

Saw Mill River Audubon
September 10, 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: Cary, Rik, Ken, Nina, Jean, Debbie, Kathleen

Meeting started at 7:23 pm.

President's Report—Valerie Lyle

Tom R. moved with Lynn seconding that minutes of the June 4 board meeting be approved. The motion was adopted with all present voting in favor.

Valerie noted that the upcoming board meeting scheduled for Oct. 1 has been rescheduled to Oct. 15 due to the California trip. The December meeting, originally planned for Dec. 3, has been changed to Dec. 10.

The NAS is offering webinars that provide information on volunteer engagement. SMRA board members are urged to participate. The information for this webinar will be emailed to all following tonight's meeting.

Bill will chair the Nominating Committee and has asked last year's members, Jim Gmelin and Ed Mertz, to serve again this year.

The SMRA office will not be open on Mondays for the period Nov. 5 to Nov. 30 while Ellen is away. Wednesday and Friday hours will not be affected.

The Executive Committee agreed over the summer that the Pruyn House apartment should be painted. We will be getting quotes for this job.

Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger

[Reference handout: *Investment Portfolio Performance Report for Period Ending June 30, 2018.*] For our official quarterly report, as of July 1, 2018 the portfolio balance was \$976,399, a \$8,967 (0.9%) increase above the January 1, 2018 balance of \$967,432. The three-month, one year and three-year investment rates of return were 1.5%, 8.1%, and 6.4% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 0.8%, 5.2%, and 4.4% for the same periods. So far during 2018 there have been \$4,180 in withdrawals from and \$500 in additions to the endowment. The portfolio balance on September 1, 2018 was \$1,008,808, a \$41,376 (4.3%) increase YTD. As of September 1st, we are \$43,917 (31.6%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds.

Phil briefed the board on the work of the subcommittee of the Finance Committee that drafted changes to the SMRA control of funds and investment guidelines. Richard moved that the full board approve the proposed changes. Tom Ruth provided a second for the motion, which was then unanimously adopted by the board.

Weinstein Donation Committee—Philip Heidelberger

In late July Phil sent a note to our pro bono attorney at the law firm of McCarter and English asking that the following questions be answered by the Weinstains and/or their attorney:

1. what is the anticipated timeline for the donation?
2. what form will the donation take?
3. what is the size of the endowment that will be part of the donation?

Since no response was received from the Weinstein attorney, there was concern. Anne contacted Martin Weinstein to confirm that their plans are unchanged. Martin will contact their attorney to move things forward.

Bylaws Committee Report —Tom McEnerney

The law firm working on the changes to the bylaws informed SMRA that the bylaws changes would be provided to SMRA by the beginning of September. As this has not happened, Tom will follow-up.

Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney

[Reference handout: *Operating Revenues and Expenses for the eight months ended Aug. 31, 2018.*]

Total revenues are approximately \$83,000. This is about \$21,000 over budget, primarily due to a generous gift SMRA has received from the client of a board member. Most revenue categories are close to budgeted amounts. Expenses are also close to budgeted amounts; net expenses are approximately \$3,000 less than the amount budgeted.

SMRA has a positive cash flow due to the above-mentioned gift. It has not been necessary to take funds out of our endowment. The checking account balance has increased by about \$11,700 year-to-date. All in all, we are doing well this year from a financial perspective. The scholarship and garden endowments are in good shape.

Development Report—Valerie Lyle

[Reference handout: *Membership and Donation Report as of Sep. 10, 2018.*] The number of SMRA chapter members is 500; total membership is 960 when the 460 joint NAS/SMRA members are added to the chapter member number. As mentioned in the Treasurer's report above, the \$20,000 special gift received means that total donations are well above the budgeted amount. Additionally, this year's fund drive has been quite successful.

Seed Sale—Anne Swaim for Ken Novenster

Our fall seed sale will occur on one day this year: Oct. 13. A sign-up sheet was circulated asking for board members to help out at the fall sale. We also need volunteers from the board to place reminder phone calls to past seed customers who have not placed orders so far this year. Finally, help is requested at Pruyn Sanctuary on Sep. 14 to unload the seed arriving by truck from our supplier.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

SMRA's efforts are continuing to foster natural resources management plans for Westchester County Parks with an emphasis on Croton Point County Park. Anne, along with Karalyn Lamb and Charlie Roberto, attended a multi-agency meeting to discuss the upcoming Croton Point landfill restoration project. Attendees included Westchester County Parks, Westchester County Dept. of Environmental Facilities, Westchester County Dept. of Planning and Larry Weaner Landscape Associates. The Dept. of Environmental Facilities and Dept. of Planning have welcomed SMRA input and this is encouraging Parks to do the same.

All eighteen sixth grade classes from the Ossining School District will participate in the Connect Kids to Parks program at Rockefeller State Park Preserve this fall. We are exploring possible funding from Con Edison to do follow-up classroom programs for these same classes.

Con Edison has funded "pop-up" informational kiosks at Prospect Park via Audubon New York. SMRA is exploring Con Ed funding for a similar project in Croton Point Park.

Two "forest preschools" will be conducting programs this fall in SMRA's Brinton Brook and Pruyn Sanctuaries. Each session will allow six to ten students to have unstructured play time in these natural environments. The schools have signed memoranda of understanding with SMRA to cover safety issues; each school will also make a donation to SMRA.

The New York State Ornithological Association will hold its 71st Annual Meeting and New York State Birders Conference in Henrietta, NY on Oct. 5-7. It would be good if there could be a representative from SMRA in attendance.

SMRA is looking to publicize our Larry Light Scholarship program with local science teachers and scout leaders. Roger Garrison helped design the new scholarship flyer which has been sent to area middle and high school science teachers. Earl offered to help circulate this flyer to area scout leaders as well.

Executive Director's Report cont'd—Anne Swaim

The Mr. Lunetta's Explorer Bag program is now in eight libraries and we are hearing stories about how much the bags are being enjoyed. We are compiling usage numbers from participating libraries.

Advocacy—Tom Ruth

Tom is SMRA's representative on the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership's (H2H) working group on member training. Upcoming programs are being planned; H2H training programs will be open to members of H2H affiliates. The next training is "Using eBird to Monitor, Inform, and Engage," on October 24th, at Greenwich Audubon. Anne Swaim is the speaker.

Advocacy—Richard Saravay

Richard distributed to the board copies of the Audubon New York 2018 Policy Resolutions Survey with their suggestions of how to weight the various initiatives. There was some discussion on the proposed ratings for the 18 resolutions with encouragement to rate highly all the regional habitat resolutions.

SMRA has submitted edited language on Audubon New York's proposal opposing solar thermal projects. SMRA is suggesting that, instead of blanket opposition, these projects may be acceptable if they are done in an environmentally responsible way that minimizes harm to birds and other wildlife.

The proposed funding of a study to assess the possibility of building massive storm surge barriers to protect New York Harbor was discussed. Hudson Riverkeeper and others feel that, if built, this type of infrastructure could harm the environment in the harbor and the Hudson River because, even with the barriers in the open position, normal tidal flows would be impeded.

The Audubon New York fall council meeting will take place in Lake Placid. Anne and Valerie are planning to attend as is Richard Saravay, for part of the weekend.

Sanctuaries—Michael Madias

Recent sanctuary work days have included:

Haas Sanctuary parking field improvement (June 8)

Choate Sanctuary trail reblazing (July 1)

On July 7, Michael met with a masonry contractor to discuss drainage repairs to the Splitrock Spring outlet in Brinton Brook. Tom M. moved that the board approve spending \$3,000 dollars for the Split Rock Spring drainage repairs; Brian seconded the motion. All present voted to approve the resolution.

Daniel Machado, a Peekskill High School student, has set up plots in Brinton Brook and Pruyun Sanctuaries under the protocols of the AVID (Assessing Vegetative Impacts of Deer) program. Vegetation has been cataloged and changes will be monitored and submitted to the AVID database.

The sanctuary bow hunting program is proposed to take place this year from Nov. 1–Dec. 31 in Brinton Brook and Pruyun following the same protocols as past years. Michael proposed the addition of Choate Sanctuary to the program. Any hunting in Choate will only take place in the part of the sanctuary owned by SMRA. Larry moved that the board approve the bow hunting program for 2018; Brian seconded the motion. All present voted in favor.

Pruyn Garden and Arboretum—Donna Lassiter

The new native grass and perennial demonstration meadow funded by the Plants for Birds grants at Pruyun Sanctuary is doing very well. Board members are encouraged to visit the garden at the public open house scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 16

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim for Debbie van Zyl

Board members are encouraged to promote the upcoming programs on the Wildlife of Ecuador (Sep. 25 at Ossining Library) and discussion of the new book *Birding the Hudson Valley* (Oct. 21, Chappaqua Performing Arts Center). Speakers at the Ossining Library program will be board member Brian Kluepfel and his wife Paula Zorrilla. The program will be conducted in English and Spanish.

Our regular Monday morning bird walks will be starting at 7:30 am through September. October through March there will be an 8:30 starting time.

The California birding trip will run from Sep. 27–Oct. 4.

Please see the updated Google Calendar on the SMRA website for additional programs and field trips.

The Nature Book Club, hosted by board member Kathleen Williamson, discussed *What the Robin Knows* by Jon Young on Sep. 4. The next book club meeting will be on Nov. 6 to discuss *Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted* by Justin Martin. After that, we have tentatively scheduled Jan. 15th for a discussion of *The Sixth Extinction* by Elizabeth Kolbert.

Newsletter—Brian Kluepfel

Brian thanked board members for their newsletter contributions and expressed his hope for additional submissions.

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

The board expressed thanks to Joanne for providing refreshments

Richard, with Larry seconding, motioned that the meeting be adjourned. The board, with all present voting affirmatively, approved adjourning the meeting at 9:03 pm.