

Saw Mill River Audubon
January 6, 2020 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, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Bill Kellner, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Joanne McAuley, Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenster, Steve Rappaport, Nina Romanoff, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg, Debbie van Zyl, Kathleen Williamson. Executive Director Anne Swaim and potential board candidate Suzanne Kavic were also present.

ABSENT: Ginger, Nina

Meeting started at 7:17 pm.

President's Report— Valerie Lyle

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Ken moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on Dec. 9, 2019 with a minor revision to the discussion of SMRA's participation in the Amazon Smile Charities program. The revision removes the reference to the placement of an ad promoting the Smile program in the SMRA newsletter. Steve seconded this motion. The motion approving the revised minutes was adopted unanimously.

Suzanne Kavic was introduced as a possible board candidate. Suzanne, who is an active birder and frequent participant in the SMRA Monday bird walks, told the board she is pleased to be considered for the board of directors and looks forward to serving on the board should she gain approval.

Tom M. explained that the board will vote for the directors and officers slate this year at its March meeting. Prior to the March meeting, the Nominating Committee will submit the slate of board members and officers running for election this year to the board of directors. Results of the election will be announced at the SMRA Annual Meeting in April.

Val noted that a list of SMRA committee descriptions and a list of current committee members and chairs will be circulated in the coming weeks, first to committee chairs to review and edit the descriptions, and then to the entire Board. Board members are asked to review the committee descriptions to consider whether there are additional or different committees where they can be involved.

Conflict of interest statements were distributed to board members. The signed statements were collected by Anne.

Nature photography, including photos taken in SMRA sanctuaries, by SMRA member Ed Mertz is on exhibit at Teatown through February. A reception will be held on Sunday Jan. 12 from 3:00–5:00 pm. It was also noted that Ed has published a 2020 calendar of his nature photography.

Finance Committee— Phil Heidelberger

On January 1, 2020 the portfolio balance was \$1,028,687, a \$142,111 (16.0%) increase above the January 1, 2019 balance of \$886,576. The portfolio balance was up \$46,288 (4.7%) during the fourth quarter. The investment rate of return was 19.9% during 2019. Excluding the Light and Garden Funds, there have been \$49,000 in withdrawals from and \$19,342 in additions to the endowment during 2019. Compared to our 5% formula endowment transfer of \$46,281, there were 5.29% in total withdrawals, but only 3.2% in net withdrawals during 2019. As of January 1st, we are \$68,384 (51.4%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds.

Treasurer's Report— Tom McEnerney

[Reference handout *SMRA 2019 Operating Revenue and Expenses*]

Donations in 2019 were \$31,800 over budget. Total revenue was about \$28,000 over budget. Expenses were approximately \$4,000 under budget. The 2019 budget called for a transfer of \$72,290 from the SMRA endowment. Actual transfers from the endowment totaled \$49,000 in 2019. Expenses for office operations were over budget due to telephone charges and the purchase of a new laptop. Pruy House expenses were over budget, in part because we needed three oil deliveries, instead of the two that had been budgeted.

Treasurer's Report— Tom McEnerney cont'd

SMRA trips have been revenue-positive due to Anne's excellent management.

Larry's clients have donated \$47,000 over the past five years. SMRA deeply appreciates these donations and thanks Larry and these donors for their generosity.

Sanctuary caretaker Danny Ferguson will get a \$1/hour raise. SMRA per diem educators will stay at \$40/hour. Office manager Ellen Heidelberger has again declined to accept a raise.

Development Report—Valerie Lyle

[Reference handout: *Membership and Donation Report as of Dec. 31, 2019*]

There are currently 988 member households, including 515 SMRA chapter member households. The number of joint NAS/SMRA members has increased to 473 households.

The end-of-year follow-up fund drive has brought in \$9,125 in 2019 with additional receipts (approximately \$2200) arriving after the New Year.

Seed Sale— Ken Novenstern

The December third Saturday seed sale was successful with revenues of \$959. A sign-up sheet was passed around for volunteers for the upcoming seed sale on Jan. 18.

Executive Director's Report— Anne Swaim

Plans for the spring trip to Big Bend fell through and, instead, we will return to Yellowstone National Park. This trip is now fully subscribed with 12 participants as is the planned South Africa trip to take place in the fall of 2020 with 15 participants. The winter weekend at Cape Ann (Feb. 15–17) has also generated interest.

A signup sheet for volunteers to staff the SMRA sites at the Feb. 8 EagleFest was circulated. Larry was thanked for, once again, underwriting the SMRA sponsorship of the George's Island warming tent.

