

Saw Mill River Audubon
January 9, 2017 Board Meeting Minutes
Held at Croton Point Park Nature Center, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

Present (in bold type): Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, William Kellner, Brian Kluepfel, Karalyn Lamb, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Christine McCluskey, Robert McCrillis, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenstern, John Phillips, Nina Romanoff, Tom Ruth, Richard Saravay, Ponie Sheehan, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg. Anne Swaim, Ed Mertz, Debbie Van Zyl, Kathleen Williamson, Sarah Hansen, Cary Andrews, and Roger Garrison were also present.

Ponie, Nina, John, Rik, all ABSENT

Meeting started at 7:25 pm. Minutes of December 5, 2016 Board Meeting were approved by all present voting in the affirmative.

President's Report– Valerie Lyle

Minutes of Dec. 5 meeting approved. Val introduced five candidates for board openings. Each candidate spoke briefly about their backgrounds and interests:

Cary Andrews: Cary is an avid birder active w/ education & outreach. Cary is chair of Croton CAC. She wants to work w/ schools, including creating bird-friendly gardens. She is interested in aligning efforts of municipal CACs and SMRA.

Kathleen Williamson: Kathleen has been attending the Monday bird walks and has done weekend trips with SMRA. She is a Pleasantville native and has been active in that community.

Roger Garrison: Roger is a retired teacher. He has been attending the Monday bird walks. Roger has previously served on the SMRA board, including a term as Vice President.

Debbie Van Zyl: Debbie was an active birder in her native South Africa. She moved to the U.S. 1 year ago. Her interest in birding has continued in her new home. Debbie has been involved w/ SMRA as an active birder for a year, attending trips and walks and has led the Monday bird walk.

Sarah Hansen: Sarah has been active with SMRA for 2.5 years. She currently serves on the Sanctuary Committee. She is interested in invasive species. She has led the Monday bird walk and is interested in leading more walks and trips.

Soup lunch 11:30 Sat. 1/14. Call for volunteers on sign-up sheet. Walk is 9:00 at boat ramp.

EagleFest Sat. Feb. 11 call for volunteers and sign-up sheet circulated. Thanks to Larry for underwriting the cost of the warming tent at George's Island.

A major donor plan is being developed the help of Barbara Campbell. The focus is on existing donors with the goal of having them increase their support of SMRA. We are also looking to expand our donor base. Board members are asked to identify prospects and work with that prospect at SMRA events and personal contacts. We may also want to have board members write hand-written thank you letters for larger donations (or call).

Ken commented that we will need to focus on Weinstein donation. These efforts will help educate the board on necessary steps.

President's Report– Valerie Lyle (continued)

The 2017 Annual Dinner will be a potluck on Apr. 2. Jean has made an owl quilt to be raffled. Robert is chair of Dinner Committee. Hope is to use Chappaqua Community Center. Jean, Joanne, and Joan (Kellner) to serve on the committee with Robert. A meeting of the committee will be scheduled for later this month.

Finance Committee– Philip Heidelberger

The SMRA portfolio balance on January 1, 2017 was \$925,591 representing a 1.8% (\$16,433) increase for 2016. There were \$61,495 in withdrawals from the portfolio and \$6,300 in additions to the portfolio during 2016, or a net withdrawal of \$55,195. The investment rate of return for 2016 was 7.9%. We are 16.7% (\$25,651) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds.

Treasurer's Report– Tom McEnerney

Ref 3-col financial report. In 2016, donations were 21k over-budget. 9.4k came in during December. The annual fund has grown. SMRA visibility has grown – this engages new people and builds donor base. Revenues were 24k over budget in 2016, while expenses were close to budget. The seed sale was under budget on costs. We had unexpected expenses of about 20k on Pruyn House; this was partially offset with about 10k of unexpected revenues. Only 60k was needed from the endowment. This equals a withdrawal of 6.8%. The average withdrawal over 2 years has been 5.1% per annum.

Ken commented that we owe Tom M. a big thank you for his outstanding efforts as SMRA Treasurer.

Development Report– Robert McCrillis

Refer to the Membership and Fund Drive Report (1/9/17). Total members are at 987 (495 joint NAS/SMRA and 492 SMRA chapter members). This represents a slight decline in overall members but an increase in SMRA chapter members.

Pruyn House Report– Robert McCrillis

Kitchen repairs will start this month (3k-4K estimate). The leaking kitchen sink drain has damaged the wall. Ken: Motion to approve 3-4K expense to make repairs. Robert second. Board approved unanimously.

Executive Director's Report– Anne Swaim

NY Audubon Collaborative grant has been approved (\$650) for young birders club. Ages 8-15 will come (w/ 1 parent) once per month. We are looking for a per diem naturalist to help with leading events. We would like to have 10 of these monthly sessions with the first taking place in February, 2017. The NY Young Birders Club meeting to be held at Mariandale on Jan. 15 is being hosted by SMRA (9:00 am to 4:00 pm after 8:00 am birding at Croton boat ramp).

