

Saw Mill River Audubon
March 2, 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 Novenstern, Steve Rappaport, Nina Romanoff, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg, Debbie van Zyl, Kathleen Williamson. Executive Director Anne Swaim was also present. **ABSENT:** Debbie, Kathleen, Phil

Meeting started at 7:20 pm.

President's Report— Valerie Lyle

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Bill moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on Feb. 3, 2020. Joanne seconded this motion. The motion approving the minutes was adopted unanimously.

Bill, as chair of the Nominating Committee, was asked to read the slate of candidates for Directors in the class of 2023: Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Suzanne Kavic, Kenneth Novenstern, Thomas Ruth, Richard Saravay, Kathleen Williamson, Debbie Van Zyl.

Rik moved that the board vote to elect this slate of candidates for director, with a three-year term to begin on March 2, 2020 and to end at the March 2023 meeting of the board of directors. Louisa seconded the motion. All board members present voted in the affirmative to approve the slate of candidates for director.

Valerie read the slate of candidates for officers of the board of directors: Valerie Lyle, President; Thomas Ruth, Vice President; Thomas McEnerney, Treasurer; William Kellner, Secretary; Richard Saravay, Board Chair.

Ken moved that the board vote to elect the slate of candidates for officers of the board of directors as read by Valerie with a term of one year to begin on March 2, 2020 and to end at the March 2021 meeting of the board of directors. Louisa seconded this motion. All board members present voted in the affirmative to approve the slate of candidates for officers of the board of directors.

Valerie read the slate of candidates for the Executive Committee: Valerie Lyle, Thomas Ruth, William Kellner, Thomas McEnerney, Philip Heidelberger, Richard Saravay. Ken moved that the board vote to approve the slate of candidates for the Executive Committee as read by Valerie with a term of one year to begin on March 2, 2020 and to end at the March 2021 meeting of the board of directors. Earl seconded the motion. All board members present voted in the affirmative to approve the slate of candidates for the Executive Committee.

Valerie read the slate of candidates for the Audit Committee: Richard Saravay (Chair), Judith Lavenberg, Henry Seduski. Valerie then read the slate of candidates for the Finance Committee: Philip Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Valerie Lyle, Thomas Ruth, Thomas McEnerney, Patricia Watson, Richard Saravay. Rik moved that the board vote to approve the slates of candidates for the Audit Committee and Finance Committee as read by Valerie with a term of one year to begin on March 2, 2020 and to end at the March 2021 meeting of the board of directors. Nina seconded the motion. All board members present voted in the affirmative to approve the slates of candidates for the Audit Committee and Finance Committee.

Valerie noted that Joanne McAuley was leaving the board of directors after many years of dedicated service to SMRA. The board expressed its appreciation to Joanne with a sustained round of applause. Joanne will continue to be an active member and volunteer.

President's Report— Valerie Lyle cont'd

Larry was given the floor and asked that the board reopen the discussion of SMRA's participation in the Amazon Smile program for charities that had previously been approved by the board. Valerie read a letter from Phil, who was not present, in which he expressed support for continuing participation in the Smile program. Phil noted that ending SMRA's affiliation with Smile would be inconsistent with the fact that the SMRA endowment contains investments in index mutual funds which hold Amazon stock. Bill responded that he felt a move to end participation in the Smile program should not require selling passive mutual funds holding Amazon stock. Rik noted that Amazon treats non-employee contractors poorly. Tom M. noted that if we end participation in the Smile program, it would result in another charity getting the Smile revenue that would have gone to SMRA. Tom noted that SMRA does not promote Amazon. Tom R agreed that Smile revenue would just go to other parties, and said that exiting the program would not have any effect on Amazon, but on principle he supports exiting. Valerie requested that the board table the discussion of the Smile program and continue it at a future meeting of the board of directors. She urged all members to watch the PBS Frontline documentary about Amazon (Larry had circulated the link to this program). Rik asked for an informal vote of those present to sense how many board members would consider ending SMRA participation in the Smile program. Eight members present voted affirmatively. Valerie reiterated that the discussion was being tabled for the present.

