

**Saw Mill River Audubon**  
**May 3, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by Lynn Salmon)**  
**Meeting conducted via Zoom**

**Present:** Erik Andersen, Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Suzanne Kavic, Donna Lassiter, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Tom McEnerney, Steve Rappaport, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Richard Saravay, Larry Trachtenberg, Earl DePass, Ken Novenster, Louisa Gagliardi. Executive Director Anne Swaim was also present.  
**Absent:** William Kellner, Debbie Van Zyl, Jean Sparacin, Kathleen Williamson  
Newly elected board member Jenni Stern joined the meeting at 7:12pm following the affirmative board vote on her candidacy (see Nominating Committee report, below).

Meeting started at 7:08 PM. It was noted that a quorum was present.

Tom R. moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on April 5, 2021. Ginger seconded this motion. The motion approving the minutes was adopted unanimously.

**Nominating Committee:** Steve Rappaport

Steve, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, submitted the name of Jenni Stern to fill a vacancy in the class of 2022 of the board of directors with a 1-year term to begin on May 3, 2021 and end on April 4, 2022.

Steve moved that the board of directors vote to approve Jenni Stern for this 1-year term on the board of directors. The motion was seconded by Phil. The motion was approved with all board members present voting in the affirmative.

**President's Report:** Valerie Lyle

- **SMRA will hold its June board meeting and annual picnic on Monday, June 7** at Senasqua Park in Croton on Hudson. The picnic will be limited to board members and their plus ones. Everyone who attends must be fully vaccinated. It will be pot luck - let Jean Sparacin know what you will be bringing.
- An **Annual Dinner** committee is needed for the Annual Dinner on September 26. We've reserved the room downstairs at Crabtree Kittle House and will require everyone to be vaccinated. The committee needs to explore ideas for how the evening will flow and choose a guest speaker. Do we want to do any fundraising at the annual dinner?
- **Committee List and Roster** [Reference: Saw Mill River Audubon Committee Descriptions, May 2021 document] [Reference: SMRA Board and Committees, May, 2021 document] Val directed members to look at the committee lists and rosters that were sent to everyone by email. If there are any discrepancies, send a note to Ellen to correct. Please let us know if you would like to be added to any committees.
- **EDI Committee** (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) This committee currently has no members (and needs a minimum of 3 to create it). We do not currently have an EDI policy. This committee would draft that policy and think of ways for better outreach to all members of our communities.
- **Other committees** seeking members include the Education Committee and the Pruyne Garden Committee.
- **Summer board meetings and August board retreat.** The Executive committee recommended that we do not have July and August board meetings this year. We plan to have a half day retreat in August at Mariandale. Proposed dates are a Saturday or Sunday morning of the last 3 weeks of August. The attendees took a poll for which day was best. August 29 had the most votes. Richard cannot make days in August, but the following weekend is Labor Day weekend and has been ruled out. Anne will follow up with Mariandale or perhaps choose a different venue and get back to us with a final date.

Phil had a question about the letter we planned to send to National Audubon before the resignation of David Yarnold. That letter may be moot at this point. We could draft a letter in support of changes National Audubon is making. The EDI committee may consider this and make a recommendation to the board

There was a recommendation by Tom Ruth and the advocacy committee to write a letter in support of community solar funding at the state level. The executive committee voted on this and wrote a letter to the NY State PFC. If you would like to see a copy of this letter, we can send it around.

**Development Committee Report:** Valerie Lyle

The 2021 fund drive is almost here. The packets for board members to PS will be available the last week of May. They will not be mailed. Packets will be available by arranged pickup in the office and Val will drop off some packets to those who live near her in Croton. The letters are dated "Spring, 2021." Ideally, they should be mailed ASAP at the end of May or first week of June. Supplies, postage, and instructions will be provided in the packets.

People will be notified when one of their PS-people donates \$100 or more so that the donor can be thanked by phone. These thanks can be just a call and a voicemail message left.

**Val screen shared the Membership and Donation Report as of May 1, 2021.**

Discrepancies in the 2021 donations to date and the Treasurer's Report were explained due to accounting methods used in the different reports. Online donations made in very late December are counted as December donations in the Membership Report but may not be deposited in our checking account until January. The Treasurer's Report must count donations when they are deposited, and this results in higher donations recorded for December and lower donations recorded for January on the Membership Report as compared to the Treasurer's Report. We're doing well and holding steady with membership.

