

**District Committee Meeting**  
**October 3, 2013**  
**One Bergen County Plaza**  
**Hackensack, NJ,**

**Key People**

Sal Bellomo, District Commissioner  
Steve Leonardi, District Field Director  
Oliris Ramos, District Exec  
Guest: Peter Kirk, Unassigned District Exec  
See attachment for other attendees

**Opening**

Steve said that District Chair Pat Stamato and District Vice Chair for Program Leslie Sonkin both had personal conflicts that prevented them from attending. Biff Van Kleeft led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Introductions**

Steve introduced Peter Kirk as a new District Exec, not yet assigned, but coming to our meeting as a guest as part of "a well-rounded orientation." All the other people present then introduced themselves. Sal said that he and Bob Lilley were temporarily sharing District Commissioner duties. Barry Messner asked us to add an item to tonight's agenda: "Poor attendance at district meetings and events."

**Membership - Numbers Down but September Recruitments Should Offset**

Steve pointed to a handout that shows our youth count down what he called "a mere 600 kids" lower than this time in 2012. Steve was certain that new boys had been signed up, saying, "There's been a lot of fall recruitment drives in September, but the forms have not come in yet. So far we've only gained 30 kids." He was convinced that at least 100 more existed in just five units that he had contacted. He asked the Assistant District Commissioners (ADCs) present tonight to contact Unit Commissioners and other units on his list.

Subsequent proposals were a "coordinated turn-in night" at some location other than Oakland (not central enough), broadcasting Steve's home address where he has a large wooden Scout-oriented drop-box, and an offer to drive to a unit leader's home or office to pick up forms. Several other people offered their homes and mailboxes as drop-off points, including Ed Quinn, who said we can use the Scout Museum's mailbox. Several offered to drive around to pick up forms. Biff reminded everyone that application forms also need checks for the registration fees, and Steve reminded people that adult application forms contain sensitive information, such as Social Security numbers.

Steve remarked that coordinating drop-offs in Hudson County will be difficult, but then announced that Jersey City Pack 475 had recently mailed in application forms for 34 new Cub Scouts.

### **Membership - New Units Expected to Charter**

Steve said that he expects about 10 units, either new or "restarts," to charter between now and the end of the year. Oliris gave some details about a new pack she is starting in Jersey City, with a parent's meeting scheduled for next Monday and possible adult leadership assistance from a Big Brothers organization.

There was a side discussion as Biff proposed converting some local Explorer posts (whose members don't count in our totals) into Venture crews (whose members would count). Steve explained how the great difference between the two programs would prevent such conversions.

### **Membership - Recruitment Goals and Second Recruitments**

Steve reminded the ADCs that he had given them a list of Cub packs and recruitment goals assigned to each. Out of curiosity, he checked Pack 475, which had a goal of 20 but exceeded it with 34.

### **Finance - Family FOS and Other Campaigns**

Referring to a handout that showed we are expected to raise \$75,000, Biff said, "We're at 95% of our goal, and need about \$4,000 more." He added that he and Steve think the goal is "obtainable. We're going to try."

Biff congratulated Bob Lilley on meeting the goal for Leadership FOS and joked, "So next year you're going to take over as FOS Chairman." He said that the Golf Outing was a great success (see below) and said that our district has a new Finance Chair named Rick Garland. Steve corrected Biff and said that Garland is the new Council Development Director.

Steve said that he had spoken with District Chair Pat Stamato, who thought he might be able to raise \$4,000 with some kind of Community FOS event.

### **Finance - Golf Outing (Sep 24)**

Dave Wolf said that the golf outing was a "great success," but insisted that Steve should get "95% of the credit" and listed Steve's many contributions. He said that the number of golfers was up this year (44 versus last year's 24) plus some guests who came just for the dinner. Steve said that several people had committed to come next year and promised to bring friends. He said, "We met our goal for this year and should do even better next year."

