

Saw Mill River Audubon
February 7, 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 was also present. (Attendance compiled by Rik.)

Absent: Ginger, Earl, Ken, Michael

Meeting started at 7:05 pm.

President's Report—Valerie Lyle

It was noted that a quorum was present.

Phil moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on January 10, 2022. Lynn 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 who have not returned their completed forms 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.

Quilt raffle tickets are being distributed to all board members. Please do your best to sell your tickets. Note that raffle tickets may be purchased through the SMRA website as well.

Anne provided an update on the Annual Dinner, which is scheduled for April 10 at Crabtree's Kittle House. We are concerned that it may be premature to have a large indoor gathering and are looking into an alternative outdoor program on June 18. Possibilities include the pavilion at Croton Point County Park, another location at Croton Point or Senasqua Park. We intend to ask the Kittle House if they could cater this event and also approach Westchester Parks about getting a permit. We'll also look into scheduling Jim Eyring and his raptor program for the dinner. Another part of the dinner programming could be the astronomical show in the twilight sky as there will be a rare confluence of four planets on June 18. Several board members volunteered to help plan this alternative Annual Dinner.

Planning for the spring Annual Fund drive has begun. Anne, Ellen, and Valerie have a meeting scheduled with fundraising consultant Sharon Danosky. We will update the board on this meeting and fund drive plans in general at the March board meeting.

Development Committee Report—Valerie Lyle

[Reference report Membership and Donation Report as of January 31, 2022]

Total membership has increased—with the current 620 SMRA chapter member households and 510 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,130.

Annual Fund and memorial donations, along with special gifts, travel and seed sale donations are at \$5,557 year-to-date. Endowment Fund donations are at \$44,701, thanks primarily to a matching grant from our anonymous donor.

Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberger

For our official quarterly report, as of January 1, 2022, the portfolio balance was \$1,452,208, a \$147,425 (11.3%) increase above the January 1, 2021 balance of \$1,304,783. The one-year, three-year and five-year investment rates of return were 14.4%, 15.8% and 11.1% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 10.9%, 12.2% and 8.4% for the same periods. There were \$11,200 in additions to and \$48,975 in withdrawals from the portfolio during 2022.

Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberger cont'd

The balance as of February 1, 2022 was \$1,439,639 which is a \$12,569 (0.9%) decrease for the month of January. In January, there was a \$44,701 addition to the portfolio which represents the remainder of the Anonymous Donor's \$100,000 matching grant pledge. As of February 1, 2022, we are \$139,008 (91.2%) 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

Attachments for tonight's board meeting included a memo from the Finance Committee on credit card processing fees. As the memo states, approximately 40% of SMRA's operating revenues are paid by credit card. While we already ask for an additional 3% donation on trip payments made by credit card, the committee is proposing an optional checkoff asking for an additional 3% donation to cover processing fees on all online credit card payments.

Larry asked whether we would consider adding acceptance of American Express cards. Tom replied that we will continue to accept Visa and Mastercard only.

Tom moved that the board approve implementation of an optional charge to cover credit card fees for all online credit card payments that would initially be 3%, subject to adjustment in the future. Jenni provided a second for this motion. The motion was approved with all present voting affirmatively.

In terms of our year-to-date budget, January was cash flow-positive with about \$6,400 more revenues than expenses, mainly because of a \$3,100 donation from the Rewilding School, as well as memorial and one-time gifts; there were no unusual expenses.

Our auditors have completed the audit of SMRA's 2020 financials. The auditors' report is available for reviewing upon request.

Fundraising Committee Report—Louisa Gagliardi

Louisa thanked Lynn for organizing the excellent photo exhibit and gallery reception at the Hendrik Hudson Free Library. Lynn reported on the well-attended reception and noted that some photographs and SMRA calendars were sold. The exhibit will be open during library hours through the end of February; board members are urged not to miss it.

Cary reported that we're planning another Birding Tea. This fundraising event has been scheduled for May 21.

Pruyn House Report—Anne Swaim for Ginger Bernardin

Anne and Ginger installed new tiling on the kitchen floor. It came out looking great, thanks to Ginger's expertise.

Val reported that SMRA's new generator had its first usage during the January power outage. Anne thanked Rik for his help in purchasing and installing the generator and for being available by phone for its first use during the power failure.

Bird Seed Sale—Anne Swaim for Ken Novenster

Our January third Saturday seed sale had revenues of \$948. Many thanks to our volunteers who helped on a cold morning. We are looking for volunteers for the Feb. 19 sale.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

SMRA has signed on to a letter supporting the Healing Our Waters Great Lakes Coalition effort to restore Clean Water protections that were in place before the Trump administration.

