

Saw Mill River Audubon
December 07, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by Bill Kellner)
Meeting conducted via Zoom

Present (in bold type): Cary Andrews, **Ginger Bernardin, Earl DePass, Louisa Gagliardi, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Suzanne Kavic, Bill Kellner, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., 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 was also present.

Absent: Cary

Meeting started at 7:04 pm.

Vice President's Report—Tom Ruth

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Kathleen moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on October 5, 2020. Val seconded this motion. The motion approving the minutes was adopted unanimously.

Development Committee Report—Tom Ruth

Please make sure to mail your ps'd letters for the end-of-year follow-up fund drive from the packets that were recently distributed by Ellen to all board members.

Membership Report

[Reference Membership and Donation Report as of Dec. 04, 2020]

We've added 57 SMRA Chapter member households in 2020, an increase of 10%. Revenues from our highly successful Annual Fund Drive plus matching grants totaled almost \$72,000. The figure for 2019 was approximately \$48,000. See the Treasurer's Report, below, along with attached budget spread sheet for additional details on the fund drive.

Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberger

[Reference Investment Portfolio and Asset Allocation Oct. 1, 2020]

For our official quarterly report, as of October 1, 2020, the portfolio balance was \$1,183,184, a \$154,497 (15.0%) increase above the January 1, 2020 balance of \$1,028,687 and a \$93,266 (8.6%) increase for the third quarter. At the end of the third quarter the year-to-date, one year and three-year investment rates of return were 2.7%, 7.6% and 6.7% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 0.6%, 4.8% and 4.2% for the same periods. The balance as of December 1, 2020 was \$1,265,897 a \$237,210 (23.1%) increase for the year. There have been \$138,337 in additions to and \$13,000 in withdrawals from the portfolio so far during 2020. As of December 1, 2020, we are \$85,249 (64.1%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted expenses in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds. Phil noted that the Endowment Fund would need to be at least \$1.5 million to sustainably support our current level of withdrawals.

Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney

[Reference report: Operating Revenues and Expenses for 9 months ended Sept. 31, 2020]

Tom asked Anne to put page 1 of his handout on the computer screen which showed the proposed 2021 budget and 2020 results as compared to budget. For 2020, budgeted revenues are projected to be about \$20,000 better than budget, primarily due to significantly higher Annual Fund donations and higher matching grants and one-time gifts, offset in part by lower trip donations due to trip cancellations. Seed sale will also be over budget and education program revenue will be under budget due to the cancellation of school programs.

Tom then reviewed the Revenues in the proposed 2021 budget as compared to the 2020 budget. The Donations amount is being increased by \$9,000 due primarily to higher expected Annual Fund donations. Education Program revenues are reduced substantially in the new budget because school programs are expected to be cancelled through the spring. Programs are expected to make a profit in 2021 and have therefore been added to Revenues.

For 2020, budgeted expenses are projected to be about \$4,000 better than budget, primarily due to lower Advocacy and Arboretum and Garden expenses, offset in part by higher Sanctuaries expenses. As a result, the projected operating deficit will be about \$42,500 or about \$24,000 less than budget. Thus, the deficit is projected to be less than the targeted 5% endowment withdrawal of about \$46,500.

Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney cont'd

Tom reviewed the current pay of our employees and the Board agreed to a salary of \$50,000 for Anne for 2021 which is included in the Budget. Tom then reviewed the budgeted expenses line by line, specifically mentioning that PR & Fund Raising expenses for 2021 included \$1,500 to once again hire Sharon Danosky to advise on the Annual Fund drive. Budgeted Education expenses are lower for 2021 because our educators will likely not be working until the fall and the Administration budget is higher to cover expenses for a board retreat in the fall.

Tom noted that the 2021 budget deficit of about \$66,000 is about \$16,500, or 1.7%, over the targeted 5% endowment withdrawal of about \$49,500.

A question was asked about the actual endowment withdrawal for 2020 and the Board was referred to page 2 of Tom's handout which Anne put up on the computer screen. Cash available to cover the operating deficit and off-budget expenses consisted of the \$13,000 that has been withdrawn from the endowment, plus \$16,237 in unbudgeted revenue from the PPP Loan, an unusually high amount of cash available in the checking account on January 1, and other revenue including deposits received for trips that have been postponed to 2021, for a total of about \$53,200. The estimated operating deficit plus estimated Pruy House repairs and other off-budget expenses total about \$66,300. Thus, additional endowment withdrawals of about \$13,100 will be required in 2020 to cover these expenses. This will bring total endowment withdrawals for 2020 to about \$26,100, or 2.8%, significantly below the targeted 5% withdrawal of about \$49,500.

Lastly, Tom referred the Board to the bottom of page 2 of his handout, which showed that the budgeted operating deficit for 2021 of about \$66,000, plus possible additional Pruy House repairs of \$20,000, would bring total endowment withdrawals for 2021 to about \$86,000, or 8.9%.

Ken moved that board approve the 2021 budget as presented at this meeting. Suzanne provided a second for this motion. The motion passed with all present voting in the affirmative.

Fundraising Committee—Louisa Gagliardi

Our fundraising calendar has sold well, with 75 sales to date. Calendars are still available if you have not yet purchased one. We've commenced planning for fundraising in 2021.

Pruyn House—Ginger Bernardin

Tree damage adjacent to Pruy House has been cleaned up by Danny Ferguson. Anne displayed photos of the work area in which a broken drain pipe was discovered. Danny has installed a new downspout to restore proper drainage. The blue-stone patio was uncovered and cleaned to make a space to operate the newly-purchased portable generator.