Steve thanked Dave and expressed appreciation to the others who assisted and contributed. However, Ken Dutcher was disappointed that none of the district's approximately 200 units signed up for a sponsorship. Steve responded by proposing that we start planning earlier and asked Dave to set a date at first opportunity, but Dave was ready to do it now and selected September 23, 2014. Steve said, "We can get stuff printed and start promoting it in June and July." Dave agreed that earlier is better, since

corporations that allocate money to sponsor events like ours "may have spent all their allotted money by June." Norman Kasser pointed out that our district calendar for 2013-14 was finalized and published by last June, but the golf outing was still up in the air and thus not included.

### **Finance - A Missed Opportunity with a Train Ride**

Ed Quinn recalled that he proposed last May that the district add a scenic train ride as a fund-raiser, but that didn't happen. Had we done so, it would have taken place this month or next. He said, "The Lehigh Valley Council runs a 'Pumpkin Train' and makes thousands of dollars. I thought we could do it too, since we need the money." Ed was visibly irritated that a recent district broadcast went out advertising a train ride to raise money for cancer research, but none went out to raise money for ourselves. Ed added that he ran a non-District ride with a small turnout that raised just enough money to buy pizzas for all the riders.

Ed said, "We missed the window for this year, but I think we ought to try it again for next autumn. That's the best time due to the very pretty foliage." Working under the assumption that the Activities Committee will approve a train ride as a district event, Steve asked Ed if he would agree to head a committee with a few people working with him to organize and publicize. Ed agreed but said, "I don't want to do something that's not supported." Lillian asked Ed to come to next month's meeting with a couple of dates to consider. Ken said, "Let's make sure that it gets on next month's agenda." In response to Mark Wrightington's question, Ed said that the current ticket price "for us" is \$4 for a youth and \$8 for an adult -- half of what would normally be charged.

### **Finance - Rock Hill Sale Closed**

Later in the meeting, Biff announced that the Council had closed its sale of the Rock Hill summer camp property. Neither he nor Sal had any details, but Steve said that District Chair Pat Stamato had probably sat in on the meeting when the sale was announced.

*[Editor's note: Rock Hill was the location in Pennsylvania of summer camp for the former Hudson-Liberty Council, and thus became one of the properties inherited by the Northern NJ Council when it was formed in 2000. The property was deemed "excess" and was sold to a developer, but that sale fell through. Apparently a new buyer was found.]*

### **Popcorn - This Year's Goal**

Gerry Beatty told about a really successful popcorn kick-off run by her Pack 91 that she videotaped. Steve said that we sold \$325,000 last year and that this year's goal will be \$400,000. He pointed out that about 37% of the total sales stayed with the units and about 65-70% of the total "stayed in Northern NJ," either with the units or with the Council. Lillian Molnar asked why the goal was raised, but Steve explained why it is standard practice to do so and added that 17 more units signed up to sell this year that did not do so last year. Steve had an interesting statistic when he said that, even if no one paid attention to those units and gave them no help, they can still be expected to raise \$3,500 each or close to \$60,000 in total. "The average per-boy sale is \$650." He added, "It's just like FOS in that it depends on how many units you can get to sell."

### **Popcorn - Show-n-Sell at the Bergen Town Center Mall**

Oliris said that she had arranged for a kiosk at the mall where units could sign up to sell any show-n-sell popcorn they brought with them. She scheduled four Saturdays and two Friday evenings divided into 1½ hour slots, so 7 different units can come on the Saturdays and 4 on Fridays. A number of the slots have already been reserved, and Oliris said she will broadcast an announcement shortly to "popcorn kernels" offering them the remaining slots. Steve thought that the broadcast might be too limited and proposed that all unit leaders should also be included.

In response to Mark's question, Oliris said that she put a limit of 3 or 4 boys manning the kiosk, but it will be okay for extra boys to stand by the entrances to "politely" direct shoppers to the kiosk.

