

Saw Mill River Audubon
March 2, 2015 Board Meeting Minutes
Held at Community Bible Church of Northern Westchester

Present: Robert McCrillis, Brian Kluepfel, Christine McCluskey, Larry Trachtenberg, Nick Fischer, Rik Kaufman, Valerie Lyle, Jan Bass, Tom McEnerney, Nina Romanoff, Valerie Heemstra, Phil Heidelberger, Tom Ruth, Donna Lassiter, Karalyn Lamb, Michael Madias, Jr., Bill Kellner, Anne Swaim.

Minutes of January 5, 2015 Board Meeting were approved unanimously

President's Report

Robert introduced Valerie Heemstra, a new board candidate. Valerie became interested in birding as a young girl in Florida. Our other 2015 board nominee, John Phillips, was unable to attend this evening but is looking forward to joining our work.

May and June board meeting dates were changed May 18 and June 8.

Additional proxy votes are needed for board election and were gathered.

A sign-up sheet for tasks for the Annual Dinner was circulated and details reviewed.

Robert gave an overview of the 2015 Fund Drive. Board packets will be distributed at the annual dinner, due back on April 27. Our PS Party for the Fund Drive will be held June 1 with details to follow from Barbara Campbell.

Community Relations and Development

Robert McCrillis distributed and discussed the Donation and Membership Report.

Finance Committee

For our official quarterly report, as of January 1, 2015 the portfolio balance was \$949,490, a year-to-date increase of 0.12% over the January 1, 2014 balance of \$948,376. The three month, one year, and three year investment rates of return were 2.5%, 6.8% and 11.9% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 1.2%, 4.1% and 8.5% for the same periods. There were \$62,384 in withdrawals from the portfolio, and \$500 in additions to the portfolio during 2014. The portfolio balance as of February 1, 2015 was \$943,856, and the balance as of March 1, 2015 was \$973,816, a \$24,326 (2.6%) increase for the year. Year-to-date, there have been \$600 in contributions, all to the Light Memorial Scholarship fund, and no withdrawals from the portfolio.

Phil Heidelberger discussed different options for setting up a retirement plan for Anne Swaim, with Anne Swaim absenting herself from the meeting for this discussion. Among the options considered were a single employee 403(b) plan, an SEP IRA, and several other more complicated options which would pose significant accounting headaches. The SEP IRA has the disadvantages of not permitting employee contributions and requiring that it cover all employees. The anticipated administrative costs of the 403(b) plan are \$750 to set it up and \$400/year to administer. The Finance Committee recommended the 403(b) because of its simplicity, and the fact that the \$400/year is about the same as the more complicated options. The Board unanimously approved a motion to set up the 403(b) plan, using the firm Admin Partners as the Plan Administrator.

Treasurer's Report

Tom McEnerney briefly reviewed expenses and income for the first two months of the year. The proposal to hold funds for an Eagle Scout project at Croton Point was discussed and approved. A report on SMRA insurance coverage was circulated and discussed. There have been no endowment withdrawals for our operating expenses. Expenditures of up to \$1,314 from the garden endowment for Pruyn Garden improvements, including a new gate and posts, were approved.

Executive Director's Report

Anne Swaim gave an update on the ongoing coyote discussion in the Town of New Castle. Two Larry Light Youth Scholarships to Eamon Freiburger and Josiah Wiedenheft were affirmed by board vote. The proposed fall trip to Trinidad has been well received and will take place. A few additional opening are possible if interest.

Advocacy

Tom Ruth gave a report on the Hudson to Housatonic Conservation Initiative to identify key property owners for conversations about conservation. Karalyn Lamb reported on the Lower Hudson Partnership for Invasive Species Management, including our grant application to control invasive Hardy Kiwi vine.

Sanctuaries Committee

Michael Madias noted that work dates are pending the end of snow cover from this long winter. Plans include barberry clearing and native shrub and tree planting at Choate, and mowing of Brinton and Haas Sanctuaries. An Arbor Day planting of pines will take place at Brinton Brook.

Programs and Field Trips

Christine McCluskey discussed upcoming trips and programs and the relative success of winter programs during a challenging winter weather season. Of note was the Eagle Walk and Soup Social at Croton Point which drew over 50 people.

Newsletter

Brian Kluepfel noted that the next newsletter deadline is this week for the April/May issue.

Bird Seed Sale

Ken Novenster reported that we have had strong winter sales because of the harsh winter. Volunteers are needed for March 21 sale; a sign-up sheet was circulated.

Hospitality

Jean Sparacin and Joanne McAuley were thanked for evening refreshments.

2015 meeting dates: 4/12 (Annual Dinner-Potluck), 5/18, 6/1 (PS Party), 6/8 (picnic)

Minutes by Brian Kluepfel