



## SWMS Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2024

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### General

Note: This board meeting was held in person, at Fuddruckers [4855 Pan American Fwy NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109].

The meeting was started at 6:00PM by President J. Neuman.

#### 1. Announcements on behalf of the President:

- Agenda: Motion to approve an adjusted agenda to focus on Motorland Fest issues, Suika Circuit Owner Letter to SWMS, and drone policy. Agenda approved.
- September Minutes: Approved and will be posted.
- September “SWMS at Motorland Fest” race, went well:
  - Last race attendance was better than last several before it.
  - L. Pittsley was Race Steward on Saturday, J. Neuman Race Steward on Sunday.
  - W. Hollowell was race chair.
  - Ken was tech inspection.
  - Majority of the feedback was very positive with repeated mention of members liking seeing more cars and younger people. The blended race weekend format with ABQ Super Laps was a success.
  - Regrettably, there was some drama, more to follow during this meeting.
  - V. Yarberr noted that timing and scoring, using the traditional SWMS transponder process, is complicated by the fact that Super Laps cars temporarily come off track and then return to the track.
- October Race:
  - M. Travers is the Race Chair for Miata Mayhem.
  - L. Pittsley will be the Race Steward. F. Cordova and K. Craig will be Technical Inspection, also supporting Pit and Grid.
  - 8:30AM start and Drivers Meeting scheduled for both days.

#### 2. Old Business

- Social Media Actions:
  - J. Neuman announced that the goal is getting redundant administrations across all SWMS social media is going well:
    - Facebook: Primary, J. Slenes. Secondary, K. Vallejos.
    - Instagram: Tracing back to E. Romero still in progress.

#### 3. New Business

- Online Board Meetings
  - Multiple members have expressed frustrations and connectivity issues with Google Meet application. The recommendation is to consider returning to Zoom.
  - Motion to cancel online meetings altogether and move to 100% in-person board meeting format. Approved.
  - The November 21 Board and Membership meeting will be in-person. A. Sanford to send email broadcast with updates and details.

#### 4. Special Topic, Letter from Suika Circuit Owners and Management

- On 10/15/2024, the SWMS Board received a formal, written letter from Suika Circuit Owners and Management (J. Guthrie, D. Brockett, M. Ossell, Management Team).
  - “After considerable thought and consternation, Suika Circuit has decided not to offer SWMS a 2025 contract to race at Suika Circuit. The October 2024 race will be the last club sanctioned race at Suika Circuit.”
  - “Suika Circuit will be offering road course racing and the running of the races, the promotions, and the financial burden of the car count for the foreseeable future.”
- Background and Suika Rationale (see also subsequent 16-Oct and 18-Oct SWMS WIX email broadcasts):
  - SWMS participation has severely dropped during the 2024 SWMS season.
  - SWMS has had no progress acquiring sponsorships, multiple board positions remain unfilled (notable, the Treasurer position), and SWMS has failed to promote race events beyond all of the hard work SWMS invests in email and Facebook posts.
  - Furthermore, three concerning events took place at the September race, Suika Motorland Fest:
    - 1) A long-time SWMS club member and volunteer purposely bypassed the SWMS board and directly asked Suika Circuit to reschedule the Saturday and Sunday schedules for Motorland Fest. During a miscommunication on the start time for the SWMS drivers meeting on Saturday (now 8:30AM, per a SWMS Wix email broadcast, versus the previously discussed 7:30AM), the SWMS volunteer quit and permanently left SWMS.
    - 2) Drone usage by Suika Circuit at Motorland Fest on Saturday. Entering the weekend’s race, the SWMS Board and membership generally understood that drone usage would be present (as discussed at 9/16/24 Board Meeting). However, specific announcements and discussions on Saturday were complicated by the fact there were accidentally two separate driver’s meetings: one at the turn one stand and one in the tower. This resulted in ~1/3 of drivers knowing details on the drone and ~2/3 of drivers not having details. A great deal of disagreements and discussions resulted from drone usage on Saturday, with a few SWMS members voicing multiple issues. One SWMS member quit the club. Fundamentally, Suika Circuit ownership owns and operates the track, including media and drone operations. SWMS does not have any control of drone operations during events at Suika Circuit.
    - 3) Drone usage by Suika Circuit at Motorland Fest on Sunday. Improvements to the driver’s meeting occurred for Saturday. The SWMS Secretary together with Suika Management and the drone operators themselves were all present to facilitate discussion on awareness, guidelines, and suggestions. The SWMS Vintage group requested the drone film the start of Vintage races with the drone starting behind all cars at the start. All other SWMS race groups had no specific requests or concerns with drone usage.
      - During the Vintage race, a driver departed the track at turn one and returned to their paddock parking place. The speeds during this departure and driving through the paddock were excessive and

viewed as dangerous by a number of SWMS members and Suika Management. When questioned, the SWMS driver was most concerned about drone usage while on track immediately following by his hasty track exit and excessive pit speed. This safety incident and driver complaint about a possible drone incident was followed up by the Race Steward resulting in sanctioning of the driver for the safety incident and SWMS Board of Directors extensive review of reported drone incident.

