

Saw Mill River Audubon
May 2, 2022 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by Bill Kellner)
Meeting conducted via Zoom

Present (in bold type): **Erik Andersen, Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Louisa Gagliardi, Mitchell Goldfarb, Phil Heidelberg, 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: Suzanne, Tom R., Debbie

Meeting started at 7:02 pm.

President's Report—Valerie Lyle

Valerie noted that a quorum was present.

Erik moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meetings held on March 7, 2022 and April 21, 2022. Lynn seconded this motion. The motion approving both sets of minutes was adopted unanimously.

Valerie said individual packets for the upcoming spring fund drive would be ready within the next two weeks. Packets will be delivered to board members or they may be picked up at Pruyn House when ready. Board members who have agreed to make follow-up contacts with donors who have contributed over \$250 in previous fund drives will receive a spreadsheet showing their specific assignments.

Our next board meeting will be held on June 6 in Senasqua Park, Croton-on-Hudson following our annual picnic. Board members and spouses/partners are invited to the picnic; this year we are also inviting SMRA volunteers, including the bowhunters who participate in SMRA's deer management program. Jean is coordinating food for the picnic. All participants are asked to bring a dish and to let Jean know what they plan to bring.

A list of committees and their members was distributed with tonight's meeting materials. An updated roster of the board and staff was also included. Let the SMRA office know if there are any corrections to be made. Board members should inform Anne or Valerie if there are any committees that they would like to join. A file describing the responsibilities of each committee will be distributed by email to the board.

Development Committee Report—Valerie Lyle

[Reference Membership and Donation Report as of April 29, 2022]

We have received approximately \$7,000 in Annual Fund donations so far this calendar year. Our matching grant commitment under the terms of the anonymous donation has now been fulfilled.

Total membership numbers are roughly the same as those reported in March, 2022 and are slightly higher than those reported one year ago. With the current 623 SMRA chapter member households and 524 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,147.

Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberg

For our official quarterly report, as of April 1, 2022, the endowment portfolio balance was \$1,431,592, a \$20,616 (1.4%) decrease below the January 1, 2022 balance of \$1,452,208 and a \$13,536 (1.0%) increase for the month of March. The balance as of May 1, 2022 was \$1,338,428 which is a \$93,164 (6.5%) decrease for the month of April and a \$113,780 (7.8%) decrease for the year. As of April 1, the YTD, one-year, three-year and five-year investment rates of return were -4.4%, 5.1%, 10.6% and 9.2% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of -4.1%, 2.9%, 8.0% and 6.8% for the same periods.

As of May 1, there have been \$12,000 in withdrawals from and \$44,701 in additions to the portfolio so far during 2022. As of May 1, 2022, we are \$126,374 (82.9%) 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

Tom noted that budgeted revenues for the first four months of the year were about \$4,000 ahead of budget due to higher revenue in each of the four main revenue categories. Budgeted expenses were about \$1,000 over budget due primarily to higher heating oil costs at Pruyn House.

The net deficit for the first four months was about \$22,400 but we only took \$12,000 out of the endowment. This is because we had about \$17,000 of off-budget revenue during that period consisting primarily of Gaspé trip deposits and a donation from the Rewilding School. This resulted in the checking account balance increasing by about \$5,400 since the beginning of the year.

Since March 15th, SMRA has had about \$4,000 of credit card revenue and about half that amount added the 3% optional credit card surcharge approved by the board at its March meeting. This resulted in about \$60 of additional revenue for that period or about \$500 for a year at a similar rate.

Fundraising Committee—Louisa Gagliardi

Louisa said profits from the sale of our 2022 fundraising calendar were \$939. Work is starting on producing a 2023 calendar. On the question of whether we should hold a silent auction in 2022 as we did in 2021, Louisa shares the opinion of Kathleen that we should skip 2022 and plan for a silent auction in conjunction with the 2023 Annual Dinner. Anne noted that board member volunteers are needed to help with the planning of the 2022 Annual Dinner, scheduled for September 9.

Pruyn House Report—Ginger Bernardin

On the morning of April 30, Anne smelled propane inside Pruyn House. The Fire Department and our heating oil contractor, Burke Heat, were called. The propane tank was pressure tested and the stove checked; no problems were found. We are looking at getting an alarmed propane detector since our current smoke and CO detectors do not detect the presence of propane.

Bird Seed Sale—Ken Novenster

Ken said our April 16 seed sale had revenues of \$987, an excellent result for a spring sale. Remaining seed is available for sale at 25% discount.

Anne said that SMRA is looking into a new supplier for bird seed as our current vendor, which we have used for 50 years, appears to be having quality control problems, including excess grit in some black oil sunflower seed shipments. The vendor has not been responsive to our concerns. We are considering switching to Blue Seal seed. We will evaluate a pricing proposal from Blue Seal before the end of June. Anne noted that Ukraine is a major supplier of sunflower products—the war has affected this market and led to higher prices.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim (includes Programs and Field Trips Report)

We have reserved the Senasqua Lodge in Croton Point Park for our June 4 program featuring falconer James Eyring. Anne asked the board whether we should serve any refreshments to attendees. Several board members commented that refreshments were not necessary, given the nature and time (2:00 pm) of the event. Registrants will be asked to donate \$5 per adult. A donation box will be available at the event; walk-ins will be asked to make this donation. This event is funded through the Mertz bequest; we do not expect donations from registrants and walk-ins to cover all costs. Registrants will be reminded that Croton Point Park will also collect the weekend access fee of \$10 per vehicle.

