

Saw Mill River Audubon
January 15, 2018 Board Meeting Minutes
Meeting at the Croton Point County Park Nature Center, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

Present (in bold type): Cary Andrews, Roger Garrison, Sarah Hansen, Phil Heidelberger, 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.

Also present were Executive Director Anne Swaim, Nominating Committee member Ed Mertz and prospective board nominees Ginger Bernardin, Earl DePass and Lynn Salmon

ABSENT: Joanne, Robert, Nina

Meeting started at 7:24 pm.

President's Report—Valerie Lyle

Ken moved with Kathleen seconding that minutes of the Dec. 4, 2017 board meeting be approved. The motion was adopted with all present voting in favor.

Robert is recovering at an in-hospital rehab facility; he looks forward to returning to the board meetings as soon as possible.

The SMRA Annual Dinner will be held on Apr. 8 at Crabtree's Kittle House in Mt. Kisco. Kevin Hils, Bird Curator at the Bronx Zoo will be the featured speaker.

A sign-up sheet was circulated requesting volunteers for the various SMRA locations at the 2018 EagleFest to be held Feb. 10 (snow date: Feb. 11).

This is the final meeting for Sarah Hansen, who is resigning from the board because she is relocating. A gift of a subscription to Bird Watcher's Digest was given to Sarah.

David Yarnold, President and CEO of National Audubon, will be speaking at the upcoming Bedford 2020 Climate Action Summit (Feb. 3).

Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger

The portfolio balance on January 1, 2018 was \$967,432, a \$41,841 (4.5%) increase for the full year. There were \$82,350 (8.9%) in withdrawals from and \$500 (0.1%) in additions to the endowment during 2017. As of January 1st, we are 35,785 (25.7%) 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 2017 Operating Revenue and Expenses Report and Explanation of Unbudgeted Revenues and Expenses Report that were distributed to meeting attendees.

2017 revenues were about \$13,000 ahead of budget, primarily due to donations. Seed sale revenues were less than budgeted. Expenses were very close to the budgeted amount. There was approximately a \$64,000 deficit (revenues minus expenses). Additionally, unbudgeted expenses were approximately \$26,000 while unbudgeted revenues were about \$4,000. Endowment withdrawals totaled \$78,000 (8.8%), an increase over the previous year. Fortunately, the rising investment markets provided a cushion.

Development Report—Valerie Lyle

Reference printed Membership and Fund Drive Report dated Jan. 8, 2018 that was distributed to meeting attendees. Total membership is at 958, of which 500 are SMRA chapter members and 458 are joint NAS/SMRA members.

Annual fund donation receipts for 2017 are ahead of those for 2016, reflecting the success of the annual appeal and board members writing personal PS notes on appeal letters. Membership numbers are stable. Follow-up mailings done in December 2017 added \$7,200 to Annual Fund revenues; an additional \$1,900 has been received in January 2018.

Seed Sale—Ken Novenster

A sign-up sheet was passed around for volunteers for the third Saturday seed sale scheduled for Jan. 20.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

SMRA's Coyote Position Statement was distributed to meeting attendees. Rik moved (with Ken seconding) that the board approve the statement with a suggested addition to the statement pointing out that pet dogs and other animals are also subject to being caught in the leg-hold traps used for coyotes. The motion was adopted with all present voting in favor.

The Weinstein Property Donation Committee is preparing a status statement for the board. The Weinstein's attorney has called Ken; Ken suggested that the Committee hold a meeting with the Weinstains and their attorney.

Thirteen people have signed up for the 3-day Adirondack birding trip scheduled for February.

Janelle Robbins has accepted a position with an environmental consulting firm; she will be leaving her executive director position at Bedford Audubon in mid-January.

On Jan. 14, SMRA hosted the New York State Young Birders Club at Mariandale. This was a very successful event. Anne led a walk for the Young Birders at Croton Point Park with over 50 in attendance with assistance from Larry Trachtenberg as well as Michael Bochnik from Hudson River Audubon.

SMRA is preparing a position paper on concerns we have with the Westchester County Parks. This document will be presented to the transition task force put in place by newly elected County Executive Latimer. Our main concern is lack of public input and accountability on the part of Westchester County Parks.

The statement was circulated to board officers previously and copies of the draft were circulated to the board at this meeting. Additional board input is welcome with the caveat that we need to have a final statement ready within approximately 1 week. The statement enumerates questionable practices by Westchester Parks in managing wildlife habitat at Croton Point and other County Parks as well as other concerns.

Phil moved that the statement for the Latimer transition team be approved in principle. Cary seconded the motion. The motion was adopted with all present voting in favor.

In response to a question from Phil, Anne said that moisture observed in the new seed shed is thought to be condensation resulting from the wide temperature swings in early January but Man Products has been asked to check the shed later in January when they are next in our area.

Sanctuaries—Michael Madias

The bow hunting program at Pruyn and Brinton Brook Sanctuaries resulted in eight deer being taken (four at each property) in the 2017 hunting season.

SMRA has received a grant for tools to aid in habitat management in our sanctuaries. We are applying for one or more National Audubon Plants for Birds grants for native planting and public outreach in our sanctuaries.

Programs and Field Trips—Debbie van Zyl

SMRA Members' Best Photos and Holiday Gathering on Dec. 21, 2017 was well-attended with over 40 people enjoying the program at the Croton Free Library.

New Year's Day was bitterly cold but a total of 14 people turned out for our annual First Day walk led by Larry at Rockwood Hall.

The Eagle Walk at George's Island Park on Jan. 6 and the following Soup Social at Croton Point Nature Center were additional events that were well-attended despite the extreme cold. Twenty-seven people went on the walk and more than 50 gathered for soup.

Programs and Field Trips cont'd

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.

A birding field trip to the Shawangunk Mountains is scheduled for Jan. 27.

Kathleen will lead the Nature Book Club discussion at the Mt. Pleasant Library on Feb. 6. The book to be discussed is *The Invention of Nature* by Andrea Wulf. On April 3, the book club will discuss *The Evolution of Beauty* by Richard Prum. Kathleen reported that enthusiasm for the book club is growing—18 people attended the December 2017 discussion of *The Genius of Birds*.

Charlie Roberto would like to schedule an end-of-season Eagle field trip on March 3 followed by a chili potluck.

A number of ideas have been received from board members for spring programs; more input is welcome. Let Debbie know your ideas.

Advocacy—Tom Ruth

Jonathan F.P. Rose gave a stimulating talk to an H2H meeting at Pace University on Dec. 6, 2017. Tom, Bill, Richard and Kathleen represented SMRA. The talk centered on how to achieve landscape scale conservation and development goals in an equitable and sustainable way.

Rik is working on the first of the SMRA newsletter articles that will report on local efforts to deal with climate change.

Newsletter—Brian Kluepfel

The deadline for the next newsletter is Jan. 22 (spring 2018 issue). The pros and cons of accepting advertising for the newsletter were briefly discussed.

Other News—various

Cary showed an article mentioning SMRA in *The Journal News*. Office manager Ellen Heidelberger has done a good job of getting publicity.

Val noted that tonight's meeting agenda lists the dates for upcoming board of directors meetings in 2018. Also, Patricia Loquet is making a beautiful quilt that will be auctioned off as a fundraiser. It will be ready for display at EagleFest.

Hospitality—Jean Sparacin

The board thanked Jean for arranging meeting refreshments.

Adjourn

Cary moved that the meeting be adjourned. Tom R. seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved at 8:35 pm.