

**Saw Mill River Audubon**  
**December 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 Novenster, Nina Romanoff, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg, Debbie van Zyl, Kathleen Williamson.** Executive Director Anne Swaim and prospective board candidate Louisa Gagliardi were also present.

ABSENT: Lynn

Meeting started at 7:22 pm.

**President's Report—Valerie Lyle**

Kathleen moved with Debbie seconding that minutes of the Oct. 15 board meeting be approved. The motion was adopted with all present voting in favor.

It was noted that board members were asked to "PS" personal responses at tonight's meeting on fundraising letters to large donors who have yet to make a contribution in 2018.

Prospective Board of Directors candidate Louisa Gagliardi was introduced. Louisa was asked to speak briefly about her involvement with Audubon. She described how joining SMRA birding trips led her to want to become more involved with the organization. Louisa said she welcomed the opportunity to serve on the board.

A retreat for the board of directors is being planned for 2019. We are looking at a September date.

**Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney**

[Reference handout: *SMRA 2018 Budget 12-5-18.*] Revenue year-to-date is about \$24,000 over budgeted amount, primarily because of a generous donation from the client of a board member. Expenses are approximately \$4,000 under budget. The deficit will be within the five percent guideline.

The 2019 budget shows small increases in several line items; the net is a \$4,000 increase in expenses. The budget calls for salaries of staff members to remain unchanged. Budgeted revenues show a reduction in the revenue increase noted in 2018, which will result in a small increase in the deficit. There may be a future increase in spending for advocacy dependent on finalizing of plans for programs. Routine maintenance is included in the Pruyn house budget. Additional necessary repairs will be funded off budget, subject to Board approval of estimated costs for each project.

Board members were asked to think of revenue-raising activities for the upcoming year. An example is the highly successful quilt raffle.

Brian asked for specifics of what SMRA's auditors are checking for. Their most important function is to check for fraud on the part of board members who have access to the organization's funds. Val noted that a proper audit is an important reassurance for large donors.

Phil noted that a seven percent annual endowment withdrawal is not sustainable. A renewed focus on more effective fundraising is needed.

Tom R. moved that the 2019 budget be approved; Brian seconded this motion. All board members present, with the exception of Phil, voted in favor of adopting the 2019 budget. Phil abstained, noting a potential conflict of interest because his wife is a paid staff member of the organization.

**Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger**

[Reference handout: side 1—*Investment Portfolio and Asset Allocation Mix Oct. 1, 2018*; side 2—*Investment Portfolio Performance Report for Period Ending Sep. 30, 2018*] For our official quarterly report, as of October 1, 2018 the portfolio balance was \$1,007,682, a \$40,250 (4.2%) increase above the January 1, 2018 balance of \$967,432. The three-month, year-to-date, one year and three-year investment rates of return were 3.0%, 4.6%, 8.3% and 9.8% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 2.3%, 2.0%, 4.9% and 6.8% for the same periods.

**Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger cont'd.**

The portfolio balance on December 1, 2018 was \$936,325, a \$31,107 (3.2%) decrease YTD. As of December 1st, we are \$6,182 (4.4%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds. This drop in the margin was largely due to recent withdrawals of \$36,000 during the fourth quarter. So far during 2018 there have been \$40,180 in withdrawals from and \$500 in additions to the endowment.

**Bylaws Committee Report—Tom McEnerney**

Drafts of the amended bylaws, certificate of incorporation and conflict of interest policy have been received from our attorneys. Tom M., Larry and Phil will review. The documents have been drafted on the basis that SMRA will reincorporate as a non-member organization under New York's current Not-for-Profit Law. Currently, SMRA's Certificate of Incorporation and bylaws provide for the full membership to vote annually for board members. Under the revised documents, the board of directors will vote on board membership. This change will require approval by the full membership (hopefully to be placed on the ballot being prepared for the board and officers election in April 2019).

**Development Report—Valerie Lyle**

[Reference handout: *Membership and Fund Drive Report as of Dec.10, 2018.*] The number of SMRA chapter members is 506; adding joint NAS/SMRA members gives a total SMRA membership of 986. Board members were reminded to refer to page 2 of the handout for a report on Barbara Campbell's recent fundraising and grant solicitation efforts.

**Seed Sale—Ken Novenster**

Volunteers were requested for the upcoming third Saturday seed sale to be held on Dec. 15. Mild weather earlier this fall may be responsible for the slowdown in seed sales.

