

**Saw Mill River Audubon**  
**May 6, 2019 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by Bill Kellner)**  
**Meeting at the Croton Point County Park Nature Center, Croton-on-Hudson, NY**

**Present (in bold type): Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Earl DePass, Louisa Gagliardi, Roger Garrison, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Bill 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 Steve Rappaport were also present.

ABSENT: Brian, Louisa

Meeting started at 7:23 pm.

**President's Report—Valerie Lyle**

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Board of Directors candidate Steve Rappaport was introduced to the full board; he was asked to provide information about his background. Many on the board already know Steve as an accomplished birder and photographer. He has been an active participant in a number of SMRA events.

Ken moved that the board vote on approving minutes from the March 4 and April 28 meetings. Earl seconded this motion, which was approved by all present voting in the affirmative.

Val informed the board that due to work and other responsibilities, Brian is stepping down from the board. He will remain active with SMRA and has agreed to continue as editor of the newsletter. He will also continue to write his monthly birding column in the Northern Westchester Examiner. This column comes with a free ¼-page ad for SMRA to use as we wish.

The SMRA Annual Meeting and Dinner, held on April 28 at the New Castle Community Center, was a great success. Several board members expressed agreement with Val's assessment, commenting that this was one of our better Annual Meetings. There were 74 attendees. Donations at the door totaled \$670; another \$570 was received at the dinner from the sale of tickets for the quilt raffle, while the silent auction brought in \$350. Crabtree's Kittle House, the site of the 2018 Annual Meeting, generously donated a cooked turkey and ham for this year's potluck dinner. It was suggested that we put the media screen atop of a table for future dinners at this venue for better visibility for back tables.

The beautiful owl quilt made by Jean Sparacin was auctioned off at the dinner with Tom McEnerney's grandson Henry selecting the winning ticket held by Patti Small who, it turns out, lives quite close to Jean Sparacin and purchased her ticket at EagleFest. Total proceeds for SMRA from the raffle were \$2,615.

The slate of officers and directors of the Audubon Council of Audubon New York State were presented. Tom R. motioned that the SMRA board vote to approve the slate; Debbie seconded the motion, which passed with all present voting in the affirmative.

The date for the membership fund drive PS party is May 20. The June board meeting will be held in conjunction with the annual picnic at Senasqua Park in Croton-on-Hudson on June 3. Jean Sparacin has volunteered to coordinate the picnic.

The New Castle Pollinator Pathways group is targeting home owners in the vicinity of our Pruyin Sanctuary to make pollinator-friendly changes to their properties. Our butterfly and hummingbird garden is an important anchor for this effort to improve the local habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. Garden volunteer Fran Jacobson is attending these meetings on behalf of SMRA.

Val and the board recognized Executive Director Anne Swaim's many accomplishments in her 30 years of service to Saw Mill River Audubon. Anne was presented with a card and gift from board members and friends to honor this milestone.

**Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney**

[Reference handout: *Operating Revenues and Expenses for the 4 Months Ended April 30, 2019*]

Revenues are approximately \$4,000 over budget while expenses are close to the budgeted amount. An endowment withdrawal of \$11,000 was made to cover the operating deficit and unbudgeted expenses. The Nebraska trip profit was \$1,570, but the trip is actually cash flow-negative for 2019 as much of the revenues from the trip were recorded in 2018. The Annual Meeting and Dinner showed a \$500 profit; this does not include revenues from the quilt raffle.

**Bylaws Committee—Tom McEnerney**

At the Annual Meeting of members on April 28<sup>th</sup>, the membership approved the ballot proposition to reincorporate SMRA as a non-voting membership corporation. Directors and officers will now be elected annually by the board of directors and reported to the membership at the Annual Meeting in April. The proxy vote was 119 in favor and 3 opposed.

Tom noted that the final form of the restated certificate of incorporation approved by the members and the final form of the new Bylaws were distributed to board members in April. Tom moved that the board of directors vote to approve the restated certificate of incorporation and to approve its filing with New York State. Bill seconded the motion and all present voted in the affirmative.

Tom pointed out that the new Bylaws had been discussed at the March board meeting and he moved that the board of directors approve the new Bylaws in the form distributed to board members in April. Ken seconded the motion and all present voted in the affirmative. Tom noted that Historian has been eliminated as an officer position in the new Bylaws. Ellen was aware of this change and will resign as Historian.

**Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger**

For our official quarterly report, as of April 1, 2019 the portfolio balance was \$971,310, an \$84,733 (9.6%) increase above the January 1, 2019 balance of \$886,576. The three-month, year-to-date, one year and three-year investment rates of return were 9.0%, 9.0%, 4.9% and 8.4% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 7.2%, 7.2%, 2.3% and 5.9% for the same periods. The portfolio balance on May 1, 2019 was \$983,930, a \$12,621 (1.3%) increase for April and an increase of \$97,354 (11.0%) YTD. Due to a recent sale of mutual funds, as of May 1st, we are \$23,728 (16.4%) 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 and \$19,000 in withdrawals from the portfolio.

Ken thanked Phil for his dedication and diligence in his service on the Finance Committee. The board concurred in this sentiment, giving Phil a sustained round of applause.