Finance Committee— Tom McEnerney for Phil Heidelberger

As of March 1, 2020, the portfolio balance was \$977,273, a \$51,404 (5.0%) decrease below the January 1, 2020 balance of \$1,028,687. For comparison purposes, note that during this recent significant stock market correction, the Dow Jones Industrial Average is down approximately 11% so far during 2020. As of March 1, 2020, we are \$73,147 (55.0%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds. There have been \$0 in additions to and \$0 in withdrawals from the portfolio so far during 2020.

In light of the recent market downturn, Tom noted that we now have cash equivalents in the portfolio sufficient to cover more than 2.5 years of budget deficits without selling any investments. Our financial guidelines require having at least 2 years of cash holdings.

Treasurer's Report— Tom McEnerney

With the receipt of \$8,400 in donations and school program revenues of \$4,600, the checking account balance has increased from approximately \$24,000 to \$28,000. Expenses remain within budget.

In 2015 SMRA adopted a 403B retirement plan. Under the plan's guidelines, only one employee, Anne, is eligible to participate. The Plan administrators have informed us we need to amend the plan to conform to pre-approved formatting requirements. Phil and Tom M. will review the amended plan and make a recommendation to the Executive Committee regarding approval. The basic structure of the plan will remain unchanged.

Development Committee— Valerie Lyle

Lynn hosted the initial meeting of the Development Committee. Developing and expanding donor base was discussed. Also discussed was how to build relationships with local businesses, especially larger corporations. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled shortly. A subcommittee of the Development Committee will meet to plan this year's annual fund drive. The subcommittee will take on functions that were formerly done by Barbara Campbell. For accounting purposes, a member's \$35 renewal dues will be added to total donation of that member. Thus, a member who renews for \$35 and contributes another \$100 will be listed as \$135 donor. In the past we would show this person as a \$100 donor. (Note: Ellen advised after the meeting that this is incorrect, and that in the past all of a donor's donations - seed sale, membership, annual fund, and travel - were included when determining what donation category they fell into.) The Development Committee will explore implementing an option for donors to make automatic recurring donations. Another idea being discussed is to give donors the option of adding credit card processing fees to their donations.

Fund Raising Committee—Louisa Gagliardi

Plans for the silent auction to be held at the Annual Dinner are in full gear and we have received some appealing "experiences," including a Cape May weekend as well as restaurant vouchers. Kathleen is providing valuable help in setting up what should be a successful auction.

Cary will host a fundraising "Tea with Birds" on Mar. 21. We will ask attendees for a donation of \$20 per person. Please let Cary know if you can assist with the preparation for this function and at the event itself.

Fund Raising Committee—Louisa Gagliardi cont'd

Ken noted that he and his wife attended the fundraising gala held by the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater on March 1. The singer Tom Chapin was featured. Chapin announced that he is doing fundraising for additional environmental groups. Ken will look into the possibility of featuring him at a SMRA event.

Seed Sale— Ken Novenster

The February third Saturday seed sale had revenues of \$315.50. A sign-up sheet for the March seed sale was passed around.

Executive Director's Report— Anne Swaim

New Castle's Healthy Yard Fair will take place on March 22. We would welcome volunteers to staff the SMRA info table. The South Africa trip is fully subscribed with 14 signed up; however there is still room for one more. Last month's EagleFest was very successful—there was record attendance.

Planning for next month's Annual Dinner is proceeding; sign-ups at this point are on pace with our successful dinner held two years ago at the same venue (Crabtree's Kittle House). Bill raised the question of whether part of the ticket price should be considered a tax deductible contribution because the spread between costs and the price of the ticket is greater than in the past.

We are looking to implement the pilot dog permit policy for our Pruyn Sanctuary beginning June 1. Signs about the new policy will be installed around April. 1.

Phil and Anne met with the Publications Committee of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference about adding birding hotspot icons to the Trail Conference's maps. The Trail Conference produces a number of high-quality maps of hiking locations in the lower Hudson Valley and beyond. SMRA will consult with sister Audubon chapters about this effort.

