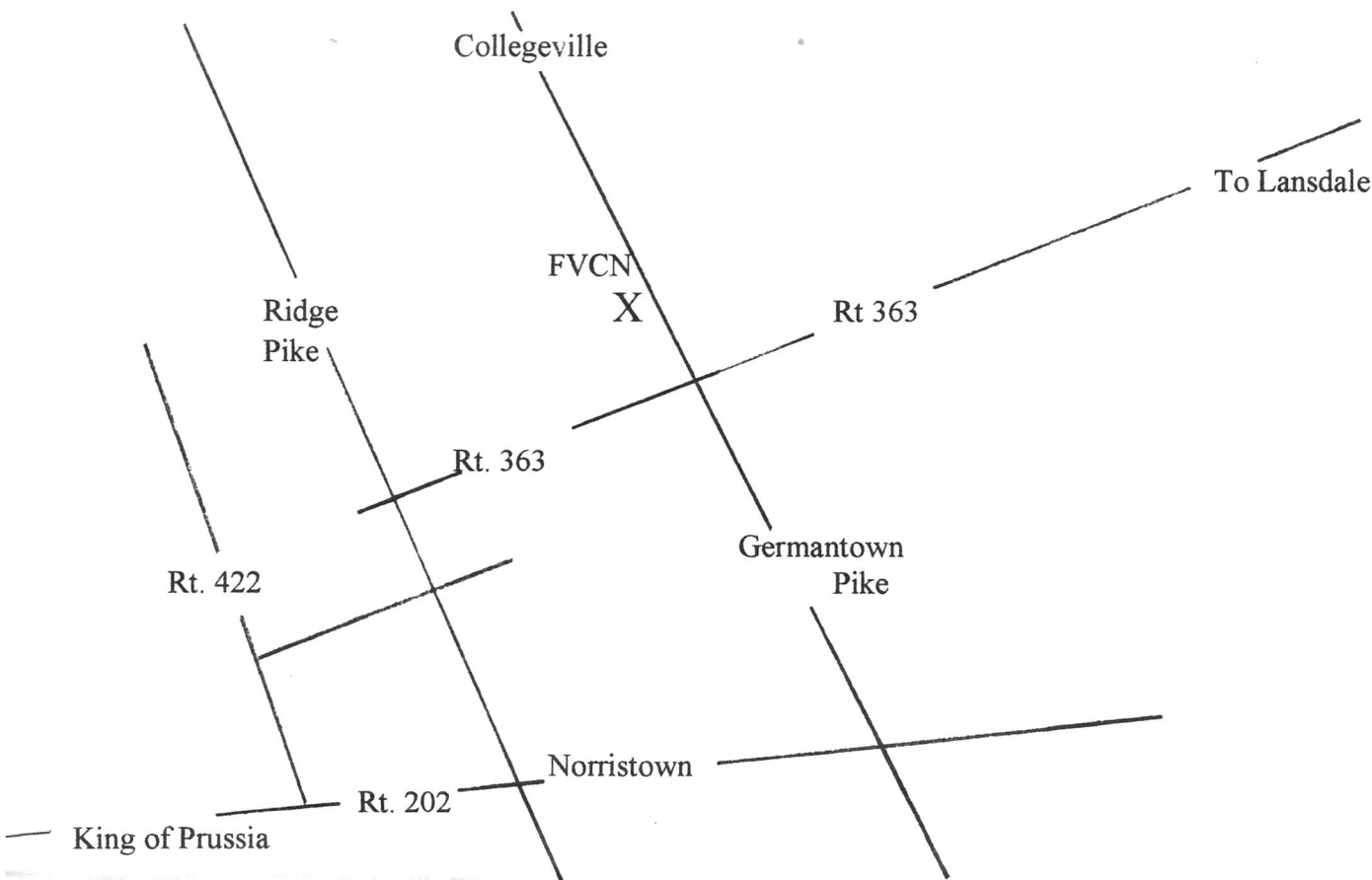
A variety of clinics have been scheduled including Dean Windsor, Bill Ataras, John Johnson, Steve Salotti and many more. Many excellent home layouts have been scheduled and are within a 25 mile radius of Lancaster. "Going home" layouts for Sunday include the Miniature Railroad Club of York; MMR Charlie Potter's Silverton Northern; and other well known local layouts in the York area. Most of these layouts are within 3 miles of I 83 and U.S. 30, the roads most of you will use to go south and west of Lancaster and all within about 20-25 minutes from Lancaster. In addition, there will be a host of layouts open to the east and north of Lancaster on Sunday and during the convention.

