



# THE DISPATCHER

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



May 2024

[PhillyNMRA.org](http://PhillyNMRA.org)

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## ★★★ ELECTION ISSUE ★★★

**G**reetings, NMRA members! This special election edition of our newsletter, *The Dispatcher*, has been mailed to all Philadelphia Division members. The issue is also available in color on our website at [www.phillynmra.org](http://www.phillynmra.org). Any NMRA member residing in the Pennsylvania counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, or Philadelphia, or anywhere in the state of Delaware, is automatically a member of the Philadelphia Division.

Each spring we hold elections for open positions on our board of directors. The division bylaws direct us to elect a total of seven board members for two-year terms, four positions of which on odd years, and the other three on even years—so this year there are three positions open. The board members then elect four officers from among themselves, while the remaining three serve as directors at large.

As of this time, nominations are closed. Below and on the following pages are the statements of each of the can-

didates running for office. This year we are conducting the voting both online with the “Election Buddy” app and through mail-in paper ballots. Each member who has provided a working email address will receive an online ballot. You may choose to vote either online or by paper ballot. If you vote online, any paper ballot received will be discarded.

The paper ballot can be found on page 4 (last page). If you choose to use it to cast your vote, indicate your choices as directed and follow the mailing instructions. The election results will be announced at the June meet and will be posted on the website and published in the August issue of *The Dispatcher*. Additional copies of this issue and ballots can be downloaded and printed from the division website, [www.phillynmra.org](http://www.phillynmra.org).

Aside from the election, this mailing serves to introduce you to the Philadelphia Division should you not be aware of its existence, and also to inform you of upcoming events, a schedule of which can be found below.

### Planning Ahead – Division Meets & Other Upcoming Events

<p><b>June 8, 2024</b> Philadelphia Division Meet/Picnic Alverthorpe Park Jenkintown Road &amp; Forrest Avenue Jenkintown, PA 19046</p>	<p><b>August 3, 2024</b> NJ/Philadelphia Division Joint Meet Switlik Park Rec Building 5 Fisher Place Hamilton, NJ 08620</p>	<p><b>August 4–11, 2024</b> NMRA Convention “Surfliner” Westin Long Beach 333 East Ocean Blvd. Long Beach, CA</p>
<p><b>September 7, 2024</b> Philadelphia Division Meet Horsham Twp. Community Center 1025 Horsham Road Horsham, PA 19044</p>	<p><b>October 17–20, 2024</b> MER Convention “Piedmont Junction” Marriott at Research Triangle Park 4700 Guardian Drive Durham, NC 27703</p>	<p><b>November 9, 2024</b> Philadelphia Division Meet Brandywine Town Center 4050 Brandywine Pkwy Wilmington, DE 19803</p>

Check <http://www.phillynmra.org/regional-timetable> for links to these and other upcoming events.

### Candidates’ Statements



#### Mike Dettinger

Model railroading, if done right, is a marvelous adventure. Opportunities abound to participate in woodwork, history, photography, drafting, computer programming and scripting, electronics and wiring, mechanical engineering, architecture, sculpting, operations, and landscaping, just to name a few. There are so many facets to this hobby that it is impossible to do all of them without any kind of help. Before finding the NMRA, I wandered aimlessly dabbling with this and that, never able to connect the



dots between the end vision and my humble starting point.

As I surround myself with other rail enthusiasts, my model train experience is much more enjoyable. Not only have I developed model railroading skills, I have found that my excitement about trains has also grown. I am no longer trapped on the Isle of Sodor with its great plywood plain and its single giant blue spruce.

I enjoy the friendships that I have cultivated with other model railroad enthusiasts. I hesitate to call model railroading a fraternity, as I truly believe that this hobby can be just as rewarding to our female members. I have learned many new techniques and I have been challenged to learn even more new and different things. And with this freely given knowledge, I am moved to share what I have learned with the NMRA membership, be that through conducting clinics or providing representation and service for the membership.

I would ask the membership to consider my re-election to the board and continue with me on a journey to promote the hobby of model railroading and our journey of personal growth, focused on:

- Breaking down the perceived barriers that prevent potential members from joining the NMRA
- Strengthening the social bonds of model railroading and teamwork
- Promoting model building creativity and excellence



### **Joe Walters, MMR**

Growing up in Philadelphia, I, like so many children, had an American Flyer train set running around my Christmas tree. Living three blocks from the Northeast Corridor at Holmesburg Tower, I saw my fair share of real passenger and freight trains. As a matter of fact, I dodged many while trespassing on their tracks. From an early age I was intrigued by the workings of both the small and the much larger. It

was no surprise when I chose working on a railroad as my career.

I served four years in the Marine Corps after high school graduation. While attending school on the GI Bill, I secured a job with the Reading Railroad as a coach cleaner. I rose through the ranks as Reading became Conrail. After ten years of service I made a change. I joined Amtrak in the back shops. During my tenure with Amtrak, I supervised locomotive and passenger car overhauls. I eventually became assistant superintendent of the mechanical department. I retired in 2004.

I became interested in model railroading when one of my car repairmen introduced me to his layout. I thought it would be a great hobby and a way to spend time with my three sons. It turns out they were more interested in sharing their time with girls. Nonetheless, I caught the bug.

After a move to Delaware in 1991, I started to build my current layout. During the time of building, I joined a Wednesday night operating crew which consisted of twenty people. These men met every Wednesday to operate different railroads. This group has been in existence for thirty years. With such a large gathering, information and inspiration is plentiful. By 1992, my layout was part of the round-robin rotation with these gentlemen. I owe a great deal of gratitude to them.

In 2016, while hosting an open house of my layout, I met Philadelphia Division member William Fagan. He asked if he could videotape the railroad and submit the video of the layout for a Golden Spike award. Not being an NMRA member at the time, I had no idea what that was. To my surprise, it was the opening for the AP program, and my introduction to becoming a Master Model Railroader. I suppose you could conclude that Bill was my inspiration for starting this journey. I appreciate his interest in furthering my ability through my hobby. This in turn led to my quickly earning all of the appropriate certificates to qualify me for my Master Model Railroader #644, which I earned in October of 2019.

My hope is to be able to continue to assist AP Coordinator Earl Paine with judging and in managing the Achievement Program. As a board member, I would pledge to work with the board and division to promote enthusiasm for the AP among division members and model railroading in general.

## THE DISPATCHER

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### **Charles Long**

I have been a model railroader since about three years old when each Christmas would involve a setup of a Unique Art tinsplate set. This evolved to a basement layout with an "L"-shaped 4x6 and 4x8 and a Marx steam engine, Lionel operating cars, and an extensive Plasticville building collection. About 1961, I converted to HO with Athearn HF rubber band drive diesels. About the same time, I met fellow modeler Bruce Elfret (in Florida since 1965) in junior high school, and he got me interested in traction modeling. I also got involved with restoring, operating, and maintaining full size trolleys with Trolley Valhalla in Tansboro and Jobstown, NJ, Buckingham Valley Trolley Association in Bucks County, PA, the Penns Landing Trolley along the Philadelphia waterfront, and the Electric City Trolley Museum Association in Scranton, PA.

I started an extensive HO trolley layout featuring



### **Alan Silverblatt**

Like many modelers, I started out as a kid with a just a Lionel HO set featuring a short freight train, a loop of track, and a power pack. Growing up in and around Pittsburgh, where passenger service had all but disappeared, I was fascinated by trains, but had very little opportunity to actually ride them. Mostly I just watched from afar, as freight trains serviced the steel mills and other local industries.

When I was seven, we moved to a suburban house that was just a couple of miles from the main line of the Union Railroad, a Class III switching operation that still serves some of the few remaining steel mills in the Monongahela River valley. One time I almost got my father in a bit of trouble when we were challenged for trespassing after I'd made him stop the car so we could inspect a gondola parked on one of the Union's sidings next to a back road we often used.

