

**Saw Mill River Audubon**  
**August 29, 2022 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by Bill Kellner)**  
**Meeting held at Croton Free Library, Croton-on-Hudson, NY**

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

Absent: Erik, Ginger, Suzanne, Jenni, Debbie

Meeting started at 7:09 pm.

### **President's Report—Valerie Lyle**

Valerie noted that a quorum was present with board members attending the meeting in the library. Five additional board members joined the meeting remotely (via Zoom), as indicated in attendance above.

Ken moved that the board of directors approve the minutes for the board of directors meeting held on June 6, 2022. Tom R. seconded this motion. Steve moved that the June 6 minutes be amended to reflect the correct date of the upcoming SMRA Annual Meeting and Dinner, September 9, 2022. Mitch provided a second for Steve's motion. With all board members present in the room and remotely voting affirmatively, the motion approving the amended minutes passed.

The Pruyn gardens have been doing well despite limited maintenance being undertaken. Volunteers, including Mark Magel and others did significant and much-appreciated volunteer work in the spring. Anne has continued to water the garden, critically important in this summer of drought. We are hoping for more volunteers for the garden in 2023. Tom McE. noted that garden expenses year-to-date have been well under budget.

A celebration of the life of Ed Mertz will take place at the Half Moon Bay common room. The tentative date is October 8. Details will be sent to the board by email when the date and time are confirmed.

We currently have 43 paid registrants for the 2022 Annual Meeting and Dinner scheduled for September 9 at Crabtree's Kittle House restaurant. Our break-even number is 45; we expect to exceed that number. We are looking to hold the 2023 Annual Meeting and Dinner in April, the traditional timeframe for this event. The 2023 Annual Meeting will be a potluck dinner; we are searching for a venue large enough to host the meeting as our traditional venue, the Town of New Castle Community Center, may be inadequate for the anticipated attendance.

Anne is the SMRA delegate to the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA). She is also current NYSOA's board secretary. Anne is planning to attend the NYSOA annual meeting, Sept. 30–Oct. 2 in Syracuse. Kathleen moved that the board approve \$500 to cover meeting expenses for Anne. Mitch seconded this motion, which was approved by a unanimous vote by all present in person and remotely.

### **Development Committee Report—Valerie Lyle**

[Reference Membership and Donation Report as of August 24, 2022]

Total membership numbers have increased over those reported at our June meeting—with the current 658 SMRA chapter member households and 532 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,190.

Year-to-date we have received a total of \$60,225 in donations. This includes \$44,701 Annual Fund donations. Proceeds from our annual Birdathon and Birding Tea have been helpful in maintaining a healthy level of donations.

### **Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberger**

For our official quarterly report, as of July 1, 2022, the endowment portfolio balance was \$1,269,002, a \$183,205 (12.6%) decrease below the January 1, 2022 balance of \$1,452,208 and a \$73,558 (5.5%) decrease for the month of June. The balance as of August 1, 2022 was \$1,337,480 which is a \$68,478 (5.4%) increase for the month of July and a \$114,728 (7.9%) decrease for the year. As of July 1, the YTD, one-year, three-year and five-year investment rates of return were –14.6%, –10.6%, 5.3% and 6.1% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of –12.7%, –10.2%, 3.6% and 4.2% for the same periods. As of August 29, there have been \$22,000 in withdrawals from and

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\$44,701 in additions to the portfolio so far during 2022. As of August 1, 2022, we are \$120,163 (78.9%) 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**

[Reference Report: Operating Revenues and Expenses for the seven months ended July 31, 2022]

Tom referred to his report and noted that revenues for the first seven months were very close to budget with Seed Sale being a little below budget and Education revenue being a little above budget. Expenses were about \$4,000 over budget due primarily to higher Program expenses, including speaker fees and the raptor program, and higher Salaries and Benefits. Salaries were higher due to paying both Ellen and Barbara during the transition to the new Office Manager.

