

Saw Mill River Audubon
January 10, 2022 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by Bill Kellner)
Meeting conducted via Zoom

Present (in bold type): **Erik Andersen, Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Earl DePass, Louisa Gagliardi, Phil Heidelberger, Rik Kaufman, Suzanne Kavic, Bill Kellner, Valerie Lyle, Michael Madias, Jr., Tom McEnerney, Ken Novenster, Steve Rappaport, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Richard Saravay, Jean Sparacin, Jenni Stern, Larry Trachtenberg, Debbie van Zyl, Kathleen Williamson.** Executive Director Anne Swaim and prospective board candidate Mitchell Goldfarb were also present. (Attendance compiled by Rik.)

Absent: Ken, Larry, Debbie

Meeting started at 7:00 pm.

President's Report—Valerie Lyle

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Jenni moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on December 6, 2021. Kathleen seconded this motion. The motion approving the minutes was adopted unanimously.

Attachments for tonight's board meeting included SMRA's Potential Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement. Board members are asked to fill out and sign the statement. It may be printed and mailed to the office or, as the file is a fill-in PDF, it may be completed and signed on your computer and returned to Ellen via email.

As noted in the minutes of the Dec. 6, 2021 board meeting, Office Manager Ellen Heidelberger is planning to retire in the spring of 2022. A written job description of the Office Manager position will be revised and circulated to the board for initial circulation through personal contacts.

Prospective board candidate Mitchell Goldfarb was introduced to the board. It was noted that two of Mitch's photographs were selected for the SMRA fundraising calendar. Mitch gave a brief description of his involvement with SMRA, including his participation in a number of walks and trips. He told the board that he is looking forward to becoming more involved with SMRA as his knowledge of and interest in birds and nature continue to grow.

Development Committee Report—Valerie Lyle

[Reference report Membership and Donation Report as of December 31, 2021]

Annual Fund donations for 2021 are approximately \$3,500 ahead of the figure for 2020 at \$66,865. 2021 Matching Grants for the Annual Fund were much lower than 2020 for two reasons: IBM paid 2 years of matching funds in 2020 (2019 and 2020), and discontinued matching retirees' donations starting in 2021. The bottom line is that total donations for 2021 were about \$9,300 below those of 2020.

Total membership has increased—with the current 610 SMRA chapter member households and 506 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,116.

Valerie expressed her thanks to members of the board for their efforts in making the 2021 Annual Fund Drive a success.

Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberger

As of January 1, 2022, the endowment portfolio balance was \$1,452,208 a \$147,425 (11.3%) increase above the January 1, 2021 balance of \$1,304,783 and a \$34,293 (2.4%) increase for the month of December. There were \$48,975 in withdrawals from and \$11,200 in additions to the portfolio during 2021. As of January 1, 2022, we are \$87,575 (57.5%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted withdrawals in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds.

Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney

[Reference Report: SMRA 2021 Operating Revenue and Expenses (with 2022 Budget) and Explanation of Unbudgeted Revenues and Expenses]

Treasurer's Report—Tom McEnerney cont'd

Tom referred to his report showing operating revenue and expenses for 2021 as compared to the 2021 budget. Total revenue was \$19,500 over budget due primarily to higher Donations (\$17,900) and Membership (\$2,400). Donations were higher primarily because the Annual Fund was \$12,450 over budget and because of memorial and one-time gifts of \$7,600 that are budgeted at zero.

Total expenses for 2021 were right on budget, with Seed Sale expenses being \$4,000 over budget due to the timing of seed purchases during the 2020–2021 winter. The net deficit of \$46,203 was almost \$20,000 better than budget due to the higher revenue. To cover the net deficit, \$46,000 was withdrawn from the endowment, which was less than the 5% endowment withdrawal guideline of \$49,465.

Unbudgeted revenue of about \$9,700 consisted primarily of Silent Auction revenue, a grant from Con Edison and a donation from the Rewilding School. Unbudgeted expenses of about \$11,000 consisted primarily of significant Pruyne House repairs, including the removal and replacement of the in-ground oil tank and the new portable generator.

Kathleen asked if follow-up fund drive letters sent out in December, 2021 are responsible for the increase seen in 2021 Annual Fund donations. Tom indicated that these letters probably did have some impact but how much is not clear.

Fundraising Committee Report—Louisa Gagliardi

The 2022 SMRA calendar has been selling well. Of the print run of 150, only 40 calendars remain unsold. Current net profit on this fundraising effort stands at \$712. We are considering making the unsold calendars available for sale at a \$10 discount at our upcoming photo exhibit reception at the Hendrik Hudson Free Library in Montrose.

The SMRA Silent Auction, which concluded in December, was very successful, raising a total of \$3,170. Thanks were expressed to those who donated auction items and to those who participated in the bidding.

Lynn reported on the SMRA photo exhibition scheduled for February at the Hendrik Hudson Free Library. We will hold a reception at the library on Feb. 6 from 3:00–5:00 PM. We are considering whether or not to have refreshments available at the reception. Of the 98 photos submitted, 35 have been selected for exhibition. Exhibiting photographers are being asked to attend the Feb. 6 reception.

Pruyne House Report—Ginger Bernardin

Following up on the problem with the gutters described in the minutes of the Dec. 6 board meeting, we hired a roofer to clean the gutters and reattach the gutter that had come loose. This fix should get us through the winter. This roofer submitted a proposal on the larger roofing job. This is the fourth proposal received for the roof repair; the Pruyn House Committee will review these proposals in the upcoming weeks.

