

Saw Mill River Audubon
January 5, 2015 Board Meeting Minutes
Held at Community Bible Church of Northern Westchester

Quorum Present (20): Robert McCrillis, Christine McCluskey, Richard Saravay, Brian Kluepfel, Tom McEnerney, Jan Bass, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Bill Kellner, Karalyn Lamb, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Ken Novenster, Nina Romanoff, Tom Ruth, Ponie Sheehan, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg. Anne Swaim was also present.

Minutes of December 1, 2014 meeting were approved

President's Report

Nominating committee: a brief discussion was held about open Board positions. Nominating Committee members were confirmed: Nina Romanoff (board), Joan Kellner and Anne Swaim (off board).

Annual Dinner committee will meet on January 21. Ponie Sheehan, Jean Sparacin and Nina Romanoff volunteered to serve on this committee along with Robert and Anne. Joan Kellner will also be asked.

Community Relations

A report was circulated and overall membership and year-end contributions are positive. "Sensational," said President Robert McCrillis.

Finance Committee

A report was circulated, read aloud by Phil Heidelberger, and discussed briefly. Phil reported the following: The portfolio balance as of January 1, 2015 was \$949,490, a year-to-date increase of 0.1% over the January 1, 2014 balance of \$948,376. Thus the investment return for 2014 was just slightly higher than the portfolio withdrawals. There was a 1.8% (\$17,362) decrease for the month of December, including \$12,150 in withdrawals during December. There were \$62,384 in withdrawals from the portfolio during 2014 which is comprised of \$1,234 in Garden Fund, \$150 in Light Scholarship, and \$61,000 in Operating Fund withdrawals. The budgeted Operating Fund withdrawal for 2014 was \$69,390, so we withdrew about \$8,000 less than was budgeted for the Operating Fund.

Treasurer's Report

Tom McEnerney circulated a report showing revenues, expenses and endowment withdrawals for 2014. Overall, it was noted that 2014 was a good year for SMRA because revenues exceeded budget, primarily due to increased donations, and total expenses were under budget. Phil Heidelberger noted that SMRA is still exceeding the 5% guideline for annual withdrawals from our endowment fund.

Executive Director's Report

Croton Point EagleFest of Feb 7 was discussed and a volunteer list circulated. SMRA will again be sponsoring the warming tent at the Croton Boat Ramp and George's Island (the latter the result of a generous board member's donation), leading three bird walks and offering our "Raptors for Rookies" ID program in the main tent inside Croton Point. Also noted was our continuing cooperative effort with Bedford Audubon to monitor the winter eagle roosts at George's Island.

Coyote update: the two coyote advisory committees appointed by the Town of New Castle will be making recommendations to the New Castle Town Board this winter. The Lawrence Farms neighborhood association has reportedly backed away from the idea of hiring private coyote trappers at this time. Education efforts will be ongoing.

Croton Sign Grant: SMRA applied for a 2015 New York Audubon Collaborative Grant to fund a second sign at the Croton Point Park landfill. We received 80% of our grant request but Westchester County Parks will make up the difference.

We are planning a fall trip to Asa Wright Nature Center in Trinidad from Wednesday, October 7 to Sunday, October 11. It will be a shorter less expensive trip as an introduction to neotropical birds.

Over 40 people have participated in the weekly Monday walks with weekly average attendance of 15 people.

The SMRA website is doing very well with 208 visits on an average day.

SMRA will send representatives this Thursday to Regional Environmental Education Day (REED) Conference at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation. SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim will lead a workshop on Winter Birding and Jan Bass will also be present to attend various workshops.

Advocacy

Richard Saravay pointed out the Spring NY State Audubon Council meeting will be third weekend in March. Issues to be discussed include forest health and the deer issue. Tom Ruth gave an overview of the Housatonic to Hudson Conservation Initiative led in our area by Westchester Land Trust.

Tom, Bill Kellner, Karalyn Lamb and Anne Swaim met with WLT staff in November for an overview of this project and Tom, Karalyn and Anne attended a full-day workshop in CT to learn more. On behalf of the Advocacy Committee, Tom Ruth recommended that SMRA be a participating organization the H2H Initiative. This will involve meeting and workshop attendance and a willingness to reach out to targeted landowners in our membership area to encourage conservation practices. A vote was taken and the proposal was approved.

Sanctuaries Committee

Two deer were culled (aka killed) in the second year of limited bowhunting at Brinton Brook. A coyote was also seen at Brinton Brook Sanctuary. Evidence of Hearty Kiwi, an invasive plant species of some concern, at Brinton Brook was reported by Karalyn Lamb. We will try to eradicate it and also map its spread/growth. Michael Madias is continuing to explore options for the restoration the rockwork at Split Rock Spring in Brinton Brook, Some cleaning out of the spring was done in November.

Programs and Field Trips

February will feature a film at the Black Cow Cafe in Croton, as well as a Martin Luther King Day walk at Kingsland Point County Park. Owl Prowl sites for January 31 walk will be announced by trip leaders Trudy Battaly and Drew Panko a week prior to walk.

Newsletter

Editor Brian Kluepfel noted that the deadline for the February/March issue is this week; issue is proposed to be four pages with two inserts: one for annual dinner and one for proxy ballot.

Bird Seed Sale

A volunteer list was circulated for the January 17 sale.

Hospitality was provided by Jean Sparacin, Joanne McAuley and a few others who brought food.

Meeting concluded at 8:38 pm.