

**Saw Mill River Audubon
December 4, 2017 Board Meeting Minutes
Meeting at the Croton Point County Park 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, Robert McCrillis, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenstern, Nina Romanoff, Tom Ruth, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg, Debbie Van Zyl, Kathleen Williamson. Anne Swaim was also present.

ABSENT: Joanne, Robert, Nina, Debbie

Meeting started at 7:31 pm after attendees finished writing personalized PS notes to follow-up fundraising letters.

President's Report– Valerie Lyle

Sarah moved with Brian seconding that minutes of the Oct. 2 board meeting be approved. The motion was adopted with all present voting in favor.

Committee action plans from the board retreat that was held on Nov. 4 were distributed. A 1-page summary of visioning concepts for the potential Weinstein property donation will be distributed in the future. Anne said that she felt that the discussion about the Weinstein property developed a number of positive ideas that could serve as talking points for future discussions with the Weinstains.

Val informed the board that board action was required to approve a nominating committee, which will have the task of recommending candidates to fill the vacancies on the board of directors. The proposed committee will consist of Bill as chair and two non-director members: Ed Mertz and Jim Gmelin. Phil moved that the nominating committee as proposed be approved with Rik seconding. The motion was adopted with all present voting in favor.

Finance Committee– Philip Heidelberger

For our official quarterly report, as of October 1, 2017 the portfolio balance was \$988,789, a 6.8% (\$63,198) increase above the January 1, 2017 balance of \$925,591. The three month, one year and three year investment rates of return were 3.0%, 11.3% and 6.2% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 2.6%, 8.5% and 4.2% for the same periods. More recently, the balance on December 1, 2017 was \$965,388, a 4.3% (\$39,737) increase for the year. There have been \$77,350 in withdrawals from the endowment so far during 2017, including \$51,000 during the months of October and November which accounts for the approximately \$23,000 drop in balance since October 1st despite a rising stock market. As of December 1st, we are 21.0% (\$32,221) 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 the SMRA budget report dated Dec. 4, 2017 that Tom distributed to meeting attendees. Revenues for 2017 are ahead of the budgeted amount by approximately \$12,500. This is primarily due to receipt of donations in amounts greater than budgeted. Total expenses are very close to budget.

The 2018 budget amount for revenues will have an increase of \$10,000 over 2017. For 2018, budgeted expenses for the seed sale will remain the same, while education program expenses will increase by about \$1,400. The budget line for salaries and benefits will increase to \$73,500 in 2018 from \$71,000 in the current year. The office operations budget reflects a decrease of about \$300, mostly because of changes to the way SMRA is charged for services from Verizon.

There were approximately \$16,000 spent on non-budgeted capital improvements, including repairs to Pruyn House and the purchase and installation of a new shed for seed storage.

In 2018, all of the monies received from the Pruyn garden endowment will be used to pay for the remainder owed for the new garden fence.

The 2018 advocacy expense line reflects a budget increase of \$500; all 2017 advocacy expenses were for expenses related to Audubon New York Council meetings and were about \$600 greater than budgeted.

Treasurer's Report cont'd– Tom McEnerney

Kathleen raised the question of whether obtaining additional grants from foundations or other sources could help raise revenues for SMRA. Anne explained that grants are typically project-specific and don't help with the day to day operating budget but that we are open to all ideas and assistance for grant research.

Tom R. moved that the 2018 budget be adopted by the board; Phil seconded the motion. The budget was approved with all present voting in the affirmative.

Development Report– Valerie Lyle

Reference printed Membership and Fund Drive Report dated Dec. 4, 2017 that Val distributed to meeting attendees. Total membership is at 954, of which 494 are SMRA chapter members and 460 are joint NAS/SMRA members. Vendor issues at NAS have led to a loss of joint NAS/SMRA members; SMRA chapter membership has remained steady.

Annual fund donation receipts for 2017 are approximately \$4,000 ahead of 2016, reflecting the success of the annual appeal and especially with board member "PSing" efforts.

