

March 23, 2014

Chris Boettcher
Nathan Robinson
Matt Jasmin

Re: March 26, 2014 Meeting

Gentlemen:

In preparation for our upcoming meeting we wanted to provide you, in advance of the meeting, with the results of our preliminary research and investigation.

The existing layout, which was constructed over an extended period of time is the oldest model railroad layout in Northern California and the largest in San Francisco and contiguous counties.

Based in the Randall since 1961 this historical layout has proved entertainment and education to tens of thousands of children and adults over the decades. The mainline runs on five different elevations and extends over 11 scale miles, allowing multiple trains, and long trains, to be operated at the same time. There are countless sidings and railyards, twelve different control panels, and an incredible amount of detail. The complexity and extent of the layout makes it virtually unique in Northern California and plays a major role in the enjoyment of our visitors.

To our knowledge GGMRA is the only club renting space from the Museum that makes a significant contribution to the enjoyment and use of the Museum by the general public. We are proud to be a major attraction for visitors to the Randall.

Based on the preliminary schematic provided to us, however, we see no alternative but to demolish the existing layout and, if possible, construct a much smaller and much more simplified layout.

Obviously, any new layout would have to be vastly reduced in size, capability, variety and ability to showcase model railroading. We have inquired of several professionals in the business of constructing model railroad layouts regarding the costs of building a new layout. While we cannot obtain any written estimates without a plan to submit for review (and paying a charge for getting such an estimate) we have learned a fair amount regarding costs.

In conversation with one professional I obtained an oral estimate to duplicate a 16' x 18' layout that firm had previously built. It was museum quality and, like the existing layout, operated on multiple levels with much variety and good attention to detail. The cost for the original layout was \$360,000. Labor was charged at \$80.00 per hour.

I was told that, if we used the same design, there could be a considerable reduction in cost. We could also reduce the cost to the extent we could salvage existing electronic components from the existing layout and were able to do a portion of the work ourselves such as installation of power supplies, wiring, landscaping, buildings etc. Nonetheless, the cost would remain in six figures.

The good news is that based on our research and consultation with architects and engineers we believe that it is possible to keep the existing train room in its entirety.

The reasons that we were given for the “unoccupiable” portions of the existing train room dealt with ceiling height and egress concerns. The California Building Code, Section 1003, General Means of Egress, in Section 1003.2, Ceiling Height, prescribes a minimum ceiling height of 7’ 6”. There are, however, exceptions to this minimum, the first of which excludes sloped ceilings in accordance with Section 1208.2.

Section 1208.2 provides for minimum ceiling heights for occupiable spaces of 7’ 6’ but also provides exceptions. The second exception deals with rooms with sloped ceilings, In such room the prescribed ceiling height “is required in one-half the area thereof.” The existing train room falls within this exception.

In addition, we note that the exception goes on to state that any portion of the room measuring less than 5’ in height shall not be included in any computation of the minimum area thereof.

Returning to any egress considerations, we also note that Section 1007.1 provides an exception to the requirement of accessible means of egress : “Accessible means of egress are not required in alterations to existing buildings.”

Applying these codified exceptions to the existing train room erases any need to declare portions of it unusable. We would appreciate it if you could forward this information to the project architects. I spoke to them after the last public meeting at which time they had not considered any exceptions to the relevant code sections.

As discussed in our earlier meeting, The Museum wishes to set forth the relationship between the Randall and Golden Gate Model Railroaders, Inc. in writing. We agree. To date, however, the promised draft has not been supplied.

Please let me know if you have any comments or further information on the matters raised in this letter or otherwise. We look forward to our next meeting.

Very truly yours,

James R. Willcox
Secretary/Treasurer
Golden Gate
Model railroaders, Inc.