- Review of the drone footage from the Sunday Vintage race by multiple Suika personnel and SWMS Board members found the drone operation to be 100% in compliance with the “film from the back of the start and no buzzing of cars” agreement from the earlier Sunday drivers meeting requests from the Vintage group.
  - Based on the unacceptable behaviors, vocal disagreements, and tempers between SWMS members and the drone operators, the drone operators nor track media vendor will not be making any films of the Motorland Fest weekend available to SWMS. Suika Ownership lost \$2,000 to \$3,000 for this media content. In summary, this was not SWMS best weekend as a guest at Suika Circuit.
  - This was followed by a Suika Circuit Ownership request to meet with the SWMS Board, where the drone issues with some club members and the safety incident were discussed at length.
- At this point in the Board Meeting, an open forum discussion started, below are notes from the multiple discussions, arranged in general chronological order (and to the best of the ability of the SWMS Secretary).
    - L. Haynes (former member): voiced multiple disagreements with drone usage during Motorland Fest.
    - G. Self: wondered what options SWMS now has for 2025 season and what the next steps could be.
    - J. Colbert: voiced suggestion that SWMS continues as a club, perhaps in a social format. Asked what concerns might be present with Suika running sports car operations during 2025.
    - J. Neuman: confirmed that Suika Ownership (J. Guthrie) remains deeply committed to road racing in New Mexico and providing a safe, fun venue for sports car racing, includes those from SWMS enjoy racing at Suika.
    - G. Self: reviewing the joint Super Laps and SWMS weekend format, the format worked surprisingly well. Lots of fun, many cars, organization was good.
    - L. Haynes (former member): asked if it is technically possible for SWMS to be a social club and yet keep a valid VMC membership (and licensing approval).
    - J. Neuman: encouraged all membership to reflect upon the news and bring proposals and suggestions for SWMS 2025 club operations to the November board meeting.
    - V. Yarberr: does SWMS have an updated financial balance sheet? What are typical costs per year without SWMS directly running races?

- J. Colbert: questioned what SWMS membership is actually doing to increase car counts during 2024, if anything. Cited historical example from ~2018-2022 of M. Travers actively purchasing SM cars from across the US and bringing them to NM for SWMS members to buy and race.
- W. Hollowell: voiced that he is aware of the fact that RMVR memberships and race weekend attendance is also down in 2024. Road racing is simply not growing like it used to. Volunteers to support road racing are a nation-wide issues for most clubs.
- J. Jerger: noted that the SWMS 2024 schedule had a number of unfortunate scheduling conflicts with the 2024 RMVR schedule, hurting SWMS car counts.
- J. Wright: suggested that if nothing else, SWMS could be a social club that maintains an ability to issue VMC licenses. VMC licenses are important to the Vintage run group. Additionally, Saturday potluck dinners should be brought back.
- M. Travers: agreed with the SWMS Board soliciting, collecting, and organizing suggestions for SWMS next steps for 2025. Perhaps a vote could be arranged at an upcoming board meeting.
- L. Pittsley: as a senior ranking member, and prior SWMS President, the following should be noted:
  - The original Saturday potluck dinners some SWMS members fondly remember were not originally present during the earliest years of SWMS. These dinners came later. Fundamentally, behind-the-scenes, the dinners were ~\$1,200 to \$1,500 each and were ended because of their causing excessive burden on SWMS finances.
  - Later (~2017) potlucks were attempted to be started, but funded on a volunteer basis and not via SWMS. These simply proved to be not that interesting to some membership.
  - Fundamentally, if the many people who race and volunteer with SWMS abandon Suika Circuit, all of sports car racing in New Mexico will suffer.
  - A local road course is a great benefit to New Mexico and those who like to race sports cars.
  - If SWMS decides to support only travel races in AZ or CO, this is very difficult for SWMS to accomplish. Poor financial returns and very low car counts have been the experience when SWMS decides to travel.
- S. DeBerry: agreed to organize a summary of 2024 SWMS club costs and to forecast what 2025 SWMS membership fees would need to be to support a social club-type approach for 2025.

## 5. Treasurers Report

- No updates at this board meeting.

## 6. Attendance: A. Sanford, S. DeBerry, F. Cordova, R. Dunn, J. Jerger, W. Hollowell, J. Colbert, G. Self, L. Haynes, K. Adams, M. Travers, M. Tribble, L. Pittsley, D. Swope, J. Slenes, V. Yarberry, J. Wright, J. Neuman.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00PM.

The next board meeting is planned to be held in November 2024. See separate upcoming email for meeting details.