Bedford Audubon initiated an eagle roost monitoring project at Hudson River locations in SMRA territory several years ago. Unfortunately this was done without any coordination with SMRA. Since then, however, communication on this effort has improved and SMRA volunteers have been covering the Verplanck site.

This year's quilt for our annual birding quilt raffle was created by Patricia Loquet. The annual quilt raffles, with beautiful quilts produced by Jean Sparacin and Patricia, have been very successful revenue raisers for SMRA. Sheets containing 10 tickets each were distributed for board members to sell.

Anne, with assistance of Phil, submitted an application for a \$1,000 NAS chapter collaborative grant. The application has been approved and the grant will be used to increase volunteer participation in sanctuary maintenance by funding workshops for volunteers and additional projects in our sanctuaries.

We are back at Crabtree's Kittle House this year for the SMRA Annual Dinner on Sunday, April 5. Our featured presentation, "Unbroken Wings: A Story of Birds and the People who Saved Them," by the team at Naturelogues, has received strong reviews. We'll also have a presentation by the SMRA 2019 Larry Light Scholarship winner and we also plan to have a silent auction of special items, services and experiences.

Advocacy— Tom Ruth

The summary of the advocacy discussion at the recent SMRA board retreat is being finalized. We're looking at additional events to follow up on our climate change boot camp, including a program for high school students and climate change leadership training for committed adults by boot camp panel member Lindsay Auden.. Rik is working on assessing SMRA's carbon footprint. We're also looking at ways to publicize techniques for individuals to reduce their carbon footprints and help preserve habitat.

Advocacy— Tom Ruth cont'd

On Feb. 4 the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H) will hold an all-partner meeting in Westport. Dr. Andrew Reinmann of the Geography Department at Hunter College will be the keynote speaker. He will discuss forest health and efforts aimed at reforestation in the region. Board members are welcome to attend. Please contact Tom if interested.

Sanctuaries— Michael Madias, Jr.

The deer season ended on 12/31/19. Participants in the SMRA deer management program harvested nine deer (four in Brinton Brook Sanctuary, two in Choate Sanctuary and three in Pruyn Sanctuary). We are looking to get woodchips for some of our sanctuaries and will need volunteers to help with spreading these chips. Trees for Tribes plantings will again take place this coming spring. Look for requests for volunteers to plant these trees in April or May.

Arboretum— Donna Lassiter

A handout was passed around detailing a pathogen that has begun to threaten beech trees in our region. Board members are urged to look for signs of this infestation and report them to Cornell as detailed in the handout.

Val and Anne discussed the need for a SMRA representative to the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management. The SMRA rep does not have to be a member of the board of directors. It was noted that LHPRISM meetings take place during the day on weekdays.

Programs and Field Trips— Debbie van Zyl

The following upcoming programs and trips were mentioned. See web site for more details.

- * Jan. 9 at the Pleasantville Library: exploring Bluebirds
- * Jan. 11 at the Croton Point Nature Center: Soup social following Eagle walk at Croton Point Park and Second Saturday walk at Brinton Brook Sanctuary.
- * Jan. 12: Pruyn Sanctuary walk.
- * Jan. 18–19: NYS waterfowl count (New Croton Reservoir)
- * Feb. 2: Shawangunk Grasslands NWR for Owls and more.

SMRA will host the NYSOA meeting in Sept. 2021. This well-attended meeting will require a lot of planning. We are looking for a venue with lodging. SMRA will lead field trips and collaborate with other Audubon chapters on various aspects of the program. This will be an “all hands on deck” initiative.

Kathleen Williamson— SMRA Nature Book Club

On Jan. 7 we will discuss Mariana Gosnell's book *Ice: the Nature, the History, and the Uses of an Astonishing Substance*. The book after that will be *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey (Mar. 10 – post-meeting update to Mar. 24) and *Seeing Trees: Discover the Extraordinary Secrets of Everyday Trees* by Nancy Hugo (May 5). The book club meets at 7:00 PM in the Mount Pleasant Library in Pleasantville.

Newsletter— Anne Swaim

The spring issue deadline is Feb. 1. We are looking for additional submissions.

Hospitality— Jean Sparacin, Joanne McAuley

Jean thanked those board members who supplied refreshments for tonight's meeting.

Additional Business— Phil Heidelberger

Bill Graham is a local amateur photographer who works for Zeiss and has attended SMRA field trips and he will have an exhibit of his bird photos at the Peekskill Coffee House.

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

Debbie motioned that the meeting be adjourned; Tom R. seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:17.