Tomorrow night (May 3) the SMRA Nature Book club will meet via Zoom to discuss James Rebanks' *The Shepherds Life*.

On May 25, another Zoom event will feature Dr. Alan Wells, who will discuss "Long-legged Waders of Southern New York." Dr. Wells is a regional birding leader and outstanding photographer.

Cary will host our second annual fundraising Birding Tea at her home on May 21. Our first birding tea held last year got rave reviews; this year's tea should be even better.

Executive Director's Report Cont'd

School field trips have resumed! Anne shared a photograph of second graders from Central School in Larchmont enjoying a recent Connect Kids to Parks educational outing at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Additional Connect Kids to Parks programs through SMRA have been scheduled this spring; some of these will be staffed by the Rewilding School. We have additional field trips scheduled to Pinecliff that will be handled by our contracted educator, Pat Mutolo. We are looking forward to participation of elementary school students from the Port Chester Schools. We were hoping to have a program this spring at FDR State Park with kindergartners from the Peekskill School District but the district has informed us that they are unable to participate at this time; we are hoping to reschedule for the fall.

The tour company contracted for our upcoming South Africa trip in November, 2022 will be submitting proposals for additional international birding trips, including Panama and England.

Our trip to the Gaspé Peninsula is scheduled for June 8–16. Trip leaders are Charlie Roberto, Sean Camillieri and Anne Swaim with 15 participants. This will be a driving trip, using rental vans to make the trip to and from Canada and then exploring the Gaspé Peninsula.

We are exploring the possible donation of a multi-acre parcel in the Town of New Castle. A number of concerns would need to be worked out, including parking and public access as well as securing an endowment for ongoing maintenance. Our preference for new donations of property has been to expand our current sanctuaries through acquisition of adjacent parcels. The parcel in question, while not directly adjacent to any of our sanctuaries, is in fairly close proximity to two SMRA sanctuaries. We are hoping to schedule a visit to this property in June.

Advocacy Committee Report—Ken Novenster for Tom Ruth

Ken reported on our Zoom program on recycling that took place on April 28. Our outstanding panel included State Senator Pete Harckham, who described efforts at the state level to enact an extended producer responsibility law, while Peter Spendelow, a former Chappaqua resident and now a Waste Reduction Specialist for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, explained implementing Oregon's version of an extended producer law (one of only two states with such laws). Peter McCartt, Lou Vetrone and Melissa-Jean Rotini discussed Westchester County's robust recycling efforts and how the County works with our many municipalities to maximize recycling. Ken thanked Tom and Anne for their efforts to put this program together. Bill noted that Ken's skills as moderator of the panel discussion helped make the program a success.

Jenni is continuing her efforts to locate a building in our territory that can be used as an example of practices that need to be implemented to reduce mortality from birds colliding with windows. Anne noted that Jenni will represent SMRA at the upcoming spring council meeting of Audubon New York.

The Advocacy Committee is exploring several ideas for public programs this fall.

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.

Anne reported that we will be switching to a plastic version of the boundary signs for our sanctuaries (see minutes of March 7 board meeting). We have determined we will need a heavier gauge, more costly plastic sign, so we are looking at purchasing fewer signs than originally planned to stay close to the amount budgeted for the signs.

Phil reported on the volunteer project to build two puncheon boardwalks on the Pond Loop Trail in our Brinton Brook Sanctuary. Nine volunteers helped carry the load of lumber part of the way to the work site. On a subsequent day, 16 more volunteers carried the lumber the remaining distance. The job has now been completed—it took 114 hours of volunteer time. This has been a rewarding, enjoyable effort. An upcoming article in the SMRA newsletter will provide additional details. Anne, displaying photos via Zoom share, thanked Phil for his leadership on the project and also for making a personal donation to help cover the costs, half of which were funded with a grant from the National Audubon Society.

Michael said mowing of the meadows in Pruyne and Brinton Brook is scheduled for this week. Trees purchased from NYS DEC have been picked up. Planting dates will be scheduled. We expect to get our Buffer in a Bag program plantings soon. We will schedule planting dates with our Scout volunteers.

Newsletter—Jenni Stern

The deadline for the summer issue (June, July, August) issue was May 1. Production is in process.

New Business—Valerie Lyle

Anne reported that our new Office Manager, Barbara Daniel, will start work on May 4. Retiring Office Manager Ellen Heidelberger will stay on for at least two weeks to help with training.

Valerie said that consideration is being given to resuming in-person board meetings. One idea is to alternate in-person with Zoom meetings. Bill asked whether we should consider outdoor meetings, weather permitting.

Valerie reminded board members that a board meeting has been scheduled for August 29. We anticipate that this will be an in-person meeting and we hope to hold this at the Croton Free Library.

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

Ken moved that Valerie adjourn the meeting; Ginger seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:07 pm.