

Saw Mill River Audubon
February 4, 2019 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by William Kellner)
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. Executive Director Anne Swaim and board candidate Louisa Gagliardi were also present.

ABSENT: Earl, Brian, Joanne
Meeting started at 7:21 pm.

President's Report—Valerie Lyle

It was noted that a quorum is present.

Tickets for the quilt raffle were distributed for board members to sell. The beautiful quilt made by Jean was on display at the board meeting.

Phil moved to accept the minutes of the Jan. 7, 2019 meeting of the board of directors; Tom M. seconded the motion, which passed with all present voting affirmatively with the understanding that future minutes will reference member households as opposed to members when membership numbers are described.

The 2019 Annual Meeting and Dinner will take place on April 28 at the New Castle Community Center. Richard suggested inviting County Executive Latimer; Kathleen expressed support for extending this invitation. No action was taken by the board on this proposal.

Attention was called to the listing of upcoming board meeting dates through the first half of 2020 listed at the bottom of tonight's agenda.

Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney

A written report has not been provided as we are only one month into the new fiscal year. With revenues received in January we are cash flow-positive. There were no unusual expenses other than \$502 spent to repair a plumbing problem at Pruy House.

Board members have been provided with the new Conflict of Interest policy, which has been drafted to track statutory language in the New York State Not for Profit Corporation law. Val moved that the board adopt the Conflict of Interest policy; Kathleen seconded the motion. All present voted in the affirmative. Board members were asked to fill out and sign the certificates related to the Conflict of Interest policy.

SMRA attorneys have recommended that SMRA consider reincorporating as a non-voting membership corporation. Tom explained the primary reasons for reincorporation. Bill moved that the board approve the following:

1. SMRA will proceed to reincorporate as a non-voting corporation
2. As the membership must approve this change, a provision to accept reincorporation will be placed on the annual meeting ballot that will be provided to all members
3. A separate written statement explaining the provision to reincorporate as a non-voting corporation will be provided to the membership. The statement will express the opinion of the board that a yes vote is in the best interests of the corporation.

Tom R. seconded the motion, which was adopted by the board with all present voting affirmatively.

Treasurer's Report cont'd

SMRA's attorneys are reviewing a draft of revised corporate bylaws to reflect, among other things, the proposed reincorporation as a non-voting corporation. A second draft of the new bylaws is expected shortly from the attorneys. If the membership approves the provision to reincorporate, a vote will be held by the board to approve revised corporate bylaws at our May 6, 2019 meeting. Discussion of the proposed bylaws revision will be on the agenda for the March 4 meeting of the board of directors.

For 2019, the 5% withdrawal guideline for the Butterfly Garden endowment is a little over \$1,700. Ken moved that the board of directors approve withdrawal from the endowment of up to \$1,700 during 2019 for garden maintenance. Lynn seconded the motion, which was adopted by all present voting affirmatively.

Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger

For our official quarterly report, as of January 1, 2019 the portfolio balance was \$886,576, an \$80,856 (8.4%) decrease below the January 1, 2018 balance of \$967,432. The three-month, year-to-date, one year and three-year investment rates of return were -8.6%, -4.3%, -4.3% and 5.8% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of -7.2%, -5.3%, -5.3% and 3.6% for the same periods. There were \$40,180 in withdrawals from and \$750 in additions to the endowment during 2018. The portfolio balance on February 1, 2019 was \$939,186, a \$52,610 (5.9%) increase YTD. As of February 1st, we are \$8,057 (5.6%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds. So far during 2019, there have been \$250 in additions to the portfolio, representing a contribution to the Light Memorial Scholarship fund.

Pruyn House Committee—Ginger Bernardin

The 2019 Pruy House maintenance budget is \$1,000. Of this \$640 is already committed to 2019 septic service (\$500) and Burke service contact for the furnace (\$140), leaving only \$360 for any needed work by Danny Ferguson as well as any supplies to do that work.

However, this month we have already spent \$502 for a plumbing emergency, replacing failed valves and pipes in basement and outside tap.

We now anticipate needing at least \$800 in this budget line for 2019 for seven items we have identified as high priority maintenance items, also identified in our 2016 engineering inspection:

1. install grounded outlet upstairs for A/C (by electrician)
2. repair of switches for outdoor pole lights (by electrician)
3. repair of broken screens on front door and patio door
4. repair of glass pane in garage interior door (by Danny)
5. replacement of interior office/residence door knob and lock (by Danny)
6. repair of cold water tap in upstairs bathroom (by plumber)
7. chimney sweep in Fall 2019 (new chimney flue installed 2016, not swept since).

In addition, we are requesting \$2,300 for an additional Pruy House expense in 2019.

The front of Pruy House urgently needs an appearance upgrade including:

- power washing the siding to remove moss and mold
- scraping, priming and repainting all three front doorways and the garage doors.

This will also better protect the wooden doorframes and garage doors. We have received three quotes for the above work and selected JGS Painting of Yonkers, Gary Santamaria, a painter used by Tom Ruth.

The Pruy House Committee is identifying and ranking other pending maintenance items for the coming years and plans to present a multi-year plan of work at a future board meeting.

Before discussion and questions we recommend that the board approve spending \$3,100 to address these eight pending maintenance items for the Pruy building, including: the seven smaller maintenance items, listed above, totaling \$800, as well as \$2,300 for power washing the entire house and painting the front doorways and garage doors.