SMRA is continuing to work on getting our sanctuary maps onto the AVENZA PDF Map platform. There are some technical issues concerning georeferencing that need to be resolved.

SMRA Educator Pete Salmansohn will conduct birding programs for all fourth grade classes at Yorktown's Crompond Elementary School. Pete will also be conducting programs at the Pearl's Hawthorne School in Yonkers.

Advocacy— Tom Ruth

The Advocacy Committee is scheduled to meet March 5. We are continuing to plan an event on how food production and distribution affect our carbon footprint and the environment. This event will emphasize how what you eat and drink affects birds and habitat.

As an additional climate change outreach, SMRA is also considering a partnership with the group Croton 100, which is working on climate change mitigation.

The Feb. 4 all-partner meeting of the Hudson-to-Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H) featured a presentation by Andrew Reinmann of Hunter College on the research project linked here: [Westchester County Forest Inventory: Mapping and Ecosystem Services Assessment](#). Among other things, the research points to the benefits of maintaining urban, suburban and rural tree canopy to help mitigate climate change.

Ken joined Tom and Bill at the H2H meeting. Ken noted that the meeting updated attendees on the multi-layer regional GIS (geographic information system) that H2H is working on and how this could be of great benefit to governments and non-profits involved with environmental planning.

Larry mentioned that The Town of Ossining is implementing a food scrap composting program. Other towns and villages are doing this as well. SMRA's program on food and climate change could help publicize these efforts.

Advocacy— Richard Saravay

Richard informed the board that the environmental group Bedford 2020 is offering a large event called Earthshot 2030 on April 19 with a focus on community engagement to combat climate change and a “Healthy Yards Earth Day Festival” on April 26. See bedford2020.org for details.

The Audubon New York spring council meeting will focus on climate change. The meeting will be held in Saratoga Springs Apr 24–26. Please let Richard or the SMRA office know ASAP if you are interested in attending.

Sanctuaries— Michael Madias, Jr.

Our 2019 collaborative grant from National Audubon will be used to conduct a workshop for trail maintainers at the home of Martin and Teresa Weinstein on March 28. The grant will also support two workdays to install short boardwalks. Workdays will be held on April 25 at Pruyne and May 31 at Brinton Brook. Advanced registration for the workshop and workdays is being publicized.

We are planning to schedule tree planting workdays in our sanctuaries using trees provided by the NYS Trees for Tribes program.

Ken noted that he met someone with Westchester County government at the H2H all-partner meeting. They discussed a tree planting program run under County auspices. Ken will follow up to see if there is any possibility of involving SMRA sanctuaries in this program.

Programs and Field Trips— Anne for Debbie van Zyl

We have begun planning work for the NYSOA meeting hosted by SMRA in September 2021. We intend to involve birders from other area Audubon chapters in this event. This well-attended meeting will require a lot of planning. We are looking for a venue with lodging. Debbie and Anne toured the IBM Learning Center in Armonk to evaluate its suitability as a venue for the NYSOA meeting. This will be an “all hands on deck” initiative. All board members will be approached by Debbie to determine how they can best contribute. SMRA-led field trips to local birding hotspots will be a part of the effort.

Upcoming events:

- * Mar 14—Woodcock walk at Croton Point (6:45 PM)
- * Mar 14—Second Saturday walk at Brinton Brook Sanctuary
- * Mar 19—Liz Cherry will talk about her new book, *For the Birds: Protecting Wildlife through the Naturalist Gaze* in a public program at the Croton Free Library
- * Mar 21—Birding Tea at Cary’s (see Louisa’s report, above)
- * Mar 24—SMRA’s Nature Book Club will discuss Edward Abbey’s *Desert Solitaire* (Mt. Pleasant Library, 7:00 PM)

Newsletter— Anne Swaim

The spring issue will mail this Friday thanks to Jean and others working with her.
The summer issue deadline is May 1

Hospitality— Jean Sparacin

Jean thanked those who brought refreshments to tonight’s meeting, including Tom M. and Bill.

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

Ginger moved that Valerie adjourn the meeting; Rik seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:34.