The net deficit of \$22,357 for the first seven months was about \$3,400 over budget. The deficit was covered by \$12,000 in withdrawals from the endowment and by unbudgeted revenues that exceeded unbudgeted expenses by more than \$9,000. The unbudgeted revenues consisted primarily of donations from The Rewilding School (\$9,006) and 2022 trip profits (\$1,099).

### **Bird Seed Sale—Ken Novenster**

Ken reported on the work of the Seed Sale Committee and especially Tom McE. in preparing our order and 2023 price list in a difficult environment of rising prices. Our annual seed sale weekend has been compressed to one day—September 24—when seed will be available for sale and pre-ordered pickup at Pruyn Sanctuary from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM. We are looking for volunteers to help out on Sept. 24; a signup sheet is being passed around at this meeting.

In the past board members have been among our best seed customers; we hope they will continue this year. We also need to find ways to reach a younger customer base as many purchasers are in the older demographic. Anne note that our new seed sale flyer is available at the meeting for board members to take and distribute. Ken noted that, with Anne's help, the Committee evaluated whether to change our seed vendor this year. The decision has been made to stick with our current vendor for this year but Erik Andersen is interested in exploring other vendor options for the seed sale committee.

### **Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim**

Anne reported that the upcoming South Africa trip (Nov. 5–21) is fully booked with 15 total participants. Due to the current volatility of the airline industry, our scheduled flights keep changing.

SMRA's involvement with the NYS Connect Kids to Parks program is continuing. We have scheduled visits to Rockefeller State Park Preserve for all 6th grade classes in the Ossining School district.

Pat Mutolo, who has been one of SMRA's environmental educators for a number of years, will be leaving. The search for a replacement is ongoing. The immediate task is to find someone to conduct the Pinecliff visits for the Chappaqua schools as Pat has done.

Over the summer the Executive Committee has approved SMRA's sign off on two advocacy letters. The first is to support Putnam Highlands Audubon's efforts to get public parking reopened at the Constitution Marsh Sanctuary. The second is to join other Westchester chapters to support Central Westchester Audubon's public opposition of the proposal to open a skeet shooting facility at the private country club adjacent to the Marshlands Conservancy. It is feared that, should skeet shooting be allowed, bird populations both at Marshlands and the nearby Edith G. Read Sanctuary will be negatively impacted.

National Audubon has a program to pair chapters with college interns to enhance the chapters' use of social media. Anne is working with a University of South Carolina student to explore ways to broaden SMRA's social media presence. This collaboration is already paying off with increased SMRA presence on Instagram.

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The maintenance and management plan prepared by Larry Weaner for the landfill grasslands at Croton Point needs some tweaking. SMRA has been involved in this process. The public needs to be alerted to the planned two-year mowing cycle for the grasslands. The plan is to mow one-half (the north side) of the capped landfill in early spring 2023. In early spring 2024, the remainder (south side) will be mowed. A digital copy of the maintenance and management plan was made available to the board prior to this meeting.

### **Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth**

The semi-annual Audubon NY/CT council meeting will take place in Rochester October 21–23. The host chapter is Genesee Valley Audubon. There will be several interesting speakers and field trips. SMRA board members interested in attending should let Tom Ruth know.

SMRA is following the situation with the 20.3 acre Buttonhook property in the Town of New Castle. This environmentally sensitive parcel is owned by the Chappaqua Central School District, which is looking to sell the property for development with single family homes after having invested money in trying to obtain pre-approved lots, without success. An organization of local neighbors and others has formed a non-profit organization, Friends of Buttonhook, to try to prevent development of the property. Friends of Buttonhook plans to submit a bid to purchase the property from the school district.

Anne, along with several SMRA board members, were invited in July to walk to the Bilski property immediately east of the Buttonhook parcel. Anne reports that this property consists of high-quality wooded habitat as well as a wetland area. The landowners have developed a trail network, which appears to be well maintained. The owners have indicated their interest in donation of part of their property to a non-profit to ensure its permanent preservation. Issues of public access would need to be resolved to allow visitors to access the donated property. If the Buttonhook parcel is not preserved, access options for any donated land in the adjacent property are limited.

