

**Saw Mill River Audubon  
May 18, 2015 Board Meeting Minutes  
Held at Community Bible Church of Northern Westchester**

**Present:** Robert McCrillis, Jan Bass, Nick Fischer, Valerie Heemstra, Philip Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Karalyn Lamb, Donna Lassiter, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Christine McCluskey, John Phillips, Tom Ruth, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg, and Anne Swain

Meeting started at 7:30pm. Minutes of March 2, 2015 Board Meeting and April 12, 2015 Annual Meeting were approved unanimously.

**President's Report – Robert McCrillis**

Robert welcomed John Phillips and Valerie Heemstra, new board members. Both received their Board handbooks.

Rosters and Committee lists were handed out. If you have any corrections or changes, please let the office know of the changes.

The Board Picnic will be Monday June 8 at Senasqua Park in Croton starting at 6pm. All present and past Board members and volunteers are welcome. A list was passed around for sign up of items to bring for the potluck.

This year's Annual Dinner (April 12<sup>th</sup>) was a success. The food was wonderful. The 2016 Annual dinner will be again in a restaurant – probably Table 9 in Peekskill.

The 2015 Fund Drive's PS Party will be held June 1st here at Community Bible Church from 6 – 9pm. Barbara Campbell will e-mail details shortly. Please let her know if you are coming.

June 8<sup>th</sup> will be the last Board Meeting until September. It was proposed and seconded to appoint the Summer Executive Committee consisting of the President, Vice President, Chairman of the Board, Treasurer, and Recording Secretary. If there are urgent matters between the June and September board meeting, the Summer Executive Committee is empowered to make decisions on behalf of the full board, as noted in the by-laws. Approved unanimously by the board.

Proposed dates of future Board meetings are listed on bottom of Agenda.

**Community Relations and Development**

Robert McCrillis distributed the Donation / Membership Report (dated May 25, 2015).

**Finance Committee – Phillip Heidelberger**

For our official quarterly report, as of April 1, 2015 the portfolio balance was \$969,070 a year-to-date increase of 2.1% over the January 1, 2015 balance of \$949,940. The three month, one year and three year investment rates of return were 2.0%, 7.1% and 9.6% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 1.7%, 4.4% and 6.9% for same periods. There have been \$0 in withdrawals from the portfolio during 2015 and \$600 in additions to the Larry Light Scholarship fund during 2015.

The portfolio balance as of May 1, 2015 was \$974,511 a year-to-date change of 2.6%.

The essential paperwork to set up the new 403(b) retirement plan for our Executive Director has been completed and the first contribution to the fund has been made. We are in the process of finalizing some auxiliary paperwork.

### **Treasurer's Report – Tom McEnerney**

The following was read by Phil Heidelberger for the absent Tom McEnerney:

The financial report distributed tonight shows some favorable results for the first four months of the year. Operating revenues through April 30<sup>th</sup> exceed expectations by about \$11,500, due primarily to a \$10,000 donation by a client of a board member and also due to higher bird seed sales. Operating expenses for the first four months of the year are generally in line with expectations. Net operating expenses of \$6,830 and unbudgeted expenses of \$1,224 have been temporarily paid for by unbudgeted revenues of about \$12,600, consisting primarily of deposits for the Olympic peninsula and Trinidad trips. As a result, at April 30<sup>th</sup>, SMRA's checking account balance had increased by about \$4,600 since the beginning of the year without any withdrawals from the endowment.

### **Executive Director's Report – Anne Swain**

An update was given on the ongoing coyote discussion in the Town of New Castle. An interesting event occurred – a coyote den was found right outside Westorchard Elementary school grounds, very visible to the classrooms where the children and teachers are monitoring the coyote activities. This has been handled well by the Town Environmental Coordinator Steve Coleman and the New Castle Police Department, with calm responses and monitoring.

Anne is tracking the Town Board Agenda for their meeting for Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup>. One of the topics listed is SMRA use of Town Hall for our fall seed sale. It is uncertain whether we will need to identify new space after 25+ years of holding the fall bird seed sale weekend at the New Castle Town Hall. Ken Novenster will attend the Town Board meeting on behalf of SMRA.