### **Advancement - Eagle Boards and a Heroism Award**

Ken Dutcher said, "We tried to schedule 13 Eagle Boards in September but couldn't do so, because September is so busy. Two boys who are off at college will get theirs during the Thanksgiving break." In response to Paul Adams' question, Ken said that the quality of Eagle project proposals had not improved. On another note, Ken said that his committee had just received National's approval for a heroism award with crossed palms (the highest), and told how an SPL had saved the lives of many when his troop safely got through a severe thunderstorm that had "flattened" Camp Rodney in Maryland.

### **Advancement - Cooking Merit Badge**

Ken expressed his concern that some Eagle candidates about to turn 18 in early 2014 (he called them "last-minute Charlies") may run into trouble due to the Cooking merit badge. He explained that Cooking will become Eagle-required on January 1. A Life Scout who already earned Cooking will be okay, but a boy who doesn't have it by that date will have to scramble to complete it before he turns 18. Ken said, "They're changing the requirements so that it will somehow be more complex." He said that he will shortly compose a broadcast to alert Eagle candidates and their Scoutmasters. Gerry said that she will have a counselor for Cooking available at the November Merit Badge Fair.

### **Advancement - Guidance for New Scoutmasters and for Eagle Candidates**

In response to Steve's question, Ken said that the District website has two documents that Scoutmasters will find helpful. One lays out the steps that a Life Scout and his troop have to take in order for him to reach Eagle, and the other is a comprehensive check-list that Scouts should use to ensure that their project proposals reach the high expectations required for an Eagle project. Ken concluded that his committee will have to send "A lot of communications during the last two months of the year."

Steve repeated his question, but this time with a stress on timelines. He was concerned that Scouts and new Scoutmasters would have unrealistic expectations for how long the process might take. Ken agreed and told a story about a project proposal where the boy was warned that Ken had an upcoming trip to Europe, but dropped off his proposal the

day after Ken's flight took off. For three weeks, Ken received messages from the Scout asking, "What's the story on my project?" Ken said, "You've got to allow us up to 30 days. In my group, everybody has a job, and life gets in the way." He added, "Most of the time we get it done in two weeks with Ed Ference being the fastest with just 4 or 5 days." Steve gave "kudos" to Ken and his Committee, pointing out that they have to work with as many as 20 boys at the same time, ensuring that each proposal rises to the level expected of an Eagle project. He said, "I know that the whole team helps each boy develop his project."

In response to Paul's question, Ken said that Ed was currently working on a document to give guidance for "special needs" Scouts working towards Eagle. He said there will be sections devoted to time extensions, special needs, and other topics, "And not just Eagles, but Star and Life, too."

### **Advancement - Recognition for "Distinguished" Adult Eagle Scouts**

Bill Metts asked about a recent notice asking for nominations for a "Distinguished Eagle Scout" award, but Ken said that the Council is handling it. However, Ken said that he participates in selection of a youth award for "Eagle Project of the Year." Bill encouraged those present to submit a nomination for any adult Eagle Scout who is doing good things in the military or in business or in sports. Bill guess that the selection process would be similar to that used for a Silver Beaver.

### **District Meetings and Events - Poor Attendance**

Steve said he had to miss both the September District Committee meeting and the September Roundtable and asked about attendance. A few people present tonight were also at the Roundtable and said that attendance was about "the same as usual." Steve said that he had prepared mailing labels for Roundtable Commissioner Ken Hesse (not here tonight), saying that Ken will mail postcards to all Scoutmasters, Cubmasters, and Committee Chairs urging them to attend the upcoming Roundtable. Biff took the labels and said he will deliver them to Ken.

Mark said, "It's very puzzling to me, " referring to how three districts merged into one, and yet attendance at meetings and events seemed to stay the same or even decrease. As an example, Mark said, "We have about the same number of people at the TRD Roundtables as we used to get in my old [smaller] Tantaqua District."

Biff explained, "It used to be that you had to go to a Roundtable to get all your information, but nowadays you can go online to get it all -- or you can pick up your cell phone to find out about things." Biff said, "Not just we, but the Boy Scouts of America have to come up with new ways to do a Roundtable. Maybe electronic, where I can sit at home in my pajamas and still deal with everyone face-to-face."

