

Saw Mill River Audubon
October 2, 2017 Board Meeting Minutes
Meeting at Croton Point Nature Center, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

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

Meeting started at 7:05 pm following a potluck dinner.

Expression of appreciation to Christine McCluskey

Anne Swaim opened the meeting by expressing thanks to Christine for her dedicated and energetic service on the SMRA Board of Directors. Christine is resigning from the board because she is moving out of state. Members of the board echoed Anne's sentiments. Gifts from board members and staff were presented to Christine, including a book of Roger Tory Peterson's art and photography signed by the author. Ed Mertz was present for this part of the meeting.

President's Report— Valerie Lyle

This part of the meeting started at 7:24 pm. Ken moved with Tom R. seconding that minutes of the June 12 board meeting be approved. The motion was approved with all present voting in favor.

Val discussed the September 16 SMRA gathering held at the home of Martin and Teresa Weinstein adjacent to the Brinton Brook Sanctuary. This was a successful event with approximately 30 people in attendance (about 20 were invited guests). Feedback from guests about SMRA's mission was solicited. Much of the discussion centered around furthering SMRA's goal of connecting people to nature, especially youth.

Post-event, SMRA received several significant donations along with enthusiastic notes from several guests. The gifts included \$1,200 from SMRA member Bonnie Barrett for the purchase of an additional spotting scope. Martin and Teresa Weinstein have indicated that they would consider hosting additional SMRA events in the future. Gerry Weinstein may invite the full SMRA membership to the fall 2018 event at his museum of industrial archaeology.

Val discussed the upcoming board of directors' retreat to be held at Mariandale on November 4. The topic will be "visioning" of how SMRA will manage the Weinstein house and property after transfer to SMRA, assuming negotiations to accomplish this are successful. Ken explained this is a three-person "life estate" with title not passing to SMRA during the lifetimes of the three current owners. A conservation easement has been placed on the property; subdivision and development is precluded whether or not the property eventually passes to SMRA. Robert raised the question of the future of Pruy House assuming SMRA ultimately receives the Weinstein house and property.

There are currently three vacancies on the board of directors, including the slot held by Karalyn Lamb who has resigned. Karalyn will continue to be active in her area of interest— encouraging the use of native plants and dealing with the problem of invasive plants. She has joined the board of the Native Plant Center at Westchester Community College.

A Nominating Committee will be formed to suggest potential nominees to fill the SMRA board vacancies. Bill will chair. Ed Mertz has agreed to join the committee; a third member is being sought. (Following this board meeting, James Gmelin agreed to join the Nominating Committee.)

Finance Committee– Philip Heidelberger

The portfolio balance on October 1, 2017 was \$988,789, a 6.8% (\$63,198) increase for the year. There have been \$26,350 in withdrawals from the endowment so far during 2017. As of October 1st, we are 31.3% (\$48,005) 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

Reference Operating Revenues and Expenses Report for the 9 months ended September 30, 2017 that Tom distributed to meeting attendees. Total revenues are approximately \$7,500 over budget primarily due to donations exceeding budgeted expectations. Expenses are approximately \$2,000 less than budget. One factor is reduced payroll because the office manager and development consultant have worked fewer hours than estimated. The expectation is that most expense lines will be close to budgeted amounts although Pruy Garden expenses have already exceeded the budgeted amount. Unbudgeted Pruy House repairs and costs for the new seed shed totaled about \$10,000 as of September 30th and are expected to exceed \$15,000 by year-end. \$22,000 has been transferred out of the SMRA endowment to date this year.

Tom reminded board members that 2018 budgets need to be covered at the upcoming November committee meetings.

Development Report– Robert McCrillis

Reference printed Membership and Fund Drive Report dated October 2, 2017 that Robert distributed to meeting attendees. Total membership is at 943, including 491 chapter members.

Unfortunately, David Yarnold will be unable to attend the 2018 SMRA Annual Meeting and Dinner. A replacement is being sought.

Seed Sale– Ken Novenstern

Our one-day annual seed sale will be held on October 14 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm adjacent to New Castle Town Hall. The seed sale is our largest single fundraising effort. It has also been a successful recruiting tool for adding new members. Ongoing seed sale dates are the third Saturday of each month from November through April; these supplemental sales are held from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm on the respective dates. The new seed shed was installed by Man Products on Wednesday, September 20.

Executive Director’s Report– Anne Swaim

Anne discussed the positive impacts being made by SMRA’s collaboration with the NYS Connect Kids to Parks program, noting that 18 field trips to Rockefeller State Park Preserve for 5th graders from Ossining have been scheduled with additional inquiries from Mt. Vernon and Bronx schools.

An intern from Peekskill High School will be working to digitize data collected in the 1970s and 1980s of sanctuary plant records with an initial focus on Brinton Brook and Pruy Sanctuaries.

The January scholarship deadline should be revised. By January, the application deadlines have already passed for some of the trips and programs to which scholarship applicants apply; a rolling scholarship award schedule may make more sense. The Finance Committee will discuss this further.

Sanctuaries– Michael Madias

Michael reported on the September 23 workday at Graff Sanctuary in which invasive plants were removed. On September 29, Michael met with Bonnie Barrett who donated native plants for Brinton Brook Sanctuary. Donations of plants have also been received from Donna Lassiter. SMRA is grateful for these generous gifts. On September 30, Michael led a Trees for Tribes planting at Brinton Brook. He was assisted by Peekskill High School students. Additional plants (mostly evergreen trees) will be planted in Brinton at a later date.

Sanctuaries (cont'd)

We are investigating the addition of gravel for the parking area at Haas, the seed shed parking lot at Pruyne and the edges of the office walkway.

Programs and Field Trips– Debbie Van Zyl

Debbie asked board members to let her know of any ideas for 2018 trips and programs. The recent canoe trip to Audubon's Constitution Marsh was a very successful, enjoyable event.

Kathleen discussed the SMRA nature book club; the initial meeting is scheduled for October 3 at the Mt. Pleasant Library; the book is *Eye of the Albatross*. Kathleen asked board members to let her know of other books that may be appropriate for the book club.

Advocacy– Tom Ruth

Tom and Bill attended a working potluck dinner hosted by Westchester Land Trust on September 27 to continue planning the future direction of the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2HRCP). SMRA and other H2HRCP partners will soon receive a survey to help in this planning process.

The Advocacy Committee will hold its next meeting on November 6.

Anne discussed the upcoming Audubon New York Fall Council meeting to be held at various upstate locations. Anne, Sarah, Valerie and Richard are planning to attend.

Newsletter– Anne Swaim

The deadline for the next newsletter is November 1 for the Winter 2017-18 issue.

Hospitality– Jean Sparacin

Thanks were expressed to Jean for her efforts to set up tonight's potluck on short notice.

New Business– Anne Swaim

The Red-shouldered hawk that was rescued after being trapped in a tree in Mt. Kisco has recovered from its injuries. Board members were invited to attend the scheduled release of the bird on October 3.

At 8:28 the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote.