

Saw Mill River Audubon
May 7, 2018 Board Meeting Minutes
Meeting at the Croton Point County Park Nature Center, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

Present (in bold type): Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Earl DePass, Roger Garrison, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, William Kellner, Brian Kluepfel, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenstern, Nina Romanoff, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg, Debbie van Zyl, Kathleen Williamson. Anne Swaim was also present.

ABSENT: Nina, Jean

Meeting started at 7:23 pm.

President's Report—Valerie Lyle

Ken moved with Rik seconding that minutes of the Mar. 5 board meeting and Apr. 8 annual meeting be approved. The motion was adopted with all present voting in favor.

Valerie asked for nominations to replace SMRA board chair Robert McCrillis who died on March 1, 2018. Tom R. moved that Richard Saravay replace Robert as board chair. According to SMRA bylaws, Richard will serve in this one-year position until the 2019 Annual meeting. Bill seconded this motion. The board voted unanimously to approve Richard's selection as chairman of the board.

One of Robert's initiatives as SMRA President was establishing our Annual Meeting and Dinner. Robert was also instrumental in selecting this year's venue, Crabtree's Kittle House in Chappaqua. This year's dinner was a great success that Robert would have doubtlessly enjoyed. There were 76 guests (65 paid). Revenues for the dinner exceeded expenses by \$187. An additional \$1,500 (approximately) was raised by sales of tickets for the quilt raffle, which was held at the dinner. Board members commented that the food was excellent and that having an open bar was a positive. Presentations by Larry Light student scholarship winners were excellent. The featured speaker from the Bronx Zoo received mixed reviews. There were comments that his preparation was inadequate, noting the poor quality of the slides he presented. The 2019 Annual Meeting and Dinner will feature a potluck supper. The previous potluck venue, the New Castle Community Center, may be inadequate. A search will be conducted to find a more suitable location.

The annual SMRA picnic will take place at Senasqua Park in Croton-on-Hudson on June 4. The June board meeting will be held at this time. The invitation list for this year's picnic has been expanded with some donors and volunteers expected to attend, including Martin and Teresa Weinstein. A signup sheet was passed around for board members to indicate whether they will attend and how many guests and what food or drink items they will bring.

The latest version of the board roster was passed around for board members to review the accuracy of their entries.

The 2019 annual fund drive will kick off with our yearly "PS Party" to be held on May 14 at the Croton Point Nature Center.

Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger

[Reference handout: *Investment Portfolio Performance Report for Period Ending March 30, 2018.*] For our official quarterly report, as of April 1, 2018 the portfolio balance was \$961,618, a \$5,814 (0.6%) decrease below the January 1, 2018 balance of \$967,432. The three month, one year and three year investment rates of return were -0.4%, 9.2%, and 5.7% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of -1.1%, 6.4%, and 3.8% for the same periods. So far during 2018 there have been \$2,885 in withdrawals from and \$500 in additions to the endowment. The portfolio balance on May 1, 2018 was \$963,641, a \$3,791 (0.4%) decrease YTD. So despite the increased market volatility, the portfolio is little changed so far during 2018. As of May 1st, we are \$52,082 (37.5%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds.

Weinstein Donation Committee—Philip Heidelberger

Pro Bono Partnership arranged for the law firm of McCarter and English to represent us in the potential Weinstein property donation. They are one of the oldest (170 years) and largest (about 400 lawyers) law firms in the country with offices around the U.S. The lead attorneys on our case are both from their Newark office; Gabriel Mancuso, who specializes in real estate, and Meredith Walsh, who specializes in taxes. Valerie Lyle, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenster and I had an introductory teleconference with them on April 5th. We outlined the potential transaction and emphasized the importance of also receiving a sufficient endowment in addition to the land and houses. Gabriel and Meredith spoke with the Weinstein's lawyer, David Kellman, on about April 28th. They reported that David is in the process of gathering due diligence materials (title report, survey, financial statements, environmental reports, home inspection reports) of the property for us to review. They received the conservation easement, which they are reviewing. They let David know that one of our chief concerns, before agreeing to accept the property, is the financial self-sustainability of the property from their gift. To this end, the Weinstein's are in the process of compiling a summary of the carrying costs and David indicated that the Weinstains are open to an endowment or paying rent under a gift-leaseback situation, but they did not go into specifics. Gabriel and Meredith will be following up with David on an approximately weekly basis.

Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney

[Reference handout: *Operating Revenues and Expenses for the four months ended April 30, 2018.*] Donations year-to-date are ahead of budget, thanks largely to a very generous gift of \$20,000 from a client of Larry. Additionally, approximately \$3,000 in memorial donations in memory of Robert McCrillis have been received.

Mild weather earlier in the winter appears to be responsible for seed sale revenues being below budget.

Total revenues are approximately \$20,000 above expenses, year-to-date. Expenses are running close to budget.

A payment of \$2,885 for the new garden fence was made from the Pruyin Garden endowment fund leaving a balance of about \$12,500 available for further improvements.

The SMRA checking account balance increased by approximately \$16,000 since the beginning of the year.

Approximately \$3,500 remains in the Plants for Birds grant; these funds are expected to be spent soon.

Both the Adirondack and Arizona trips were profitable; page two of the written handout has an accounting of revenues vs. expenses for these trips.

The bottom line is that, so far, in terms of the SMRA budget, 2018 is doing much better than 2017.

Bylaws Committee Report—Tom McEnerney

Also provided via the Pro Bono Partnership, the Morgan Lewis law firm is working to bring SMRA's bylaws and certificate of incorporation into compliance with current New York law. The SMRA conflict of interest statement is also part of this review.