Ed described Camporees he had attended in the past with 600 boys and contrasted that with a planning meeting for the upcoming District Camporee where only 8 people had registered so far, "and it's only 10 days away!" Gerry guessed that the problem arose from

the assumption that most schools would be closed on Columbus Day Monday, which will not be the case in her area. Biff told Ed that his 600-boy event took place back when the only competition that Scouts had was baseball and football, "and that's it."

### **District Meetings and Events - How to Publicize**

Biff also questioned how well our events are being publicized and also how far in advance flyers are made available by the respective committees, citing the Gold Rush and the STEM weekend as examples. Steve responded that flyers for these and other events were available at the June program launch, that the events were on the online calendar since then, and that the events were also printed in the thick "Program Resource Catalog" calendars handed out at that time. But Mark took issue with all three, saying, "We say that all the time: 'It's on the calendar, it's on the website...' But the vast majority of people in the units don't even know that the website exists, and they didn't come to the program launch and so never got the printed calendar."

Steve countered that "Dozens of parents and unit leaders come to the Council office on a regular basis and pick up literature from the rack," but he allowed that we still don't reach everyone. He asked Mark for an opinion about hard-copy mailing, and Mark liked the idea and proposed, "Let's send a post card in the middle of the month that lists all the events scheduled for the upcoming month." Going back to e-mail, Mark proposed "targeted" e-mails, where an event like the Tiger Tumble would be broadcast just to Tiger families and Tiger leaders, saying, "Don't bother the rest of the parents."

Steve realized that Mark was thinking in terms of having the district's broadcast list contain an e-mail address for every family and every Scouter registered with the Council. In response to Steve's question, Norman estimated that we currently have 600 names in our list [*actual number: 750*], but almost all of them are unit leaders with very few Scout parents. Steve estimated that a full list would have about 4,000. Norman said, "I have lots of families in my troop and packs, but virtually none of them are in the broadcast list and they don't have to be. My job as Scoutmaster and Cubmaster is to keep track of the events and to keep my families informed about what's coming up."

If our intention is to be in contact with all our Scout families, Paul suggested that Facebook or Twitter might be better vehicles and asked, "Do we use them?" Gerry said that Three Rivers does have a Facebook page, but Steve interrupted. Instead he summarized by saying that we have two problems to solve: "We need to get information about events early enough, and we need to increase the method we use to get the information into people's hands."

Going back to Mark's suggestion for a district broadcast list of perhaps 4,000 families, Steve said that such a list does not exist, although the raw data is likely available in the Council's database of some 10,000 people. Mark proposed starting with a mass broadcast that made it clear that people not interested in TRD events should make use of the "opt-out" feature to get themselves off the list. Lillian suggested that broadcasts would be more successful if they were filtered so that, for example, Cub-related messages went only to

Cub families. Mark said that is exactly what he did when he used to make broadcasts to families in the former Tantaqua District, where he had a master list kept in an Excel spreadsheet that let him select subsets and make selective broadcasts. He said, "Boy Scouts never got e-mails about the Tiger Tumble."

Steve thought he might be able to provide a TRD "master list" similar to the one Mark had in his old district. Paul wondered if we should be using Google as our provider instead of Doubleknot, saying that his company had recently decided to switch due to the many fine-tuning and filtering options that Google provides. But Steve said there were numerous reasons why that could not happen, such as a guarantee of information being protected. Steve also pointed out that each provider imposes various limits, such as a maximum on how many e-mails are allowed to be sent.

Norman told Paul that Doubleknot also has many of the same filtering options that Google has, "But we don't make use of them. For example, of our 600 names, I don't know who are the Scoutmasters, the Cubmasters, the parents, and so on, and so at this point I can't send targeted broadcasts. Also I don't know who's affiliated with a troop or a pack or both." Gerry pointed out, "Even if you knew, that information changes from year to year, with Cubs graduating into Scouts, and Tigers graduating into Wolves." Paul said, "That means that the information has to be, what they call, 'scrubbed'." Norman responded, "Paul, there's nobody doing any scrubbing."