Executive Director's Report– Anne Swaim (continued)

Anne met w/ the Lunetta family about the donations in memory of Don Lunetta totaling \$1,621. The family doesn't want money to go for maintenance of the Pinecliff Sanctuary. The Lunettas suggest the donation should underwrite "naturalist explorer bags." These will be backpacks filled with aids to learning about the environment of the Pinecliff Sanctuary. They will be stored at the Chappaqua Library and available for short-term loan. Ideas on how to set up this program requested of board members.

Boardwalk at Pinecliff needs repair. The boardwalk is composed of Trimax but we may need to substitute an alternative material that is less costly. Danny is calculating amount needed to keep on hand.

Anne is planning to do eBird program for Hudson River Audubon and a program about bird nests for Friends of Marshlands Conservancy.

Minnesota trip, January 27-30, has one potential slot open but enough people registered for trip to run.

Our spring big trip will be to Ohio on the Lake Erie shoreline coinciding with the "Biggest Week in US" birding festival. Dates are May 2-8. A side trip to Pt. Pelee on the north (Ontario) shore is planned. SMRA trip will begin before the main festival and big crowds arrive.

Sanctuaries Committee– Michael Madias, Jr.

Five deer were taken at Brinton Brook Sanctuary this season. Hudson National Golf Course work will necessitate closure of the white-blazed Village Trail but affect trails in the sanctuary. Michael and Anne met with Ryan Oliver, HNGC Manager, and Jan Wines of the Village Trail Committee to review trail closure locations and also reviewed the proposed text of the closure signs. Following up on the idea from our fall retreat, we have scheduled 2017 sanctuary work days. (See SMRA Google calendar.)

Field Trips– Christine McCluskey

Barnegat Light trip is a full day. Feb 5. We are looking to visit other coastal NJ sites in addition to Barnegat for birding on that day. Dutchess County birding is Feb 26. Flight of the Woodcock: Mar 11 at Muscoot Farm and Mar 12 at Croton Point County Park. Meet at dusk (6:00 PM) for both walks.

Pruyn Garden– Donna Lassiter

Need for repair of garden fence is critical. NYS guidelines limit expenses to 7% of the garden trust fund. Withdrawals from the trust have been under this amount up to now. The Garden Committee recommends accepting the \$5885 bid from Campanella Fence. This can be paid over 2 years and will keep us close to the 7% limit (will be exceeded by a few hundred dollars). Tom M: motion to go forward. Ken second. Richard: garden maintenance should come out of trust. Motion approved by majority of board members present with 1 no vote and 1 abstention. [Written fence proposal to be attached.]

Advocacy– Tom Ruth

Nothing new to report at this time on Hudson River Anchorages issue.

Hudson to Housatonic Initiative: This is foreseen as developing into a regional partnership with focus on stewardship of private forested properties. The core team of the new RCP (regional conservation partnership) met in December. Its future role is still being defined. Possible ideas involve pollinator education and bird habitat improvement. H2H core team is looking to identify additional conservation narratives to educate public.

Advocacy– Karalyn Lamb

A new treatment strategy proposed by NYS is to inject the herbicide fluridone at low concentrations into the Croton River over a period of 60-120 days, upstream of the aquifer, to control the hydrilla infestation. NYS will monitor Croton's drinking water supply. Failure to do herbicidal treatment of the Croton River could lead to spread of hydrilla with the potential of severe ecosystem damage. DEP has no current plans to treat hydrilla in the reservoir system. The concern is that if the reservoir is not treated with the herbicide, the downstream plan to treat the river below the New Croton Dam will not work. The Water Control Commission (Croton) must approve the treatment plan for the Croton River. SMRA is a stakeholder but is not on record in support of this plan.

Volunteer Survey– Valerie Lyle

The draft survey to encourage volunteer participation and how to tally responses will be reviewed by the Education and Outreach Retreat Goal Committee at a Feb meeting.

Newsletter– Brian Kluepfel

Mar.1 is deadline for Apr/May newsletter.

Bird Seed Sale– Ken Novenster

Bird seed sale is Jan. 21. Board members are our best customers. Board members should promote the seed sale. Seed sale is SMRA's largest net revenue source after donations.

Hospitality– Thanks to Jean, Karalyn, Robert

William Kellner– Nominating Committee

Motion to make interim board appointments: Debbie, Sarah, Cary, Kathleen until April, offered and seconded. Motion approved with all present voting in affirmative.

Meeting ended at: 9:04 pm **Next meeting:** Feb 6, 2017. Minutes taken by William Kellner