Barbara Campbell is drafting a grant request from Audubon New York to fund purchase of tools for habitat maintenance in our sanctuaries.

Seed Sale—Ken Novenster

Ongoing seed sales continue on the third Saturdays of each month through April; these supplemental sales are held from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. A sign up sheet was passed around for the upcoming sale on Dec. 16.

Executive Director's Report- Anne Swaim

We have 18 field trip days scheduled for spring 2018 to Rockefeller State Park Preserve as part of the NYS Connect Kids to Parks program. Students will be from PS#204 the Bronx. This program has been a great success. We are looking to invite some of our supporters on the spring trips to acquaint them with the value of the program.

Coyote trapping was done again at the Random Farms section of the Town of New Castle despite vocal opposition. While SMRA opposes this trapping, we declined to place a sign expressing opposition at our Pruyn Sanctuary. Phil proposed we have a science-based statement posted on our website explaining why trapping is counter-productive. The statement would also outline prudent steps to reduce the possibility of negative human-coyote interactions.

SMRA has signed on to an Audubon New York letter urging Governor Cuomo to fully fund the NYS Environmental Protection Fund. We also signed on to a letter to Westchester County to restore funding for County Parks' naturalists and curators.

Lunetta Explorer backpacks (funded by donations in memory of Don Lunetta) will be available in the Chappaqua Library and Croton Free Library. We are looking to expand the program to additional libraries. A sample backpack was passed around.

Sanctuaries: Michael Madias

Michael and Phil have been working to refresh trail markings in Pruyn Sanctuary; David Watson has provided assistance. Work has also been done on the Haas Sanctuary parking lot.

Michael has given a report on our latest Trees for Tribes planting to the NYS DEC.

The bow hunting program continues this hunting season in our Pruyn and Brinton Brook Sanctuaries. To date, six deer have been taken (three in each sanctuary).

Programs and Field Trips– Anne Swaim

The popular Members' Best Photos and Holiday Gathering will be held this year on Dec. 21 at the Croton Free Library. On Jan. 25, Fran Greenberg will share her photos and commentary of her visits to Costa Rica and Belize in a program at the Chappaqua Library. Ruth Moy hosted a lunch for the many Monday morning bird walkers at her home today. Tomorrow (Dec. 5) Kathleen will lead the Nature Book Club discussion at the Mt. Pleasant Library. The book to be discussed is *The Genius of Birds* by Jennifer Ackerman.

Advocacy– Tom Ruth

Topics are being developed for a newsletter column on the impacts of climate change. Board members were invited to a talk by Jonathan P. Rose hosted by H2H at Pace University, Pleasantville, on Dec. 6.

Richard discussed a New York Times article on regenerative farming. Tom will raise this issue with H2H.

Newsletter– Brian Kluepfel

The deadline for the next newsletter is January 15 for the Spring 2018 issue which will also include the annual dinner invitation and the 2018 proxy ballot.

Hospitality- Jean Sparacin

Jean passed around a sign up sheet for the annual Soup Social scheduled for January 6 at Croton Point Nature Center. Thanks were expressed to Cary for giving each attendee a bag of holiday treats.

New Business– Valerie Lyle

Val urged attendees to read the reports in the current newsletter about the fall Audubon New York Council meeting by Sarah and herself. We are in discussions with the Council and NAS to change their policy of total opposition to thermal solar power generation.

New Business– Anne Swaim

The water service pipe from the road to Pruyn House has a leak that needs to be addressed. We have one estimate to repair (\$3,900). A second estimate will be sought. Jean moved that an emergency repair expenditure of up to \$4,000 be approved by the board. Bill seconded this motion; all present voted in favor.

Sarah announced that she is moving out of the area and that she will resign from the board following the January 2018 meeting. Board members wished her well but said she will be missed.

Val asked that a board member move to adjourn the meeting. Kathleen so moved with Sarah providing a second. All present voted in favor.