**Development Report—Valerie Lyle**

[Reference handout: *Membership and Donation Report as of May 6, 2019.*]

There are currently 1,015 member households (507 SMRA Chapter member households and 508 joint NAS/SMRA member households). Donations are going well so far this year; it should be noted that some donations received in 2019 were the result of the December, 2018 fund-raising mailing.

Tom M. noted that not all 507 SMRA Chapter members are paying dues annually as receipts from chapter members total about \$5,000. Tom also explained that members who donate \$35 or more are automatically renewed as members, but their contributions are recorded as donations rather than dues. If all 507 SMRA Chapter members were paying the \$35 (minimum membership fee, revenues would be over \$17,000 per annum. SMRA receives a yearly payment of \$3,541 from the National Audubon Society based on the number of joint NAS/SMRA member households.

Val pointed to Barbara Campbell's report on the back of the Membership and Donation report highlighting work on the upcoming 2019 spring appeal in which approximately 900 letters will be sent out.

**Seed Sale—Ken Novenster**

Our seed inventory is on sale at a discount of 25%.

**Pruyn House Committee—Ginger Bernardin**

Power washing of the exterior of the house has been completed; on May 7 the exterior trim is scheduled to be painted. Painting of the interior will need to be scheduled. Also, in August we have scheduled the annual cleaning and maintenance of the oil burner; septic pumping and chimney cleaning need to be scheduled. Danny has repaired the knob on the door between the office and residence.

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

The project to restore the grassland habitat on the Croton Point Park landfill has started with initial mowing and herbicide application. SMRA will host a program at the Croton Free Library on May 23 to inform the public about this important project.

We are expecting SMRA educator Pete Salmansohn to lead four field trips in May for classes from the Mt. Vernon School District under the Connect Kids to Parks initiative.

There was a recent incident where the dog of a visitor to the Pruyne Sanctuary ran onto a neighbor's property and killed a pet chicken. This dog was off leash, in violation of the posted SMRA policy that dogs in our sanctuaries must be leashed at all times. It was noted that other neighbors have expressed concern that the leash policy is frequently violated. The board discussed various ideas to deal with this problem, including additional signage and establishing protocols for dealing with violators of the leash policy. A small group from SMRA will meet to discuss this further and then meet with the concerned neighbors.

**Advocacy—Tom Ruth**

The Advocacy Committee is planning a half-day workshop on Oct. 26, 2019 on Mitigating Climate Change Where We Live. The public will be invited; local Audubon chapters will be asked to participate. Ideas for the workshop were discussed at the Advocacy Committee meeting on May 1. Sandy Morrissey of Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon attended the meeting. The Committee discussed the idea of having a screening of the film *Paris to Pittsburgh* in advance of the 1-day workshop that will generate interest and help promote the Oct. 26 workshop. We are looking to hold the screening at the Jacob Burns Film Center, if possible. We need to select a venue for the Oct. 26 workshop as Mariandale is not available. We hope to have speakers from local and regional government agencies as well as elected officials.

Upcoming training sessions being offered by the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H include a program on meadow management on May 14.

**Sanctuaries—Michael Madias**

Ed Mertz has donated \$200 worth of plants. These have been planted at Brinton Brook Sanctuary with others planted at the entrance of Pruyne House. Tree plantings are scheduled for Brinton Brook on May 9 and Graff on May 16. Eric Stone will also lead work sessions for parents of Rewilding School students at Brinton Brook.

**Lynn Salmon—Report on Geocaching**

There are now 29 geocaches in the SMRA sanctuaries. Lynn Salmon, who is an active geocacher, has volunteered to verify and check these caches and she is adding some additional SMRA sanctuary caches. It was noted that geocaching draws new visitors to our sanctuaries. We are considering another public SMRA program on geocaching. (Anne led an outdoor workshop on geocaching in May 2007.)

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

Monday morning bird walks will now start at 7:30. Wednesday morning walks (6:00 am) have been held at Croton Point Park and Rockefeller State Park Preserve and will continue to mid-June. We'll be back at Rockefeller on May 15. Charlie Roberto will lead a walk in Central Park on May 17. The Pruyne Sanctuary spring walk will take place on May 19 led by Phil Heidelberger. The annual Doodletown walk is scheduled for May 18. As noted above, our last public program for this season will be Thurs. May 23 at the Croton Free Library focused on the Croton Point Park grassland restoration project.

**SMRA Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson**

On May 7 the club will discuss *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* by Elisabeth Tova Bailey. The book club will take the summer off; we'll resume Sept. 17 with the book *American Eden: David Hosack, Botany and Medicine in the Garden of the Early Republic* by Victoria Johnson. The club meets in the Mt. Pleasant Library in Pleasantville at 7:00 pm. For those looking for interesting summer reading, the club is recommending Jonathan Franzen's *The End of the End of the Earth*. Watch for Kathleen's recommendation of specific essays from this collection.

**Newsletter—Anne Swaim**

The summer issue deadline is now. We are happy that Brian will continue as newsletter editor even though he will no longer be on the board.

**Refreshments—Jean Sparacin**

The board thanked Cary for providing refreshments.

**Adjournment—Valerie Lyle**

Bill motioned at 8:47 that the meeting be adjourned. Tom R. seconded the motion. The motion passed with all present voting in the affirmative.