We are planning to lay new peel-and-stick-tiles on the kitchen floor. We will start the job on Jan. 20 and hope to finish in one or two days.

Bird Seed Sale—Anne Swaim for Ken Novenstern

Our January third Saturday seed sale has a full complement of volunteers. Today's email blast has generated some orders for this sale.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

Steve and Earl will be moving forward on the project to set up a live-streaming wildlife camera in the Pruyn Sanctuary. We are hoping to go live by the end of this month.

The tally for the 2021 SMRA sanctuary deer management program is: three deer taken at Brinton Brook and four at Pruyn. No deer were taken at Choate. As noted in the minutes of the Dec. 6 board meeting, one of the four deer taken at Brinton Brook was suffering from epizootic hemorrhagic disease. The carcass was turned over to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Anecdotal reports indicate that this highly lethal illness may be causing a decline in the local deer population.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim cont'd

The Zoom programs that we have created for local libraries continue to attract interest. Four libraries are looking to host these programs this winter.

We are very much hoping that we can have our Annual Dinner in person this year. We have scheduled this event for April 10 at Crabtree's Kettle House. We need to begin the planning process for the dinner. We will set up a Zoom meeting shortly for this purpose; please respond to the email invitation that will go out if you are interested in helping out.

Lynn reported at the December 6 board meeting on her donation of a corporate sponsorship on behalf of SMRA for the Ardsley Curling Club. A banner with the SMRA logo is currently on display at the club. Lynn invited members of the board to attend a session at the Ardsley Curling Club. Several board members accepted Lynn's invitation to visit the club and try out this exciting sport. Val, Kathleen, Cary and Phil reported that it was lots of fun to try curling. Louisa, Anne, Tom M., and Ginger also participated.

All board members are invited to attend the winter tree identification walk led by Eric Stone at Pruyn Sanctuary on Saturday, Jan. 15 at 1:00 PM.

Another walk of interest to SMRA board members, also at Pruyn, will feature Rob Buchanan, an expert on Native American lithic structures. Rob will be assessing the sanctuary for evidence of Native American artifacts, including stone structures. The walk is scheduled for Sunday Jan. 23 meeting 10:00 am at the office/garden entrance for Pruyn Sanctuary.

Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth

The Committee will meet Jan. 24 to plan upcoming spring events.

Val pointed out that SMRA's statement submitted to the Village of Croton on Hudson about the Hudson National Golf Course's plan for a large-scale solar array (see minutes of the December 6 board meeting) does not appear in the list of public comments. Val and Cary will follow-up with the Village to try and rectify this.

Nancy Heppner, who recently donated a bench that was installed in our Graff Sanctuary, has reached out to us in an effort to increase public awareness about the golf course proposal. Joe Wallace and Brian Kluepfel are looking to write articles about the impacts of the solar project for the local press. Cary suggested partnering with Holy Name of Mary's Care for Creation Sustainable Sundays programs. Anne responded to Cary that we should consider linking to Sustainable Sundays through the SMRA YouTube channel.

Board members may be interested in the virtual H2H All Partner Meeting to be held this coming Wednesday, Jan. 12. There will be a discussion by a forest ecologist on the problem of invasive plants in our woodlands and on impacts of deer on forest regeneration. An invitation with details on this meeting will go out to the board.

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.

Phil described the project for new and improved directional signs at the Pruyn Sanctuary. Erik volunteered to make new signs; to date 11 signs have been created. Erik's efforts are much appreciated. Michael noted that new directional signs should also be installed at Brinton Brook. Erik offered to make those, as well.

Phil also indicated that there is a need for signs at our sanctuary entrances that cover rules for sanctuary use. Such rules would include things like a prohibition on mountain biking and a requirement that dogs be leashed. Board members were asked to contact Phil if they would like to help come up with language for these signs.

We are getting ready to place our tree and shrub order with the DEC Saratoga Tree Nursery. Trees to be purchased include white pine and white spruce, as well as several species of shrubs. There may be some seedlings left over after we do our planting; these will be available for distribution to interested board members.

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr. cont'd

A large tree has fallen across the Highland Trail on property managed but not owned by SMRA. We will follow-up with the Village of Croton on Hudson Trails Committee. Erik offered to help with chain sawing if needed.

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim for Debbie Van Zyl

We have scheduled several open bird walks (no pre-registration required). We will evaluate how this works. Our first open walk had 25–30 people despite bad weather. The next open bird walk is scheduled for this Wednesday, Jan. 12, at Rockefeller State Park Preserve at 8:00 AM.

Our next public program is Jan. 27 and features Ben Van Doren discussing “Migration from a Birds Eye View.” All five Westchester County Audubon chapters are sponsoring this program. So far, registration is at 230!

Cary reported that our First Day walk at Rockwood Hall was successful; several members expressed interest in becoming members of SMRA.

Newsletter—Anne Swaim

Jenni has taken over as newsletter editor. Feb. 1 is the deadline for the spring (Mar., Apr., May) issue.

Nature Book Club—Kathleen Williamson

We'll be discussing Jennifer Ackerman's *Birds by the Shore* on Tuesday, Jan. 18. This will be a Zoom gathering.

New Business—Valerie Lyle

Anne requested that board members sign on to the American Bird Conservancy's emergency alert about the Heritage Wind Project planned for upstate New York. There is a great potential for significant harm to raptor and other bird populations because of the problematic siting of the proposed towers. A link will be circulated tonight with information on how to add your name to the alert. Audubon New York has signed on to this.

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

Cary moved that Valerie adjourn the meeting; Tom R. seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:06 pm.