After college, around the time Amtrak was just beginning to take over Penn Central's passenger service, I took the overnight train from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia to visit friends. It was one of the few times that I'd been that close to trains, and I really didn't have a handle on how physically imposing they are up close. When my train finally pulled around the curve and entered the station, I was absolutely floored by how big and loud the F-unit was as it passed a few feet away from where I stood on the platform.

I eventually moved to Philadelphia to become a case-worker for the Philadelphia County Board of Assistance. I worked several other jobs over the next few years, and then moved back to Pittsburgh to attend law school. After practicing law for a while and realizing the profession wasn't for me, I parlayed my then limited programming experience into my final career, IT. After stints doing technical support and managing a law firm's computer operations, I realized I

downtown Philadelphia and the surface car subway in 1966 and after three moves it still forms the core of my present layout. With Bruce, I visited the lobby exhibit area in the Ben Franklin Hotel when the NMRA had its annual convention in Philadelphia in 1964. I formally joined the NMRA in 1990 when I attended the national convention in Pittsburgh of that year attending the NMRA tours and assisting the East Penn Traction Club with their display. I similarly assisted and coordinated East Penn when they exhibited at the 2006 Philadelphia NMRA convention and train show. I currently serve as treasurer for both the Electric City Trolley Museum Association and the Abington Lines Model Railroad Club. I also am the secretary/treasurer and interim newsletter editor for the East Penn Traction Club.

I hope I can continue to help the division with guidance and direction as a director as they continue to evolve and move forward. Thank you for your support.

needed a credential to advance in the field, and so I returned to school one last time to get a degree in information science. But even with the degree, good IT jobs were scarce in Pittsburgh, and I was by then approaching mid-life and still single. Since it seemed there would be more personal and professional opportunity for me in Philadelphia, I decided to move back after landing a job with a small software company in Delaware County. In the more than 30 years since then, I've done a variety of IT work: training, support, writing and mostly programming. I finally retired in 2022. My life is still busy and full (but at a milder pace than before), and every day I'm reminded of an off-hand remark my father made to me after he'd been retired for many years: "I'm so busy now I don't know how I ever had time to go to work."

About 15 years ago, my fascination with trains resurfaced, and I started attending train shows and buying N-scale rolling stock, motive power, track, buildings, etc. Eventually, I found out about the NMRA and joined, but didn't know any other members. After a long phone conversation with Howard Kaplan, I began to attend meetings. I still have my HO set from childhood, displayed on a shelf in my man-cave. I've worked on N-Trak modules as part of a now-defunct club, and last year built my first T-TRAK module. While my N-scale layout has been in the planning stages for some years, I'm hoping to finally start construction on it this summer. I also host a rock and blues show a few times a month on a local community radio station, play in a classic rock band, and do some very part-time IT consulting.

I believe my varied work experience, and my undying fascination with railroads, will be an asset to the division. I look forward to continuing our outreach to currently unaffiliated modelers (and potential modelers), and developing new engaging activities.

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**P. O. Box 399**  
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## Inside:

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## 2024 Philadelphia Division Ballot

**Name:**

**Email:**

**NOTE:** Only paid-up, NMRA Philadelphia Division members in good standing may vote. Railpass and family members may not vote, having agreed to postpone that right until or unless joining as full members.

**Please vote for not more than three (3) candidates for Board of Directors. Ballots indicating choices for more than 3 candidates will be disregarded. If you vote electronically, any written ballot submitted will be disregarded.**

Mike Dettinger

Charles Long

Joe Walters, MMR

Alan Silverblatt

Write in: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** Copies of the ballot and election issue can be downloaded and printed from the division website, [phillynmra.org](http://phillynmra.org)

Cut along dotted line and mail to:

**Charles Long, Clerk**

**227 Locust Rd.**

**Fort Washington, PA 19034**

**Questions:** Contact any board member (see masthead on p.2)

**POSTMARK NO LATER  
THAN MAY 31<sup>TH</sup>**