Steve proposed that next month's Committee meeting be devoted exclusively to the topic of poor attendance. The Committee Chairs should provide reports in advance that can be dealt with quickly and "the bulk of the time would be spent talking about what we're discussing here." He said, "Maybe it's time for us to honestly discuss the challenges we're facing. I think it will be a long discussion."

#### **Activities - Scouter of the Year (Feb 28)**

Ed said that the Scouter of the Year Dinner will take place at the American Legion in Rochelle Park on Feb 28. Biff proposed getting the process started next month, and Ed agreed, saying that last year we waited too long before making a selection.

#### **Activities - Merit Badge Fair (Nov 23)**

Gerry said "I'm just now finalizing my list of volunteer counselors and will have that posted by the weekend. Scouts have to call one or more of them to make appointments." She said that this technique accords with National's belief that Scouts should contact their counselors "instead of their mothers doing it." She said that they have a discussion in the same manner as if the Scout were going to the counselor's house, but they agree to meet at St. John's instead. She said, "We have a bunch of counselors in the same spot at the same time, so if a Scout plans his day right, he can get several completions in one day." Paul recalled last year's Fair and added, "Scouts must show up in full Class-A uniform. Also they're allowed to come with partials from summer camp in order to turn them into completions."

Gerry said that she had gotten calls and e-mails from people hoping that we are running a "teaching merit badge fair, like they do at Glen Gray." She said, "But what we offer instead is a lot of counselors in the same place at the same time. It's actually pretty nice to watch it in action. Everyone takes it very seriously."

Gerry said that she no longer posts prerequisites on the website, but rather leaves it with the counselors to inform the Scouts what they expect. She said, "Nobody read them anyway, and now that we've added more badges, it just became too much." However, Scouts are expected to download and fill out the worksheets found on the "Scouting Service Project" website, and to bring them to the Fair. She said, "There will also be some requirements asking for evidence that they did it with their parents or Scoutmaster, and they'll bring a letter along with the worksheet." Gerry read the lengthy list of merit badges being offered, and Norman pointed out that Cooking was one of them, saying, "That ought to be a winner this year." Lillian suggested broadcasting a notice about the Fair that would include something about Cooking.

#### **Activities - District Camporee (Oct 12-14)**

No one was present to talk about the upcoming Camporee. Steve said that it will take place at Campgaw Mountain Reservation in Mahwah, and Norman said that the Leader's Guide was available for download from the district website.

#### **Activities - District Gold Rush for Cubs (Oct 26)**

Mark said that he was in touch with Bergen County who wanted to verify that the facilities that Mark asked to use were actually the ones that he intended to use, "I said, 'Yes, that's why I put them on the form.'" Norman asked Mark for a list of stations that will be offered, but Mark said they were not finalized except for Disability Awareness. He said that some Boy Scouts will show up to earn that merit badge with Ed Ference as counselor.

Steve said that two brand new Cub packs will invite boys from their towns to the Gold Rush in order to recruit them, saying, "There's no prep work, and it's fun stuff. It's the perfect opportunity to recruit. Mark said that so far only two boys had signed up, but he is getting a lot of phone calls asking for information.

#### **Activities - STEM Weekend for Scouts (Nov 8-10)**

Steve said that he had been in touch with event organizer Gordon Beattie, who prepared an information packet that can be downloaded from the district website. Mark was disappointed that Gordon had changed his original location from Bergenfield, which would have been convenient, to take place at Camp Turrell, which is quite far from the Three Rivers area. Mark also thought that there should have been more lead time, given that this is the first time we are trying to run a STEM event, and given that lots of people have no idea what the term "STEM" means.

Biff wondered if Gordon was aware that Turrell in November has no water or heat. Mark said that Gordon had not reserved the entire camp and that Scout troops are expected to

reserve their own tent sites as separate transactions. This triggered a lengthy discussion that required Steve to explain the behind-the-scenes budget process that takes place for any event, especially an elaborate one like this.