Rik, an electrical engineer, assisted with the planning for the purchase of this generator (a portable Generac generator rated for 6,500 watts) and the necessary modifications to the electrical panels. The total project came in under budget with costs of the generator, new CO detectors and gas cans at about \$1,000. Modifications to the electrical panels and installation of a 30-amp box were done by Conte Electric; the cost was approximately \$2,500.

We received three bids on the interior paint job. The high bid was \$7,400 and the low bid, which was accepted, was \$5,400. Work has started today. The job is scheduled to be completed by the end of the week. Some electric work needs to be done after the painting is done. Rik has made a generous donation of LED lightbulbs, which should help lower electricity usage (and the electric bill).

Future work may include replacing the old single pane casement windows and the roof. Three companies have been consulted to do preliminary evaluations of the scope of these jobs. Estimates for the window replacements averaged \$11,200. The new windows will be double pane (low-E and vacuum-insulated). Ginger is reviewing these proposals.

Proposals for complete roof replacement averaged \$20,800. These estimates are also being reviewed.

Finally, the Pruy House fuel oil tank is an underground tank. We will study the possibility of replacing and either removing or abandoning the in-ground tank. SMRA currently has an insurance policy on the oil tank.

Bird Seed Sale—Ken Novenster

We had a good third Saturday seed sale in November. We're looking for two additional volunteers for the upcoming December sale. Please contact Ellen if you can help.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

The chain that blocks access to the Pruy House entrance at night is now being locked in place after someone unhooked the chain about six weeks ago and spent several hours on the property after dark. The New Castle Police were informed. Please contact Anne or Ellen if you need access to the property after sunset or before dawn.

To help with funding for the production of the upcoming third edition of the *New York State Breeding Bird Atlas*, SMRA will participate in the sponsorship subscription program. We will sponsor the House Wren by making a \$100 donation in each of the next five years.

Jane Light, mother of Larry Light, died last month. Jane and her husband Tom endowed SMRA's Larry Light Scholarship Fund for Youth. The entire Light family, including Larry's brothers, have been very supportive of SMRA over the years and have directed gifts in memory of Jane Light to the scholarship fund with several gifts having already been received. Saw Mill River Audubon called and wrote to Tom Light to express our heartfelt condolences.

Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth

SMRA's Bird's Eye View of Food Webinar no. 2 will be held on Jan. 27. We plan to show three or four short videos interspersed with discussion by our expert panel.

SMRA signed onto the Audubon New York policy letter on siting of alternative energy projects. Delaware-Otsego Audubon was a leader in expressing concerns about impacts on birds and other wildlife from new energy projects.

SMRA will partner with the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County and Teatown to host a webinar about siting of solar projects and how to balance the benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions with local impacts, including loss of forest lands (with possible negative effects on wildlife) and viewsheds. The date is Jan. 14. Ken informed the board about a large solar project proposed for the Town of Bedford. Richard is closely monitoring this project as well.

Board members are urged to use the Cure100 Carbon tracker by visiting cure100.org/carbontracker. Reducing carbon emissions depends on each of us addressing the issue and making thoughtful choices. This valuable tool will help us achieve this goal.

Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson

The Nature Book Club will meet on Jan. 19 to discuss Michael McCarthy's *The Moth Snowstorm*. In March (date TBD) we will read *Vesper Flights* by Helen Macdonald.

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.

Anne, Nina, and Phil met with a neighbor of Graff Sanctuary who wants to donate a bench for the sanctuary. We appreciate this generous offer and plan to complete the project in the spring.

The SMRA deer management program has been effective so far this season. Five does and two bucks have been culled by our registered participants. Of these seven deer, two were taken in Pruy Sanctuary and five in Brinton Brook. To date, there have been no deer culled from Choate Sanctuary.

Our annual day after Thanksgiving Turkey Mountain hike had only 1 guest. Michael expressed appreciation for the improvements to the Blue Trail. Phil said Walt Daniels and the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference should get credit for the trail upgrades.

Phil, Anne, and David Watson worked with a Cub Scout pack to install rock steps on one of the Pruy Sanctuary trails.

Programs and Field Trips—Debbie van Zyl

Small group bird walks are continuing. We are now using EventBrite for signups. Our virtual Bird Chats are being held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

The annual Christmas Bird Count is coming up. Check the event calendar on the SMRA website for specific count circle dates.

SMRA's annual Members' Best night will be held virtually this coming Thursday. Check the event calendar on the SMRA website for registration details.

Larry is scheduled to lead our New Year's Day bird walk again at Rockwood Hall but has concerns about a walk for 25 people as planned by NYS Parks or any group walk given pandemic progress in this area. Anne will contact Rockefeller State Park Preserve to re-think how this walk is conducted or if it is conducted. Check the SMRA website for updates in the weeks ahead if you are registered for this walk.

Our postponed Yellowstone trip is now scheduled for May 11–18.

Newsletter—Anne Swaim

The deadline for the spring issue is Feb 1. The spring issue covers Mar., Apr., and May. Planning the newsletter is somewhat tricky as we are unsure what kind of pandemic-related restrictions will be in place in the first months of 2021.

Adjournment—Tom Ruth

Bill moved that Tom adjourn the meeting; Larry seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Tom adjourned the meeting at 8:38.