

Report and Discussion Item
IEEE Region 3 EXCOM Meeting
Section Support Committee
19 August 2019

As Section Support Specialist for the R3 Section Support Committee, I have been working on a rejuvenation effort with the Central NC Section. The one active officer moved from the area approximately three years ago and did not have any succession in place. A call for nominations was sent out last year with one self-nomination for vice chair but that one candidate did not want to take on the chair position. A meeting was arranged at the Forge makerspace in downtown Greensboro for December 13, 2018 with the NC Council Lego Mindstorms project as the program. We had only one member and two guests appear (there had been an unseasonable snow two days before). None of these individuals were interested in helping with getting the section going. Plans were in progress to do another section event this fall featuring the MOVE truck as another effort to get people involved.

Meanwhile, I was recently notified that the core leadership of the Winston-Salem section (mainly Carroll Perkins) are preparing to step down with no replacements in place. The W-S section has been struggling for a number of years. Carroll had suggested 'shutting down' the W-S section.

So now we have two adjacent sections that are struggling to get traction. Both started out with Bell System support (Bell Labs in one and Western Electric in the other). There is no large industry support currently in either, although there are small businesses and both cities (W-S and Greensboro) have active makerspaces and business startup support and activities.

As of today, W-S Section has 142 members including 14 student members. Central has 274 members with 18 student members.

I would like to start a process to investigate possibility of a merger of the two adjacent sections into a new unified section, either called the Central NC Section or the Triad Section. The population centers of W-S and Greensboro are approximately 20 miles apart. The two cities along with High Point, NC form the "Triad" in north-central NC.

The process would take the form of:

- call a meeting of all identified volunteers and past volunteers in the two sections to discuss the pros and cons of the merger
- if the first meeting shows support, call a meeting of all members of the two current sections to discuss the possible merger in a 'town hall' format. This meeting would be held in a central location (probably near PTI airport). This meeting should result in one of two outcomes: either people will be in support of the merger or they will be against it and be willing to make their sections active again. It is my hope that the latter will be the case and our effort will concentrate on training and supporting these new leaders.

However, If the group cannot come to consensus to revitalize the two sections, I would then proceed with the merger process per MGA procedures under direction of MGA board and staff and R3 leadership.

We would then stand ready to start training the new volunteers for the combined section and begin the process of drafting a new bylaws and putting together some meetings for the new section.

The goal would be to have both the local leadership meeting and town hall meeting completed by the next board series in November so that MGA can discuss and act as needed - if that is the direction that the members in the two sections approve. If the sections want to remain separate and have volunteers who want to work to make them active again, I will work with each to get them back active.

One suggestion that has been brought up is to merge W-S into the Charlotte Section and the Central Section into the Eastern NC Section. I do not recommend this due to geography – W-S is approximately 80 miles from Charlotte and Greensboro is about the same distance from Raleigh. I feel that this will prevent the two larger sections – although active – from being able to support the needs of the two inactive sections due to distance. We have run into this with the past subsections in NC as well as the issues involved in the formation of the NW Florida section in the past from the Pensacola and Ft Walton Beach sections.

I submit this issue and my proposed plan to the R3 EXCOM for discussion, review, and possible modification.

Charles J. Lord, PE
Section Support Specialist
IEEE R3 Section Support Committee