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

SMRA representatives have met six times since spring with Westchester County officials about plans for the Croton Point Park landfill restoration project. SMRA objected to the proposal to remove 90% of the vegetative cover for two years, arguing instead for work that would allow continued usage by nesting birds of the landfill habitat. The County and the project contractor (Larry Weiner Landscape Associates) have agreed to modify the proposal so that a perimeter of native grasses will remain while restoration work is done inside the perimeter. Work in the perimeter area will take place in the non-breeding season. It is hoped that the project will get underway in spring 2019. It is suggested that a program for the public be held (possibly in May) to keep local residents informed about the project, including the controversial but critical need for the use of herbicides. There is funding for three years of invasive plant removal on the site.

A \$3,600 grant from Con Edison will fund classroom programs by SMRA's educator in the Ossining schools as a follow-up to the NYS Connect Kids to Parks program. The Ossining students had previously visited the Rockefeller State Park Preserve with SMRA's educator as part of the state-funded program.

SMRA is hosting a trip to Nebraska from March 12-17, 2019 to view the Sandhill Cranes. We have 14 paid sign-ups.

SMRA has signed on to letters from Audubon New York protesting weakening of Federal fisheries management practices and urging Governor Cuomo to fully fund the Environmental Protection Fund and restore cuts made to DEC and State Parks staff.

**Advocacy—Tom Ruth**

The Advocacy Committee met prior to tonight's board meeting. The Committee discussed a one-day seminar on local impacts of climate change to be held in July 2019.

SMRA's participation in the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership continues. Anne presented a program for H2H partners at Audubon Greenwich on how to use the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird website and the benefits eBird brings to conservation science. We are looking to do a second program on eBird in early 2019, possibly at Mariandale in Ossining.

**Advocacy—Tom Ruth cont'd.**

Additional programs for H2H partners were held on the H2H pollinator pathways program and basics of getting funding through grants. H2H will hold an all partners meeting at Pace University's Pleasantville campus on Dec. 12. The guest speaker is Dr. Kate Brandes who will discuss the program she manages in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania that seeks to improve habitat by having residents choose native plants for their gardens. Bill and Tom R. are planning to attend.

Richard moved that the SMRA board approve SMRA's participation in the H2H All Partner Agreement. Carey provided a second for this motion, which was adopted unanimously by the board. The agreement may be terminated at any time by either H2H or SMRA.

Richard, Anne and Tom R. are planning to attend the Dec. 12 workshop in White Plains on "Confronting Climate Change." A report to the full board will be made in January.

**Sanctuaries—Michael Madias**

Only one person (Sarah Hansen) joined Michael for the Turkey Mountain hike on the day after Thanksgiving.

A meeting was held with the manager of the Hudson National Golf Course about a new structure planned for the course. Impacts are not expected on the adjacent SMRA Brinton Brook Sanctuary as the structure will not be near the sanctuary border.

Boundary walks at the SMRA sanctuaries continue with the following schedule: Dec. 14 (Pruyn); Dec. 19 (Graff); Dec. 21 (Choate).

The 2018 SMRA deer management program continues until the end of hunting season on Dec. 31. A total of 9 deer have been harvested at the three participating SMRA sanctuaries (Brinton Brook, Pruyn and Choate).

**Programs and Field Trips—Debbie van Zyl**

Members' bird and nature photography will be featured at the annual Members' Best program to be held at the Croton Free Library on Dec. 13. January programs include an eagle walk on Jan. 12 at Croton Point to be led by Charlie Roberto (followed by a soup social at the Croton Point Nature Center) and a Jan. 26 outing to the Shawangunk National Grasslands led by Kyle Bardwell. Also noted was the New Year's Day walk scheduled for Rockwood Hall (Larry is the leader) and the various upcoming Christmas Bird Counts.

Kathleen discussed a spring trip to the upper west side of Manhattan to see the Audubon Mural Project. A date in early April is planned.

**Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson**

We will discuss Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction* on Jan. 15. On Mar. 5, selected essays by John Muir will be discussed. The Book Club meets at the Mount Pleasant Public Library in Pleasantville at 7:00 pm.

**Newsletter— Brian Kluepfel**

The spring issue deadline is Feb. 1.

**Additional Business—Valerie Lyle**

Save the date: SMRA Annual Meeting and Dinner is scheduled for Apr. 14. A potluck supper is planned.

**Refreshments—Jean Sparacin**

The board thanked Richard, Debbie and Joanne for providing tonight's refreshments.

**Adjournment—Valerie Lyle**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57.