**Finance Committee:** Phil Heidelberger

For our official quarterly report, as of April 1, 2021, the portfolio balance was \$1,346,824, a \$42,041 (3.2%) increase above the January 1, 2021 balance of \$1,304,783. The one-year, three-year, and five-year investment rates of return were 34.0%, 10.7% and 10.4% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 30.1%, 7.6% and 7.7% for the same periods. The balance as of May 1, 2021 was \$1,379,513 which is a \$32,689 (2.4%) increase for the month of April and a \$74,730 (5.7%) increase for the year.

There have been \$0 in additions to and \$19,000 in withdrawals from the portfolio so far during 2021. As of May 1, 2021, we are \$72,008 (54.6%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted withdrawals in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds.

After attending a Finance Committee meeting, Erik Andersen and the Finance Committee would like for Erik to join the Finance Committee. Phil Heidelberger made the motion for Erik Andersen to join the Finance Committee. The motion was seconded by Tom Ruth and was passed by all board members present.

**Treasurer's Report:** Tom McEnerney

[Reference report: Operating Revenues and Expenses for 4 Months Ended April 30, 2021] Anne shared Tom's report using the Zoom share screen function. Total revenue was about \$6,800 better than expected, in part due to a one time gift of \$3,000 from one of Larry's clients and higher seed sales. Total expenses are where they are expected to be at this point in the year. The net deficit is about \$7,500 better than expectations due primarily to the higher revenue. The bank account increased by \$14,700 since the beginning of the year because of \$19,000 in endowment withdrawals and \$16,400 in off budget revenue. Most of the \$800 balance in the Lunetta column will go to buy 3 new Lunetta Explorer bags for the Yonkers Library. See referenced report for more detailed numbers.

Last year in June, 2020 SMRA applied for and received a \$16,237 PPP (Payroll Protection Plan) loan. Tom M has filed the loan forgiveness paperwork. If approved, we will not have to pay principal and interest on this loan and will have received this money at no cost to us.

**Pruyn House:** Ginger Bernardin

Discussion of the on-going oil tank removal/replacement project. A soil test was performed, and no contamination was found. A deposit has been paid to Advanced Environmental for the tank work. The new tank has been installed in the basement. The old tank will be excavated tomorrow. If there are any problems, our tank insurance policy should cover us. Approximately 300 gallons of old but usable oil will be transferred from the old tank to the new tank before it is removed. (Post meeting update: The oil tank was removed on May 4 with no issues and no evidence of leakage under the tank.)

**Bird Seed Sale:** Ken Novensterm

April Saturday seed sale brought in \$395.50. There is seed remaining in the shed, way less than normal for this time of year. There is no plan to discount it at the moment as it is still selling at full price. The Fall sale weekend is planned to be held at Pruyn this year instead of Town Hall. Any other publicity or fundraising ideas for that would be welcome.

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

- **Eagle Scout Owl box project.** 3 of the 5 boxes have been sponsored, 2 will be placed in Brinton Brook, and 1 in the upper meadow at Pruyn. The 2 remaining are planned for Pinecliff when they get sponsored. Boxes are on poles with predator baffles. The remaining two were sponsored by Suzanne and Erik. There is a 6th sponsor (Cary) if an additional box is made possible that will be placed at Pruyn.
- **Community programs update.** Zoom Birding 101s and other programs at various libraries are still going through June. The May 20 Big Sit at Marymount Convent is in response to their request for bird habitat assistance.
- **Mertz Bequest programs update.** For the Nature Explorer Walks, Brian Kluepfel's wife Paula provides translation into Spanish. Kyle has done one Young Birder Walk and more are planned.
- **Brinton Brook parking.** The sanctuaries were overwhelmed by pandemic visitors last year, causing problems for the Weinsteins at Brinton Brook with trespassers in their yard and parking issues. They blame the Rewilding School. The parking policies for Rewilding School were forwarded to the Weinsteins last year, but they did not respond with any comments at the time. The Weinsteins recently added large boulders along the road which are impeding our parking lot use by 2 spaces. The Weinsteins own the driveway and are within their rights to do this. We have examined the site and determined that the Rewilding School is not the problem. Discussions with the Weinsteins are ongoing. There are problems with some visitors. The board discussed adding better signage and directing people to additional parking near the Golf Course when the lot is full. The idea of a gate on the road, suggested by the Weinsteins, is not desirable. A plan of adding 6 parking spaces where some shrubs are located was discussed. This will cost about \$1,000 for the 6 spaces.  
Ken moved that we proceed with adding additional parking spaces in Brinton Brook at approximately \$1,000 cost. Suzanne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- **Forest Pre-School proposal for Pruyn.** Chappaqua Friends Nursery School is only planning on a Friday use of Pruyn for their Forest Preschool in the 2021-2022 school year. The Little Leaf pre-school inquired about doing programs at Pruyn. Anne contacted Rewilding School first since they had expressed an interest in expanding. They would do a "Wildlings" program in 2021-2022 school year at Pruyn: two-hour program segments Mon-Fri with parents accompanying 2-3 year old children. This will mean as many as 6 cars plus 2 instructor cars parked at main entrance of Pruyn. Discussion of possible parking two deep at the main entrance leaving grass spaces for any sanctuary weekday visitors. This won't work if there is snow. The decision is pending further discussion of logistics.