One suggestion is to change the election of new board members and officers from the current requirement of voting by the full membership to selection by the board of directors. This is permitted under the New York not-for-profit law per the revision of 1970. The full membership would have to vote to approve this change.

Development Report—Valerie Lyle

[Reference handout: *Membership and Fund Drive Report as of May 7, 2018.*] The number of SMRA chapter members is 500; total membership is up by 40 over December, 2017 with the addition of 40 joint NAS/SMRA members (total SMRA membership is thus 998).

Approximately \$8,000 has been received year-to-date in the annual fund drive. Some of this is revenue received from follow-up appeal letters made in late 2017 that was received in 2018.

Page two of the Membership Report handout covers Barbara Campbell's work on the upcoming annual appeal.

Seed Sale—Ken Novenstern

The final third Saturday seed sale held in April brought in \$640. All remaining seed is now discounted 25%. Planning for the 2018-2019 bird seed sale will start in early summer.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

Twelve paying participants went on the SMRA trip to southeastern Arizona with Anne Swaim and had an enjoyable time; 174 bird species were tallied. Main guide provided by Naturalist Journeys was not as knowledgeable as we would have hoped; however, daily local guides were excellent.

SMRA's first spring session with the NYS Connect Kids to Parks program will be held at the Rockefeller State Park Preserve on May 11. PS 205 of the Bronx has cancelled for this spring but plans to participate this autumn.

A letter sent by SMRA to NYS State Parks management discussing the positive impact made by Rockefeller State Park Preserve manager Susan Antenen was passed around.

The Federated Conservationists of Westchester County meeting on June 7 will honor all five Audubon chapters in the county to commemorate this year's 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Anne and Tom R. are planning to attend; Ken indicated his interest in attending as well.

AVID Training Session—Roger Garrison

AVID is a state-wide citizen science program to Assess the Vegetative Impacts from Deer offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension. SMRA, in partnership with Teatown Lake Reservation, hosted a training session on May 5 to train volunteers in the lower Hudson region to use the AVID protocols to assess deer impacts on the landscape. A baseline assessment is conducted on a 6' by 6' plot; after one year the plot is reassessed to monitor changes related to deer browsing. Roger, along with Michelle Garrison, participated in the training session. Two high school SMRA interns also attended the AVID workshop and we hope to set up AVID study plots in Pruyn and Brinton Brook Sanctuaries with their assistance.

Sanctuaries—Michael Madias

Earth Day plantings of native species were done at Brinton Brook Sanctuary. On Friday, May 11, we will plant trees acquired from the NYS DEC Saratoga Tree Nursery at Brinton Brook. A second planting of trees received from NYS will take place at the Graff Sanctuary on May 18.

On June 3 the trails in the Choate Sanctuary will be reblazed. (Post-meeting update: this will be done July 1.)

The planned addition of gravel to the Haas Sanctuary parking lot was postponed due to wet conditions.

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 two new garden beds. There will be a total of 500 new plants. The original date for the planting, May 5, has been rescheduled to May 12 (May 13 rain date). Volunteers are needed to help out. Prep work for the May 12 planting event will take place on May 10; volunteers from the board are requested to assist Donna.

Programs and Field Trips—Debbie van Zyl

Recent field trips have included a Woodcock walk at Croton Point Park, a bird walk at Greenwich Audubon and an early morning pop-up migration bird walk at Croton Point Park—all were enjoyable events.

Upcoming programs include a talk entitled Predators in the Landscape by Dr. Melissa Grigione, Professor of Biology at Pace University, to be held on May 24 at the Croton Free Library. On June 2 there will be a multi-site Dutchess County birding trip.

Programs and Field Trips cont'd

Note that our regular Monday morning bird walks will be starting at 7:30 am through October. We are also offering a short series of very early Friday morning walks during the spring migration.

Cary thanked board members who volunteered at the SMRA booth at the Croton Earth Day event.

Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson

We will discuss *Birding Without Borders* on June 19; *What the Robin Knows* will be discussed on September 25. The Book Club meets at the Mount Pleasant Public Library in Pleasantville at 7:00 pm.

The Films on Purpose series showing of the film *Albatross* at the Jacob Burns Film Center was a big success with 250 people attending. There was a question and answer session with the filmmaker afterwards.

Advocacy—Tom Ruth

SMRA's position statement on appropriate ways to deal with coyotes was discussed in light of recent incidents and a posting on the NYS DEC website was noted as being in sync with the SMRA comments.

SMRA's participation in the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership continues. The H2H Conservation Initiative Results report was passed around to meeting attendees.

Tom reported on his attendance at the workshop held by the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County on Communicating the Science of Climate Change. Techniques of engaging the public in a positive way to disseminate knowledge about climate change were discussed at the workshop.

Advocacy—Richard Saravay

Richard and Tom R. attended the spring Audubon NY Council meeting in Saratoga Springs. The focus of the meeting was the 100th 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. An exhibit on the treaty is currently at the New York Historical Society. Kathleen offered to lead a field trip to view the exhibit. A second field trip to view the Audubon Mural Project in upper Manhattan was also discussed.

A second issue at the spring Council meeting was about how Audubon and its chapters can foster diversity. The newly named Executive Director of Audubon New York/Connecticut is Ana Paula Tavares, formerly of the Rainforest Alliance. Mike Berger has been named Managing Director of Audubon New York.

The fall Audubon New York council meeting will be held in late October in Lake Placid.

Richard attended Governor Cuomo's press conference on the proposal to open offshore waters to oil drilling and what New York State is doing to oppose this.

Newsletter— Brian Kluepfel

The summer issue is being prepared. Board members were thanked for their written submissions.

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

Debbie, with Rik seconding, motioned that the meeting be adjourned. The board, with all present voting affirmatively, approved adjourning the meeting at 8:45 pm.