A live auction, hosted by Bob Charles, gives you an opportunity to sell off some of your unneeded "stuff"; and, a raffle with lot's of great prizes will give you an opportunity to take home something for practically nothing. And, of course, Ray Bilodeau's contest room should be full of superbly built masterpieces.

The convention banquet may seem pricey at \$28 but trust me, it will be a real feast. And, a superb local entertainer (no one any of you know!) will entertain us throughout dinner.

This convention is ideal for the family. It's in the middle of Pennsylvania Dutch country and the convention folks have lined up lots of additional family oriented activities. So, come early and make a family vacation at the MER 2001 fall convention, DUTCH STATION.

November Meet Directions



Schedules

The Philadelphia division is pleased to offer the following activity dates for your planning. If you have an item you would like included, please contact the editor. They will be included on a first come, first served space available basis.

September 22nd, Philadelphia Division Meet Fairview Village Church of the Nazarene, 3060 Germantown Pike, Fairview Village, PA Clinics, layout tours. Contest: Freight cars. Doors open at 9:30 AM. Clinics start at 10:00. Layout Tours 1:00 - 4:00 P.M.

September 22nd, New Jersey Division Meet. Deptford Division meet, Deptford Municipal Bldg. Clinics & meeting 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. Layouts 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. Contest TBA

October 5, 6, & 7. Dutch Station 2001. Mid-Eastern Region NMRA fall convention. Eden Resort Inn (717) 393-0510. Rooms \$79.00

per night. See MER Local or page 6 of this issue for more details.

October 13 - 14th Timonium Train Show Great Scale Model Train Show, Timonium, MD. (410) 730-1036

November 3 (Tentative) Philadelphia Division Meet, Holy Spirit School, Sharon Hill, PA. Clinics, Contest, Door prizes, Layout Tours

November 10 (Tentative) New Jersey Division Meet. Tentative plan is a prototype tour of a Grain Elevator. Bordentown. More details TBA.

Important Announcement

The Philadelphia Division has a new address! Please address all future correspondence to the:

Philadelphia Division
46 Meadow Rd.
Collegeville, PA 19426

With Keystone Junction over, the staff did not feel the need to keep the Post Office Box any longer.

Discounts for Division Members at Local Hobby Shops

Be sure to patronize the area's hobby shops that are now offering discounts on model railroading purchases to members of the Philadelphia Division.

Kenwood Model Hobbies

Various train shows throughout the division

10% discount

Call (610) 532 2253 for details

Iron Horse Hobby Shop

60 S. 6th St. in Reading

10% discount with \$10 min purchase

Nick Logothetis

(Abracadata)

2 Buck Run

Thornton, PA 19373

(610) 399 3469

Mitchell's Family Store

2119 Concord Pike (202) in Wilmington DE

10% discount on train department items

Herb's Hobbies and Crafts

200 W. State St. in Doylestown

\$25 of free merchandise for every \$250 spent

Nicholas Smith Trains

2343 West Chester Pike (3) in Bromall

10% discount (excludes O & G items)

Lin's Junction at Henning Scale Models

128 South Line St.

Lansdale, PA 19446

5% in addition to already discounted prices

Bussinger Trains

Old Ambler Station, Ambler

10-12% off retail

The Philadelphia Dispatcher

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Inside: Presidents Letter
Dutch Station
And more!

Do you need to renew? If the date on your mailing label is highlighted, please renew promptly. Thank you for renewing promptly.