The Advocacy Committee will meet in October to plan upcoming public programs. Please let Tom know of any program ideas you may have.

Cary mentioned that she will follow-up and report to the board on the skeet shooting proposal mentioned in the Executive Director's report. Richard will monitor the skeet shooting issue as well as the effort to reestablish public parking at Constitution March. Bill reported that the Hudson-to-Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H) will hold its semi-annual all-partner meeting on Sept. 8. This will be a virtual event instead of the previously-scheduled in-person meeting at the Highstead Preserve. Contact Tom Ruth or Bill for information.

### **Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.**

Michael showed the board a sample of the new plastic entrance signs we have purchased for our sanctuaries.

Work on the parking lot extension for the Brinton Brook Sanctuary will start on Aug. 31.

A series of upcoming walks is being planned for the sanctuaries to evaluate the trail network for possible problem areas that may be subject to erosion in case of heavy precipitation events. Extreme rainfall episodes are expected to become more frequent because of climate change. The walks are an effort to prioritize where trail work is needed to stay on top of this issue. The first of the walks is scheduled for Sept. 12 at 9:30 AM at Brinton Brook. Board members interested in joining the walk should contact Anne. Board members will be notified of future walks as they are scheduled.

A new initiative this fall is to have a table at each sanctuary entrance trailhead staffed by board members or other SMRA member volunteers. The idea is for those staffing the tables to greet and interact with sanctuary visitors. We hope to gain information about sanctuary visitors and educate them about SMRA and its mission. A possible bonus is acquisition of new members. We've applied to Con Edison for a grant to fund the purchase of tables, display flags and people counters.

We are planning to implement our annual deer management program again this November and December. Michael moved

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that the board approve making Brinton Brook, Pruyne and Choate Sanctuaries available to deer hunting based on parameters established in previous years under our deer management program. The dates of the program are Nov. 1 to Dec. 31. Steve provided a second for Michael's motion. The motion was approved with all board members present in person and on Zoom voting affirmatively.

Brinton Brook Sanctuary neighbor Jerry Weinstein has raised the possibility of funding any needed repairs to the Brinton Brook dam. Michael plans to have further discussions about this with Jerry.

We plan to resume sanctuary boundary surveys in the coming months. This is where we walk our boundaries, off trail, to see if boundary signs are needed or if there have been any encroachments. Board members will be updated as the schedule is planned.

### **Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim for Debbie van Zyl**

Please check our online calendar for upcoming trips and programs in addition to those mentioned elsewhere in these minutes.

### **Newsletter—Anne Swaim for Jenni Stern**

The deadline for the winter issue is December 1.

### **New Business—Valerie Lyle**

For the remainder of 2022 and the first half of 2023 board meetings are scheduled for 9/9 (Annual Dinner and meeting at Kittle House), **10/3\***, 12/5, 1/9, 2/6, **3/6\***, April dinner?, **5/1\***, 6/5 (picnic).

**\*Boldface meetings held in person at Croton Free Library**

Louisa reported that she is working on **the SMRA fundraising calendar for 2023**. We've gotten some excellent photo submissions but could use more. Louisa reminded board members about the upcoming fundraising event, the annual **SMRA Birdathon**, scheduled for Oct. 14–16.

Anne reported that the annual **FeederWatch** program usually held at the Croton Point Nature Center will not take place this year as the program's coordinator, Bonnie Coe, is unavailable. Let Anne know if anyone is interested in volunteering to conduct a "big sit" at the Nature Center feeders this fall and winter to accomplish some of the goals of the FeederWatch program.

### **Adjournment—Valerie Lyle**

Bill moved that Valerie adjourn the meeting; Cary seconded this motion. With all present voting in favor, Valerie adjourned the meeting at 8:33 PM.