

Saw Mill River Audubon Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 7, 2012
Held at the Community Bible Church of Northern Westchester

Present: Robert McCrillis, presiding. Sally Dow, Nick Fischer, Phil Heidelberger, Shirl Kaplan, Rik Kaufman, William Kellner, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Christine McCluskey, Thomas McEnerney, Nina Romanoff, Richard Saravay, Ponie Sheehan, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg. Anne Swaim present as Executive Director.

Meeting started at 7:30pm. Quorum present.

Minutes from the March 5, 2012 board meeting and the April 1, 2012 annual meeting were reviewed and approved.

President's Report /Mail and Correspondence (Robert McCrillis):

Robert welcomed Shirl Kaplan attending her first board meeting as a board member. There was a brief discussion about the April 1 annual meeting and dinner event. It was suggested that we consider Saturday evening instead of Sunday evening. If we keep to our alternate year schedule, 2013 would be a potluck dinner. Saw Mill River Audubon's 60th Anniversary will also be 2013. Volunteers for an anniversary committee to plan special events were requested. Nina, Christine, Ponie, Jean, and Nick volunteered. An anniversary meeting will be held either Monday June 11 or Monday June 18 at Robert's house. Rik moved and Jean seconded that the Summer Executive Committee consist of the current officers as specified in the by-laws. Approved. The food list for the June picnic and the updated board roster were circulated.

Community Relation and Development: Robert asked everyone to look at the handout of the Development Report and Membership/Fund Drive Report – April 2012 prepared by Barbara Campbell and Ellen Heidelberger. Next Monday, May 14, will be our annual "PS'ing Party" to prepare the spring fund drive letters.

Finance Committee (Phil Heidelberger):

For our official quarterly report, as of April 1, 2012 the portfolio balance was \$899,485, a year-to-date increase of 7.6% from the January 1, 2012 balance of \$835,841. There were \$5,000 in withdrawals from the endowment during the first quarter, and an additional \$10,000 was withdrawn during April. The year-to-date, one year and three year investment rates of return were 8.2%, 2.3% and 18.8%, respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 6.3%, 2.1%, and 12.9% for the same periods. The balance as of May 1, 2012 was \$887,296, an increase of 6.2% year-to-date.

Treasurer's Report (Tom McEnerney):

Tom reported that revenues for the first four months of the year continued to be below expectations, primarily due to lower bird seed sales. Expenses for the first four months were generally in line with expectations. Please see Operating Revenues and Expenses report distributed at the meeting for more details.

Executive Director's Report (Anne Swain):

Anne reported on adding Saw Mill River Audubon as an organization supporter at the request of Audubon New York and National Audubon on three issues in the past two months:

- 1-Wind Energy Guidelines Implementation
- 2-Cape Hatteras National Seashore Protection
- 3-Thank you to U.S. Senate for passing Gulf Coast RESTORE Act

The Texas trip ran well and Larry and Christine, as trip participants, added their comments about the trip.

Ken Novenster and Anne meet with the Town of New Castle Supervisor and Administrator on Thursday, April 5 and with the entire Town Board in a work session on Tuesday, May 1 to discuss our concerns about the open space in and adjacent to Choate Sanctuary. The Town is seeking to sell one piece of town owned open space near Choate Sanctuary to a landowner to allow for septic field improvement and also convert another small parcel in another part of town from parkland to allow its sale. In exchange they have offered to protect one or more small town-owned parcels adjacent to Choate with conservation easements or by

transfer to Saw Mill River Audubon. They have also suggested providing support for a new parking area and boardwalk at Choate to allow access from the northern part of Crow Hill Road. The Town Board also expressed support for the work of Saw Mill River Audubon and welcomed further, ongoing communication about our sanctuary issues. Attorneys for the town are working on the details of these ideas and we hope to hear more in the near future. Anne thanked Ken Novenstern for his help in this dialogue with the town.

Advocacy (Richard Saravay):

Richard reported on several items from the Spring 2012 Audubon New York Council meeting and passed around materials about bird safe buildings. He noted that Audubon is now organizing its conservation and program efforts to focus on the major flyways in North America. He encouraged us to consider including Audubon New York staff Laura McCarthy and Sean Mahar in a further conservation briefing. It was suggested that this be part of a Lower Hudson Audubon gathering. Richard reported contact between Westchester County Parks and Audubon New York. County Parks is seeking Audubon input on programming for Lenoir and Croton Point. Anne will pursue a meeting with Hudson River Audubon of Westchester, our sister chapter in Yonkers that has been meeting at Lenoir, to see what input they might offer about an Audubon-Westchester Parks collaboration. There was discussion about how any SMRA effort at Croton Point would fit into our sanctuaries efforts and other volunteer opportunities. The desire for more bird-friendly management of Croton Point was also discussed as well as including Chris Letts and Charlie Roberto in any "Friends of Croton Point" organization.

Sanctuaries Committee (Michael Madias Jr.):

Much work has been completed on the "Trees for Tribes" planting at Graff Sanctuary this spring across four work days despite being short-handed on volunteers. Michael has been working with native wildflower seeds and seedlings intended primarily for ongoing meadow restoration at Brinton Brook. We have received the Forest Assessment from NYDEC for Brinton Brook and Graff but the details were not as site specific as we had hoped. However, this connection did link us up with the Hudson River Estuary Biodiversity project and Brinton Brook will now be part of an ongoing monitoring for amphibians, reptiles and birds by NYDEC staff and interns with all data shared with SMRA.

(Bill Kellner took over chairing the meeting at this point since Robert McCrillis needed to leave early.)

Programs and Field Trips (Christine McCluskey):

Our spring schedule of birding field trips is well underway with trips completed at Prospect Park and at Angle Fly Preserve with seven other May migration trips scheduled. One idea coming from the Prospect Park birding trip was a future spring trip offering a full day in Brooklyn with birding, lunch and other options. The Sylvan Glen hike was also well received. Christine noted that the RaptorFest weekend trip is an event we will want to repeat and that it was kid-friendly. We should keep in mind kid-friendly options for future trips. Anne noted that we are offering a canoe trip at Constitution Marsh on Sunday, June 10 but since this is limited to 16 people, it will be offered to the board first. An email will follow with details.

Hospitality: Bill thanked those who brought refreshments this evening.

New Business:

Valerie Lyle noted that the Lower Hudson Sierra Club group is seeking a program on local birds. Anne asked Valerie to let them know that we can provide this and that they should contact our office to schedule.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m. Minutes taken by Anne Swaim.

The next board meeting will follow the Monday, June 4 picnic at Senasqua Park. Arrive 6:00 pm for the picnic with the board meeting to begin 7:30 pm.