Many thanks to Earl, Steve and Danny for setting up our Pruyn Sanctuary feeder cam, which is now live. Anne demonstrated real-time and archive views using Zoom share. The live cam will be used in our educational efforts. An upcoming program at the Ossining High School will feature the camera. We plan to create a video archive of camera views. Although saving the entire video stream would be impractical, we hope to create some highlight reels. An example is the coyote that appeared on camera when Jean was viewing the camera link.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim cont'd

Rob Buchanan, an expert on ancient, human-made stone structures conducted a guided walk at Pruyin Sanctuary. There are some interesting stone features that may be quite old. Phil reported that another expert on these lithic structures believes that at least one closest to the Birchwood Swim and Tennis Club entrance is of Native American provenance.

Anne thanked the volunteers who worked at this year's EagleFest. While there may have been more eagles in attendance than people, SMRA did have a presence at the EagleFest sites at the Croton-Harmon Station boat ramp and George's Island County Park. Cary reported that she had good conversations with families at the boat ramp warming tent; we may get some new members as a result.

Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth

The Committee met on Jan. 24 to continue the planning of our upcoming spring events.

We are making progress on the goals developed at the August board retreat. We are working on adding a focus on bird safe buildings to our overall look at how corporate campuses can improve wildlife habitat on their properties. We are also looking at outreach to owners and managers of other large, non-forested properties with the idea of helping grassland bird breeding by altering mowing schedules and implementing other beneficial practices.

On April 28 we will host a webinar on plastics recycling, discussing what happens after your plastics go into your home recycling bin. We'll look at the pros and cons of recycling as well as exploring how producers of plastics can mitigate some of the problems associated with their production and distribution.

At our December and January board meetings we reported on SMRA's advocacy for a full environmental impact statement for the Hudson National Golf Course's plan for installing a large-scale solar array and discussed a number of negative impacts that may result from this proposal. In an effort to get the Village to mandate a full EIS, Valerie and Cary have been in contact with the Board of Trustees of the Village of Clayton-on-Hudson. It looks like this effort, complemented by many members of the public airing their concerns at a special session of the Village Board, may be paying off.

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Anne Swaim for Michael Madias, Jr.

New sanctuary boundary signs showing rules for public use of the sanctuaries were displayed via Zoom share. These were developed with input from several board members. Larry suggested that the most frequent problem—unleashed dogs—appear at the top of the list of rules. This led to a reordering of the rules to list the more common violations first.

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim for Debbie van Zyl

Our recent Zoom program featuring Ben Van Doren discussing his work on bird migration at Oxford and Cornell Universities was excellent and very well attended. The recording of the program is available on our YouTube channel.

On Feb. 24 we will have a public program on Zoom featuring Becca Rodomsky-Bish of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology who will discuss "the Challenges Birds Face and How Our Yards Can Help."

Kathleen reminded the board that the next meeting of the Nature Book Club will take place via Zoom on Mar. 1 We'll be discussing Jonathan Meiberg's *A Most Remarkable Creature: The Hidden Life and Epic Journey of the World's Smartest Birds of Prey*. Thanks to Richard for recommending this book.

Our bimonthly Bird Chats are continuing on Zoom. Tomorrow's chat will feature Chris Zumwalt who will describe her personal journey to becoming a licensed falconer. Thunder, her Red-tailed Hawk, will make an appearance.

SMRA's guided bird walks are going well. One problem is no-shows on walks requiring preregistration. Inclement winter weather may be partly to blame. We're experimenting with open walks (no registration required). We've had two so far, one with 25 attendees, the other, on a much colder day, had only eight people. Our next open walk will be Feb. 11 at Croton Point.

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim for Debbie van Zyl cont'd

We have a trip scheduled Feb 14–17 to the Adirondacks to view boreal birds in their winter habitat. As some of our initial signups have had to cancel, we now have six openings. The trip will go forward whether or not we fill these slots—current registrants have generously committed to paying a supplemental fee to cover increased per-person costs if we have lower attendance.

We're in the planning phase of a trip in June (June 8–16) to the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec. There will be opportunities for whale watching as well as birding. Let Anne know if you're interested.

Cary asked about the possibility of scheduling a trip to the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area in Pennsylvania. Anne said that, as the preserve is a little over 3 hours away, a 1-day pop-up trip is possible although an overnight stay might make more sense. Suzanne also expressed interest in this trip. Middle Creek is known as an important stopover site for migrating Snow Geese and other waterfowl.

Personnel—Anne Swaim

The ad hoc committee (Valerie, Kathleen, Tom M., Bill, Anne and Ellen) set up to conduct the search to replace Office Manager Ellen Heidelberger, who plans to retire this spring, had its initial meeting. The search has started with an email sent to our list of over 1,900 names. We had 17 responses expressing interest in seeing the full job description. Anne and Ellen will do an initial evaluation of resumes received. The committee will then review those selected. The most promising candidates will be available for interview by the full board of directors. Ellen has committed to helping with the transition as much as possible.

Newsletter—Jenni Stern

The deadline for the spring (Mar., Apr., May) issue is now. Jenni has delivered the issue's content to Anne for layout.

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

Cary moved that Valerie adjourn the meeting; Debbie seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:12 pm.