**Advocacy:** Tom Ruth

- **Bird's Eye view of Food Part 3** will be June 23. The topic is food waste.
- **FCWC Members Meeting 5/19, 2-4pm** via zoom. SMRA is a member of this group. Tom R plans to attend. Anyone else interested can get more details from Tom.
- **Audubon NY/Connecticut Spring Council Meeting** happened last weekend and about 20 chapters were represented. The meeting focused on advocacy policy at the state level and youth leadership issues. Erin McGrath spoke about state advocacy and reported that the final state budget was passed and maintained the Environmental Protection Fund at \$300 million dollars. Also passed by the legislature was the Restore Mother Nature Bond Act, a bond to raise \$3 billion dollars. The bond vote will be this coming November. The bond will help reduce flood risk in vulnerable communities, invest in resilient infrastructure, restore fish and wildlife habitats, preserve open space, enhance recreational opportunities, and prepare New York for the impact of climate change. Mike Berger spoke about youth engagement programs being planned, including junior forest technicians, a youth climate summit, and women in conservation internships. Anne gave a good synopsis of our programs for youth engagement at the round table. The National Audubon Society Convention on July 16-18 this year will be remote, making it easy for those interested to attend.

**Advocacy cont'd**

Larry mentioned a NY Times article about the renowned restaurant in NYC, Eleven Madison Park that has been closed during the pandemic. Chef/owner David Humm plans to re-open as a plant based only restaurant.

Val mentions that the Birds-of-a-feather Audubon meetings held once a month have interesting topics and are intended to draw in board members from many different chapters. Information on the next one, to be focused on native plants, will be forwarded to board members

**Sanctuaries Committee:** Michael Madias

A work party of 8 scouts at Pruyn planted 100 trees and shrubs last month. Earth Day on April 24 was celebrated by planting 250 wildflowers at Brinton Brook. Michael picked up a tree order on 4/20 which had some of our order lost. The problem seems to be straightened out and 50 white pines from this order will be given to Bill Kellner for a project in Yorktown. More trees and shrubs from the NYS DEC's Buffer in a Bag program should arrive at the office this week in brown paper bags. Anyone who is at Pruyn when they arrive is asked to let Michael know.

**Programs and Field Trips:** Anne filling in for Debbie

On Thursday May 26 at 7pm The Beauty of Birds with Ilana Block is our next public Zoom program.

After board discussion, it was decided to raise the participant limit for small-group walks to 16 people (from 10) for the summer.

Nature Book Club: The book, *Seeing Trees*, will be the subject of our book club meeting on May 11. Book club will not meet over the summer. The next book club meeting will be on Tuesday Sept 21. September book TBD.

**Newsletter:** Anne Swaim

The deadline for the summer issue is now. We want to send newsletters out to people before the PS letters are mailed.

**Fundraising:** Louisa Gagliardi

Louisa mentioned plans for fundraising including the calendar photo competition and the planned member photography exhibit at the Hendrick Hudson Library. Calendar photo submissions will be mentioned in the upcoming newsletter and on the web site and will be due by the end of July. The Hendrick Hudson Library photography exhibit is scheduled for February, 2022. We will have more details about that in the fall newsletter and accept submissions for the exhibit through the end of the year. We also need to put a date for a reception at the Hendrick Hudson Library in the calendar in February. Cary wants to reschedule her birding tea, which had to be canceled last year due to the pandemic, for a date this June.

**Adjournment:**

Ken moved to adjourn the meeting; Cary seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:44pm.

2021 board meetings have been scheduled for:

June 7 (picnic), Sept. 13, Oct. 4, Dec. 6.

Board retreat tentatively scheduled for morning of Aug. 29

The Annual Dinner is scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 26.