Norman explained that "STEM" stands for science, technology, engineering, and math, "And Gordon is into this stuff, so he wanted to run an event with this as the theme." Norman said that there will be 8 stations, many of which require building a gadget that will perform some function, and often there will be measurements involved. Norman said, "This is really interesting stuff -- assuming you're into it." As an example, he told about the station where Scouts will construct a battering ram out of a free-swinging log. They'll ram it against a wall and use a smart phone taped onto the log to measure how much force was exerted. Norman said, "The Scout who owns the smart phone will have to download an 'accelerometer' app." Norman predicted, "Some kids will say this is really cool, and others will say that this is too much like school."

Norman and Mark both said that Gordon's current STEM packet was missing needed information, and that they would ask Gordon for a revised version to post.

#### **Activities - District Klondike Derby (Jan 25)**

Mark said that Allen Sterk had stepped down from the Activities Committee, and so Mark had agreed to add Scout events to his responsibilities. However, Allen and Lee Wallin are still planning to run the January Klondike derby, which will take place at Campgaw. Gerry said that Allen had been in contact with the Scouters in charge of last year's competition stations ("mayors"), and that he will need some replacements this year.

#### **Training - Commissioners College (Oct 19)**

Sal said that his Assistant District Commissioners had been informed about the "Commissioner's College" training session, saying, "It's on the calendar, and Chris Dufford is in charge." He said, I don't know if any e-mails have gone out, and I don't know if any Unit Commissioners were informed."

#### **Training - Pow Wow for Cub Leaders (Nov 2)**

Mark said that he had just received an e-mail that a location had finally been found in Paramus. Oliris had details and said that it will take place in the "Our Lady of Visitation School" on 222 Farview Avenue in Paramus. *[Editor's note: A recent flyer has a typo, saying "Fairview Avenue."]*

#### **Training - Training Awards for Scouters**

Rich Curran had a concern, saying, "I heard that some applications for Scouter training awards had been mailed to the Council office, but they never got bounced back to me. Steve had not seen them, noting that he had seen some applications for Cub Summertime Pack Awards. *[Editor's note: Training Awards and Key Awards are "knots" that a Scouter may sew onto his uniform. Applications go to Rich for approval, and presentations typically take place at a Roundtable or unit award ceremony.]*

### **Rechartering - Getting an Early Start**

Sal said that Bill Metts had e-mailed a number of district leaders with a proposal for how units could get an early start on their rechartering process, well ahead of the deadline, which is January for most troops and packs. Bill drafted a flyer titled "Rechartering Made Easy" with 3-steps, and his e-mail asked for approval and advice about distribution. This evening there was general approval, although one of the flyer's dates needed correction. The draft flyer proposed:

1. A unit picks up its rechartering packet at the November Roundtable.
2. Fill it out at home or at a District "rechartering session" (to be announced).
3. Bring the final paperwork to the January Roundtable.

In response to Bill's question, Steve said that he had already decided to distribute packets at the November Roundtable, and in fact the packets are actually ready now and are sitting in his office, including the new access keys assigned to each unit for 2014. However, Steve pointed out that the website will only become available 30 days prior to the rechartering date. Sal said he will contact Steve in order to finalize the three steps including the not-yet-scheduled sessions of Step-2.

### **District Award of Merit - When to Nominate?**

In response to Rich Curran's question, several people said that the District Award of Merit will be presented to awardees at the annual District Dinner on April 6, 2014. Rich responded that he must receive nomination forms at the March Roundtable.

## **District Committee Meeting**

### **Attendance**

Paul Adams

Gerry Beatty

Sal Bellomo

Rich Curran

Ken Dutcher

Norman Kasser

Peter Kirk

Steve Leonardi

Bob Lilley

Barry Messner

Bill Metts

Lillian Molnar

Ed Quinn

Oliris Ramos

Biff Van Kleef

Dave Wolf

Mark Wrightington