Pruyn House Committee cont'd

In the discussion that followed the Pruyn House Committee's report, Ken suggested that the \$3,100 figure above be changed to "up to \$3,500." Ginger moved that the board approve spending up to \$3,500 to address above-mentioned eight pending maintenance items for the Pruyn building including: the seven smaller maintenance items totaling \$800 as well as \$2300 for power washing the entire house and painting the front doorways and garage doors. Ken seconded this motion, which was approved by all present voting in the affirmative.

Development Report—Valerie Lyle

[Reference handout: *Membership and Donation Report as of Feb. 4, 2019.*] Membership numbers are similar to those in the December 2018 report, with a total of five new SMRA Chapter member households. There are currently 1,008 member households (519 SMRA Chapter member households and 489 joint NAS/SMRA Member households).

Fundraising Subcommittee—Kathleen Williamson

Board members are invited to a strategy session to be held Sunday, February 10, 3:30pm at Kathleen's home. Board members who are unable to attend are urged to submit ideas on how to increase fundraising to Kathleen in advance of this meeting.

Seed Sale—Ken Novenster

The third Saturday seed sale at Pruyn Sanctuary held in January brought in approximately \$600. Board members are being asked to consider joining the Seed Sale Committee, which so far has two members. The reinvigorated Seed Sale Committee will be tasked with exploring new ways to promote seed sales. Board members are reminded that the next third Saturday seed sale will be Feb. 16 at Pruyn.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

The Croton Point Park grassland restoration project for the main landfill is expected to go out to bid in March. Although the County has said the posts will not be numbered, as SMRA had requested, there will be delineation of critical habitat areas. The main contractor, Larry Weaner Landscape Associates will present SMRA's May 23rd program at the Croton Library to inform the public about the project. While a multi-year maintenance plan is being developed, grant funding only covers two years of work.

The issue of feral cats at the campground adjacent to the landfill in Croton Point Park is an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed. These cats present a serious threat to populations of grassland birds on the landfill.

Anne will be away on vacation from Mar. 23 through Apr. 8.

The New York Young Birders meeting hosted by SMRA has been rescheduled for Feb. 17 at Mariandale Retreat & Conference Center in Ossining. There will be a morning birding walk at Croton Point County Park before the meeting. This is a talented, enthusiastic group of young people. SMRA is pleased to be the host club.

This year's EagleFest is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 9. Larry has generously donated \$500 to sponsor SMRA's warming tent at George's Island County Park. Board members volunteering at the various SMRA EagleFest sites were reminded to pick up their nametags and take them on Saturday.

On Mar. 9 SMRA will host the Lower Hudson Audubon Chapter Roundtable at Mariandale. All ten lower Hudson chapters, including New York City Audubon, will attend. Anne will present a training session on eBird at Mariandale prior to the Roundtable program; a separate registration is required for this morning session through Westchester Land Trust. The Roundtable will cover local issues faced by the various Chapters, including challenges and successes. A one-hour roundtable, with each chapter highlighting one success and one challenge, will be followed by one-hour small group discussions on various topics of interest to Chapters including program and field trip planning, outreach including PR and social media, board matters and money matters. A fifth discussion group will focus on the idea of a "Climate Change Boot Camp" to be held in the fall.

Val raised the possibility of initiating a new advocacy group, Friends of Croton Point Park. This volunteer, non-profit group would have the ability to identify key needs to protect habitat in the park and possibly to provide funding for habitat improvement projects.

Advocacy—Tom Ruth

Board members are invited to attend upcoming Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H) training workshops; Tom will email a schedule of topics, dates and locations. The next workshop, on implanting the Pollinator Pathway Program, is scheduled for Mar. 5 in New Canaan. Future workshops will include early successional habitat management (May 1 and meadow habitat management (May 14.

The Advocacy Committee is planning a 1-day workshop in the fall of 2019, a Climate Change Boot Camp focused on “Mitigating Climate Change Where We Live.” The public will be invited; local Audubon chapters will be asked to participate with ideas discussed at the Mar. 9 Lower Hudson Audubon Chapter Roundtable.

Richard mentioned the upcoming Audubon New York Council meeting to be held in March in Saratoga Springs. Val said board members should consider attending a Council Meeting as they are informative and fun. Tom M. reminded the board that we have budgeted attendance by two members. Richard alerted the board to an exhibit at the New York Historical Society on the history of the Hudson Valley.

Sanctuaries—Michael Madias

Sanctuary Boundary walks will continue this winter.

Several spring sanctuary workdays will be scheduled to include tree and wildflower planting. Local scouting groups will assist with these planting projects.

Programs and Field Trips—Debbie van Zyl

Upcoming programs and field trips were described, including the Feb. 7 talk by naturalist Ted Gilman on backyard birds in winter, and the Feb. 17 afternoon birding walk in Croton Point Park. The recent trip to the Shawangunk Grasslands was very successful with great observations of Short-eared Owls and other grassland birds. Watch the calendar for future trips and programs.

Kathleen mentioned a trip to upper Manhattan to view the Audubon Murals project. We are hoping to schedule this in mid- to late April.

Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson

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.

On May 7 we will discuss *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* by Elisabeth Tova Bailey.

Richard referenced the recent book club discussion of *The Sixth Extinction* by Elizabeth Kolbert. He urged all board members to read this important book.

Newsletter— Anne Swaim (for Brian Kluepfel)

The spring issue deadline is now. The issue will be four pages to keep the weight down as the election ballot will be included in the mailing in addition to the newsletter. Supplemental material that does not make it into the printed newsletter could be made available in the SMRA blog.

Refreshments—Jean Sparacin

The board thanked Tom R. and Jean for providing refreshments.

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45.