

Saw Mill River Audubon Society
Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting
September 9, 1999

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m. Alice Maram hosted. Thirteen directors were present: J. Anderson, L. Bickford, S. Hartmann, B. Lincoln, J. Lunetta, M. Magel, A. Maram, J. Pinerio, R. Saravay, M. Smolin, R. Wecker, S. Wecker, and B. Wiesendanger. Naturalist/ education director Anne Swaim was also present.
2. **Minutes** of the Board meeting of June 3 were corrected to show that the finance committee's report should replace reference to the "endowment fund" with "investment portfolio." The audit committee's report was amended so that the following sentence was added: "Rita Wecker's May 24 rebuttal to many points in the Kravitz letter was also mailed to the Board." Also, a sentence that appeared in the minutes, "more minutes to follow," should be omitted. Jo Lunetta moved, and the corrected minutes were accepted.
3. **Membership** was reported by Office Assistant Chris Nykwest to be 812.
4. **President's Report**—Mention of an NAS Advocacy Workshop September 25-26 in Chatham, NJ.
Notification that a NAS letter on Smart Growth legislation was not approved by the state legislature.
Much discussion about Chappaqua School System plans to build a new middle school on Hog Hill. J. Pinerio pointed out that the site is an ecologically sensitive one and is located on a cliff and by a stream. Pinerio also noted that the Chappaqua School system seems not to be taking environmental issues into account in its evaluation of sites. S. Hartmann questioned whether SMRAS should take a position on the matter. A letter was sent over the summer on SMRAS letterhead raising questions about the Hog Hill site. It was decided that a copy of the letter will be sent to the Board.
5. **Federation of NY State Bird Clubs**—Berna Lincoln noted that SMRAS had responded to a request by the Federation to help fund a guide to birds of New York State. Not all the SMRAS money was needed by the Federation. SMRAS was given a choice of having the surplus of \$1333.86 returned, or donating it to the Federation's general fund. Alice Maram motioned that we ask that the money be returned, but in a cover letter indicate that we would view future requests for project funding favorably. Motion was seconded and unanimously passed.
Larry Bickford noted that the Rare Bird Alert telephone hotline is in need of a volunteer.

6. **Audubon Councils**—Richard Saravay will be the SMRAS delegate to the Audubon Council fall meeting, October 1-3, 1999, in Stony Brook, NY.
7. **Bird Seed Sale**—Jim Anderson reported that the mailing for the bird seed sale had gone out and that a supplier had been selected. He is looking for a volunteer with a van to help move remaining seed from the sale site to the Hartmanns' home.
8. **Naturalist's Report**—Anne Swaim reported on several activities over the summer, including an eight-week program for children in Leonard Park, a program for New Castle senior citizens, and a Constitution Marsh canoe trip. She also showed new signs on plant and animal life that will be placed along trails in Crystal Spring. A SMRAS mailing has gone out to 320 educators responsible for booking programs. She made mention of a program on Canada Geese that the Westchester County Parks Department is putting on at the Westchester County Center on November 10. She also mentioned that many sick and dying crows have been observed in recent months; any sightings should be reported to the DEC or to her.
9. **Sanctuaries**—Martin Smolin said that he will set up an appointment with Jim O'Toole from ConEd to draft a memo of understanding regarding use of power line property adjacent to Brinton Brook.

There has also been dialogue with the Open Space Institute regarding the purchase of the Silverman property, consisting of 19.5 acres adjacent to Brinton Brook. Asking price on the property is \$350,000, but the Open Space Institute would purchase it with grant money and turn it over to SMRAS. There is a cistern on the property that would have to be dealt with because it is a hazard.

Larry Bickford brought up a long-standing encroachment problem with a house adjacent to the Seven Bridges Road entrance to Pruyn Sanctuary. A fence was moved at SMRAS's expense and was seen as the most expedient solution to the problem. Anne Swaim suggested posting a boundary sign on an existing post.

10. **Pruyn Arboretum & Garden**—Svend Hartmann urged everyone to see photos of the butterfly garden on the SMRAS web site. There has been a delay until spring of planned tree-planting due to the drought.
There was more discussion on the driveway visibility problem. Bids have been obtained from consulting engineers on widening the driveway. One bid for \$5,500 was for plans and help with permits, and did not include survey costs. Another bid for \$6,900 included a survey, design recommendations, and a presentation to the Board. A suggestion of building a second driveway was made. Berna Lincoln asked if the present driveway was really life-threatening. The committee will see if the bids include recommendations for alternatives.

11. **Treasurer's Report**—Jim Anderson reported that, consistent with last year, \$5,000 was transferred to the checking account from the endowment fund to make up for low income and high expenses in the summer. The total required from the Endowment Fund this year to August 31 has been \$32,217. The bird seed sale should ease demand on the endowment. The main Capital Fund activity over the summer was \$1,475 for the Pruyn driveway.
12. **Finance Committee**—Rita Wecker reported that the value of the Investment Portfolio was \$1,031,428 on June 30, 1999. Wecker also discussed her September 2 letter to the Board regarding SMRAS's status as a public charity. According to an advisor on nonprofit regulations from Deloitte and Touche, we are not in danger of losing our nonprofit status because of a "10 percent facts and circumstances" rule, requiring that at least 10 percent of support come from the general public. Concern was expressed about continuing to use Barbara Kravitz as our auditor. There were other opinions that the suggestions in the management letter be ignored, and that Kravitz did a satisfactory job.
13. **Audit Committee**—Doug Fletcher, a former CPA, and Joe Schlosser, a non-Board member who has a Ph.D. from Wharton, were unanimously elected to the audit committee.
14. **Environmental Action & Conservation**—Jeff Pinerio announced a request from Jessica Astrof of the Tri-state Transportation Committee that SMRAS Board members write to County Executive Spano to protest the widening of I-287. Local chapters requested that we co-sponsor a petition for groundwater monitoring at Westchester Airport and Kensico Reservoir. Stan Wecker moved that we agree to co-sponsor; motion was unanimously carried.
15. **Other business**—Stan Wecker said that SMRAS public programs would now take place on Tuesdays, since that was the only day the Chappaqua library was reliably available. Also, programs will now start at 7:30 p.m. Wecker also stressed the need for Board members to be more proactive in welcoming guests to programs and promoting SMRAS. Meeting was adjourned at 10:40 p.m. The next Board meeting will take place on Thursday, October 7, 1999 at Chappaqua Library.

Betsy Wiesendanger
Recording Secretary