

**Saw Mill River Audubon**  
**March 5, 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, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, William Kellner, Brian Kluepfel, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenster, Nina Romanoff, Tom Ruth, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg, Debbie van Zyl, Kathleen Williamson.** Anne Swaim and board nominees Ginger Bernardin and Earl DePass were also present.

ABSENT: Rik, Debbie

Meeting started at 7:23 pm.

**President's Report—Valerie Lyle**

Tom R. moved with Richard seconding that minutes of the Feb. 5 board meeting be approved. The motion was adopted with all present voting in favor.

It was with great sadness that the passing of Robert McCrillis on March 2 was noted. Robert was a past President of SMRA. He held the office for 12 years. At the time of his death he was serving as Chairman of the Board of Directors. A number of board members present at the meeting paid tribute to Robert's many accomplishments during his years of service to SMRA. Not only was Robert instrumental in moving SMRA forward, he was a wonderful friend and colleague. He will be missed.

One of Robert's initiatives as SMRA President was establishing our Annual Meeting and Dinner, which is a much-anticipated event every year. This year's dinner will be held at Crabtree's Kittle House in Chappaqua on Sunday, April 8. Board members are urged to purchase their tickets and publicize the event. Kevin Hils, Bird Curator at Wildlife Conservation Society's Bronx Zoo will be the featured speaker.

The committee that is working on the potential donation of the Weinstein property will be chaired by Phil. Phil was asked to speak to the board about recent activities of this committee.

**Weinstein donation—Philip Heidelberger**

In a discussion Phil had with Seth McKee of Scenic Hudson it was determined that Scenic Hudson is not a suitable partner for SMRA to work with on the property and house donation.

Tom McEnerney, Phil, and Valerie met with Kristen Centre, staff attorney at the Pro Bono Partnership, to discuss possible engagement with SMRA on the Weinstein property donation, as well as assistance with revising the SMRA bylaws. The Pro Bono partnership offered to accept SMRA as a client and has sent us an engagement letter. The members of the Weinstein committee voted in favor of engaging with PBP for assistance on the Weinstein donation, and the letter of engagement was signed and returned to PBP. PBP will now conduct a search for volunteer attorneys to represent SMRA in the Weinstein donation negotiations and legal work.

Members of the committee had a meeting with Fred Rosenberg, an estate attorney, to discuss the possibility of his advising SMRA regarding the property transfer. No decision has been made on this yet.

**Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger**

As of March 1, 2018 the portfolio balance was \$966,880, a \$552 (0.1%) decrease below the January 1, 2018 balance of \$967,432. The portfolio declined \$26,965 (2.7%) during the month of February. There have been \$2,885 in withdrawals from and \$500 in additions to the endowment during 2018. As of March 1st, we are \$43,001 (30.9%) 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**

A written report was not prepared because we are only 2-months into the new year. Cash flow is plus \$7,000, mostly due to a \$5,000 grant from the National Audubon Society (see Donna Lassiter's report, below) and receipts from the recent Adirondack trip.

The Larry Light Scholarship Fund has a fund balance of approximately \$29,000. It is recommended that utilize up to \$1,800 in scholarship funds for 2018.

**Treasurer's Report cont'd—Tom McEnerney**

A written report on SMRA's insurance policies is being prepared. The focus will be on possible changes to coverage limits. Nationwide has dropped SMRA's disability insurance policy. The Hartford is now handling disability insurance for us. The transition to the new carrier has resulted in SMRA being double-billed for the period prior to Jan. 1, 2018. Tom is working to resolve this problem.

The SMRA bylaws have a number of deficiencies because of revisions to NYS not-for-profit law that were made in recent years. As noted above in the Weinstein committee report, volunteer lawyers working via the Pro Bono Partnership will review SMRA's current bylaws and suggest revisions. In addition, the PBP lawyer who met with Phil, Tom Mc, and Valerie last week noted that SMRA, which incorporated in 1963, is a membership organization, in which members must vote on the board of directors and on any changes to the certificate of incorporation. Since 1970, non-profits have been allowed to incorporate as non-membership organizations, where the current board of directors selects new directors and the general membership has no voting role. Kristen suggested that SMRA might want to consider becoming a non-membership organization. To do so, the membership would have to vote on this change to our certificate of incorporation. Kristen further noted that under our current status as a membership organization, members are supposed to vote on the board of directors, but the board itself elects the officers. Our current bylaws provide for the members to elect the officers as well as the board of directors. After this meeting, the members of the bylaws review committee - Phil, Tom Mc, and Larry Trachtenberg - voted in favor of having PBP review and assist in amending our bylaws.

A small increase in receipts under the Amazon Smile charity donation program was noted.

**Development Report—Valerie Lyle**

[Reference Membership and Fund Drive Report dated Mar. 5, 2018 that was distributed to meeting attendees. Page two of the handout references SMRA successful efforts in getting approval for a Plants for Birds Burke Grant from National Audubon as well as Barbara Campbell's work on the upcoming annual appeal.]

Membership continues to grow. Total membership is at 979, of which 484 are SMRA chapter members and 495 are joint NAS/SMRA members.

The board applauded a very generous donation of \$20,000 received from one of Larry's clients.

**Seed Sale—Ken Novensterm**

We are looking for volunteers for the third Saturday seed sales scheduled for Mar. and Apr. The Feb. sale receipts totaled over \$600.

**Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim**

On Feb. 12 Anne, Val, Ken, Tom R. and Charlie Roberto met with Kathleen O'Connor, Commissioner of Westchester County Parks Recreation and Conservation. Other members of Commissioner O'Connor's staff were also present. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the issues raised in SMRA's memo regarding concerns we have with the management of Westchester County Parks.

One of the topics discussed at the meeting was the problem of the Croton Point Park RV campground being used as a permanent residence. The County officials noted that detailed regulations have been issued that prohibit this type of usage of the campground. It is SMRA's position that these regulations need to be publicized by, among other things, being posted on the County web site.

Another topic covered was the need to make public the individual park master plans. The County needs to establish a mechanism for the public to review and comment on these plans. A deficiency, in SMRA's opinion, is the lack of a plan to replace trees that die or are felled by storms.

Anne is working with County officials to review the mowing plan for the Croton Point landfill.

**Executive Director's Report cont'd—Anne Swaim**

Richard commented that SMRA's concerns with parks' management should be aired with appropriate members of the Westchester County Legislature. Ken noted that we should be somewhat patient with the County Parks Dept. as they are still struggling with the effects of budget cuts and personnel loss that occurred under the previous County administration. Bringing our concerns to the County legislators should be done in a way that supports the efforts of the new administration to fix problems in the County parks. Ken went on to suggest that SMRA should bring together a team to assist the County with creation of a master plan for Croton Point Park.

AVID is state-wide citizen science program to **Assess the Vegetative Impacts from Deer** offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension. SMRA is planning to partner with Teatown to host a Lower Hudson training session for AVID volunteers. Saturday May 5 is the tentative date.

**Sanctuaries—Michael Madias**

Tree damage from the recent storm at Graff and Pruyn Sanctuaries is being assessed; damage at Brinton appears to be minor. Upcoming work includes a late March mowing of the Brinton Brook meadow and re-blazing the Choate Sanctuary trails. A workday for making improvements at the Haas Sanctuary will be scheduled.

**Pruyn Garden and Arboretum—Donna Lassiter**

SMRA has received a \$5,000 Plants for Birds grant from National Audubon. We will be planting a demonstration native grass and perennial meadow on what is now lawn at Pruyn Sanctuary. Native grasses and meadow perennials will be planted in individual 8' x 8' sections of this new garden. There will be a total of 500 new plants. Our membership and the broader public will be kept informed on the progress of these plantings by frequent online postings and reports in the SMRA newsletter.

**Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim** (reporting for Debbie van Zyl)

We have a busy spring ahead with many field trips and programs. A few highlights are:

- On Mar. 22 Anne will lead a program at the Chappaqua Library about the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird citizen science program. Attendees will learn how eBird contributes to global conservation science and how we can participate in eBird as individual birders.
- Charlie Robert will lead a walk at Croton Point Park on the evening of Mar. 25 to view the display flights of Woodcocks.
- A walk on the trails of Audubon Greenwich is scheduled for Mar. 31.
- SMRA's Annual Meeting is April 8 (see President's Report, above).
- On May 24, Melissa Grigione of Pace University will present a program at the Croton Library on the ecology of large predators such as black bear, coyote and mountain lions and how human-induced landscape changes impact these animals.

Charlie Roberto led an Eagle walk followed by a chili lunch at the Croton Point Nature Center on Mar. 4. This was a fun event with several families with children participating.

The recent Adirondack weekend trip was successful. Joan Collins did a great job finding birds for us. We are considering using Joan on a trip to look for the Bicknell's Thrush.

Kathleen discussed the Films on Purpose series in Pleasantville featuring films on the environment and social justice. Our planned showing of the film *Albatross* at the Jacob Burns Film Center has hit a bit of snag with the filmmaker refusing to allow a showing where tickets are sold. We may need to change the venue. (Post meeting note: the film will now run at Burns as scheduled.)

**Programs and Field Trips cont'd—Anne Swaim** (reporting for Debbie van Zyl)

Kathleen also reminded the board of the Apr. 3 meeting of SMRA's Nature Book Club. The book to be discussed is *The Evolution of Beauty* by Richard Prum. On June 19 the club will discuss *Birding without Borders* by Noah Strycker. The book club meets at the Mt. Pleasant Library at 7:00 pm.

**Advocacy—Tom Ruth**

Reference was made to SMRA's position statement on appropriate ways to deal with coyotes as these animals continue to expand their populations in our suburban landscape. SMRA is monitoring recent incidents involving coyotes in Yonkers and at the Muscoot Farm.

The Hudson River barge anchorage proposal was the subject of workshop hosted by the U.S. Coast Guard, which will issue a report on input received. New York State has implemented a law enabling the DEC to delineate tanker avoidance areas and create guidelines for anchorages. SMRA favors issuance of regulations under this law.

Richard and Tom R. will attend the spring Audubon NY Council meeting in Saratoga Springs. The focus of the meeting will be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty. Richard pointed out that proposals by the Trump administration would weaken the treaty; he said SMRA should advocate for maintaining this important treaty. A second issue at the Council meeting will be how Audubon and its chapters can foster diversity. The newly named Executive Director of Audubon New York is Ana Paula Tavares, formerly of the Rainforest Alliance.

**Newsletter— Brian Kluepfel**

The deadline for the summer issue is May 1.

**Hospitality—Jean Sparacin**

The board thanked Jean for arranging meeting refreshments.

**Adjournment—Valerie Lyle**

The board, with all present voting affirmatively, approved adjourning the meeting at 8:58 pm.