

**NEW Manufacturing Alliance  
Communications Task Force**

May 20, 2026

C.A. Lawton

8:30 a.m.

*Minutes*

**ATTENDEES:** Aaron Baer-BPM, Nate Vandergrift-The Lawton Standard Co., Ann Franz-NEWMA, Sarah Putbress-NEWMA, Lori O'Connor-NWTC

**Topic 1: 2026 All Stars & Future All Stars Awards recap of May 6, 2026 event & plan 2027 All Stars**

The 2026 All Stars & Future All Stars Awards event was held May 6.

- Approximately 100 people attended.
- The event was well received.

Members liked that All Stars is now a separate event.

- The separate event helps highlight the honorees and make the recognition feel more special.

The venue worked well.

- Parking and accessibility were good.
- Honorees were shown on the Jumbotron, which companies also shared on social media.

**2027 All Stars planning:**

- Nomination forms will be sent to manufacturing members June 1.
- The nomination form was updated last year and does not need major changes this year.
- Nomination questions include:
  - Why the nominee should be considered an All Star.
  - Personal characteristics that make the nominee a great All Star.
  - Optional quotes from co-workers.
- NEWMA typically receives approximately 40 nominations between mentors and All Stars.
- Task force members will review nominations before the July meeting and vote on the winners.
- Ship Visuals will again be used for videos and photographs.

**Topic 2: Plan 20<sup>th</sup> NEWMA anniversary celebration – June 17, 2026**

- The 20th anniversary celebration will be held June 17 from 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. at Great North Commons.
  - Ann will meet with Great North Commons regarding food, layout and event details.
  - Approximately 127 people are already registered.
  - Attendance is expected to be approximately 150–200 people.
- The 15-year anniversary book will be updated into a 20th anniversary document.
  - Approximately 30 companies sponsored the \$300 campaign supporting careers in industrial maintenance and CNC machining.
  - Six companies sponsored \$1,000 scholarships.
  - MaryBeth Matzek is working on the anniversary book.
  - Printing information is needed by Tuesday due to the print timeline.
- The event should feel valuable, engaging and celebratory.
  - The group discussed balancing history with current work and future planning.
  - The program should not feel too long or overly focused on the past.

**Program structure:**

- **Past**
  - Welcome three-minute video highlighting 20-years of NEWMA

- Panel or remarks from individuals involved in NEWMA's early years.
  - The panel should be moderated and time-limited.
  - Questions should be prepared in advance.
  - The group discussed keeping this section focused and relevant for both long-time and newer members.
- Possible topics include:
  - How NEWMA started.
  - Early programs that helped change perceptions of manufacturing.
  - Get Real Math/Get Real Science.
  - The engineering four-year degree created with the UW System.
- **All Stars / impact panel**
  - The group discussed including an All Star-focused panel.
  - Possible panelists could include past All Stars, cover honorees or individuals impacted by the program.
  - Brandon Beard's story was discussed as an example of the All Stars program inspiring career growth.
  - Internship Draft Day participants could also be considered for this discussion.
- **Present**
  - Day in the Life videos will be shown.
    - Videos are approximately one minute long.
    - The videos focus on hard-to-fill jobs.
    - The first video was filmed at Titledown Manufacturing and focuses on CNC machining.
    - Another video was filmed at HART Design & Manufacturing and focuses on industrial maintenance.
  - NEWMA may announce a Department of Defense contract for approximately \$120,000 to expand underwater robotics programs.
    - The program would include a high school ROV program.
    - Students would build an advanced ROV and work with maritime museums and a shipwreck organization to explore Lake Michigan shipwrecks.
  - A potential AI grant announcement will likely not be ready in time.
- **Future**
  - The group recommended moving directly into discussion rather than adding another keynote or speaker.
  - Discussion will focus on future workforce needs and NEWMA's next priorities.
  - Slido or a similar app may be used for quick-response questions and word clouds.
  - Table discussions will be used for deeper questions.
  - Tables will be asked to share key "aha" moments.
  - A table captain will take notes and send them to Ann.
  - Information gathered will be used by the board during its September 17 strategic planning meeting.

**Potential discussion questions:**

- What will manufacturing talent needs look like in 2031?
- What major workforce problems need to be addressed?
- What program that NEWMA has done has been most impactful for your company?
- What program should exist that does not exist today?
- If resources were unlimited, what bold initiative should NEWMA launch?
- How are companies using AI now, and what are their future plans?

**Additional event details:**

- The group recommended having a break between the past/present portion and the future discussion.
  - Suggested structure: Past, Present, 15-minute break, Future.
  - The break will allow attendees to get food, use the restroom and socialize before discussion.
- The bar may be open at the beginning of the event.
  - Attendees will receive one complimentary drink ticket.
  - Attendees may use the ticket before or after the program.
  - Water will be available at tables.
- Hors d'oeuvres will be served after the program.
- Task force members may help with check-in.
  - Members should arrive around 1 p.m. if helping with check-in.
- Task force members and other key members may help facilitate table discussions.
  - A table marker, such as a blue star at place settings, may be used to identify table captains.
- Scot Anderson from NWTC may be included on a panel or asked to speak about training and workforce changes.
  - Lori will help coordinate if he is needed.
- Manufacturing First should be promoted during the event.
  - A QR code can be shown on screen for registration.
  - Members should be reminded that the deadline for free booths and tickets is August 3.
- Internship Draft Day date should be announced.
- A running photo montage from the past 20 years may be shown as attendees arrive.
- All Star magazines will be available for attendees to take.
  - Copies may also be mailed to members and potential members.
- Ann will send the group the draft agenda and discussion questions for review.

#### **20th anniversary logo / future branding:**

- The 20th anniversary logo will be launched at the event.
  - It may be added to email signatures and the website.
  - A dedicated 20th anniversary webpage may include the PDF version of the anniversary magazine.
- The group briefly discussed whether NEWMA should explore a logo refresh for the next 20 years.
  - The group agreed this could be explored without committing to a full rebrand.
  - Any future branding process should involve a limited decision-making group.

#### **Topic 3: October is Manufacturing Month - K-12 student outreach event where students vote on their favorite WMCs 'Coolest Thing Made'**

- The group discussed connecting a K-12 student outreach activity to WMC's Coolest Thing Made competition.
- The goal would be to engage students with products made by Northeast Wisconsin manufacturers.
- Students could vote digitally on which nominated product they think is the coolest.
- Nate has contacts at WMC.
  - Nate will reach out and copy Ann.
- The intent is to enhance the existing competition and increase youth engagement with manufacturing.

**Topic 4: Upcoming NEWMA Events**

**June 3:** President's Cup Scholarship Golf Scramble at Blackwolf Run

- One president cancelled – Nate will see if his president will take his place

**June 11:** All About Boats Tours & Dialogue -Tech Ed Teachers at Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding & Burger Boat

**June 17:** NEWMA 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary membership meeting

**June 1–2:** Wisconsin Drives Summit at Lambeau Field.

- NEWMA is a partner in the event.

**Topic 5: Set agenda and next meeting on July 22 at 8:30 a.m.**

The next meeting will be moved from July 15 to **July 22 at 8:30 a.m.**

- The meeting will be held virtually.

Task force members should **send their nomination choices to Ann by July 20.**

The July meeting will focus primarily on selecting the 2027 All Stars honorees.

**Noted:** NEWMA's podcast with Insight won third place in a national business podcast competition.

- The recognition will be shared on social media.