- One or more black bears have been seen in the Millwood, Kitchawan, Yorktown and Ossining areas.
- The slate of candidates was read for NYS Audubon Council election. Motion was read and approved to accept as read. Richard Saravay is among the slate of six running.
- The FCWC Land Stewardship Annual meeting will be held on June 4<sup>th</sup> (9:30am – 12). Anne and Karalyn Lamb will attend.
- Information on Westchester Land Trust and NYS Birders Conference (in Albany, October 2-4, 2015) was passed around.

The Olympic National Park trips were a success. A total of 21 people were on the trip. The first week had un-typical Washington State weather while the second week was not so lucky. There were great sightings and many life birds for those who came. A contribution was made to Winbie Island Audubon chapter. We will also be offering a trip to Trinidad's Asa Wright Center in October 2015. That trip has enough commitments to run with just a few spaces still available.

### **Programs and Field Trips – Christine McCluskey**

Upcoming trips and programs were discussed. Monday Bird Walks are a success. We will have "extra" walks on Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> at Rockefeller State Park (warblers). Both programs start at 6:30am.

Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> is our multi-chapter sponsored program on Cuba Birding at the Chappaqua Library at 7pm. Anne will pick up our speaker at the train station. Anyone interested in joining them for dinner (5:30 – 6:30) at Chappaqua Tavern is welcomed to come.

Monday, May 25<sup>th</sup> will be our regular 4<sup>th</sup> Monday bird walk in Croton-Point Park at 7:30am.

**Advocacy**

Tom Ruth gave a report on the Hudson to Housatonic Conservation Initiative, a joint effort by SMRA, Teatown and Westchester Land Trust. A key meeting will be held on June 19<sup>th</sup> to talk about stewardship of the land (lectures on forestry, invasive plants, birds, etc.). There is the possibility of holding a "Woods Forum" for local landowners at the Weinstein's for approximately 25 people this summer, pending additional planning and conversation with the Weinsteins. Tom, Karalyn, Bill Kellner and Anne Swaim all involved in this project.

Karalyn Lamb reported on the Lower Hudson Partnership for Invasive Species Management, including our grant application to control invasive Hardy Kiwi vine. A project map was given out which identifies Hardy Kiwi vine patches in Brinton Brook Sanctuary. Work will begin on Patch 2 as of June 2. The vines will be stem cut, brush hogged and sprayed with herbicide. Will monitor in the fall 2015 and again in spring 2016 for any re-sprouting. A decision was made to close the trail segment for one day during herbicide application.

Richard Saravay noted that the theme of the 2015 National Audubon convention was reclaiming our forests. Also passed around various flyers : volunteers needed for "on the beach" outreach during the months of May and July; 2015 Audubon Legislative Priorities (there is a link to read this electronically); the Audubon Leadership Convention – July 10-13; a native plant list prepared by a chapter on Long Island. Nominations are being accepted for the National Board.

**Sanctuaries Committee – Michael Madias Jr.**

At Brinton Brook 65 new plants were planted in the meadow. Trees for Tribs work was done last Saturday, May 16, including planting over 80 new native shrubs and trees. Ramps provided by Jean Sparacin were also planted. Another Sanctuary Committee meeting is slated for June. Michael also spoke about seeing a man shooting a rifle near power lines in Brinton on Saturday, May 16. Appropriate authorities were called and incident reported.

**Garden and Arboretum**

Donna Lassiter reported that we received free mulch from Town of New Castle. Danny mowed the meadow at Pruyn. Donna has been primarily weeding and looking at what natives the Arboretum contains. Found so far that 60 trees are native. Taking lots of photos – making power-point presentation on natives.

**Newsletter**

The next newsletter deadline is June 1<sup>st</sup>. Will be mailed the third week of June.

**Bird Seed Sale**

The shed is almost empty. We sold a lot of seed this winter/spring. Didn't have a rodent problem this year either.

**Hospitality**

Jean Sparacin and Robert McCrillis were thanked for the evening's refreshments.

**New Business**

None.

Minutes taken by Joanne McAuley, SMRA Board Secretary