



Saw Mill River Audubon
March 06, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by William Kellner)
Meeting held at Croton Free Library, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

Present in the Croton Free Library: **Erik Andersen, Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Louisa Gagliardi, Rik Kaufman, Suzanne Kavic, William Kellner, Valerie Lyle, Tom McEnerney, Steve Rappaport, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Jean Sparacin, Larry Trachtenberg.**

Present via Zoom: **Mitchell Goldfarb, Philip Heidelberger, Michael Madias, Jr., Kenneth Novenster, Richard Saravay, Jennifer Stern, Debbie van Zyl.**

Newly elected (see Nominating Committee, below) members of the board of directors **Kara Mason** and **Mark Magel** were also present in the library as was Executive Director Anne Swaim. Attendance compiled by Rik.

Absent: Kathleen Williamson.

The 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. Seven additional board members joined the meeting remotely (via Zoom).

Motion: To approve the minutes of the board of directors meeting held on February 6, 2023 as circulated. Motion by: Steve Rappaport. Seconded by: Lynn Salmon. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Val called attention to the upcoming meeting dates for 2023 listed on the agenda. The Annual Meeting, a potluck dinner this year, will be Sunday April 2. Board members who have not done so were urged to register on the SMRA website. Also, board members were urged to buy tickets for the Eagle Sighting quilt raffle. Ticket blanks were available at the meeting for board member purchase as well as for board members to sell.

Some board members have not yet returned their annual conflict of interest statements to the office. These should be filled out, signed, and returned right away.

PS lists for the upcoming Annual Fund Drive are being prepared. The lists will be sent to board members via email. Please review and update the office with any changes. PS packets will be distributed at the Annual Dinner. Fund Drive letters should be mailed by board members in early April.

Development Committee Report—Valerie Lyle

[Reference Membership and Donation Report as of March 3, 2023]

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With the current 663 SMRA chapter member households and 526 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total

membership stands at 1,189.

Donations year-to-date in 2023 stand at \$9,045. Val called attention to a revision in the report showing \$5,027 in donations received that are dedicated to the upcoming New York State Birders Conference that SMRA will host. This line item was left off the report distributed by email prior to the meeting; the revised report was available at the meeting.

Fundraising consultant Sharon Danosky will hold a virtual training session for the SMRA board of directors on April 18 at 4:00 pm. The focus will be donor care and engagement. The workshop will be recorded.

Finance Committee—Rik Kaufman for Phil Heidelberger

As of March 1, 2023, the endowment portfolio balance was \$1,277,101, a \$27,176 (2.2%) increase above the January 1, 2023 balance of \$1,249,925 and a \$35,524 (2.7%) decrease for the month of February. There have been \$8,000 in withdrawals from the portfolio so far during 2022. As of March 1, 2023, we are \$125,509 (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

Operating revenue for the first two months of 2023 included \$4,000 in donations from the Rewilding School and Chappaqua Friends, \$3,000 in donations for the NYSOA Conference in September and about \$4,500 from National Audubon. There were no unusual expense items.

This resulted in a positive cash flow of about \$3,200 for the first two months. In addition, \$8,000 was withdrawn from the endowment. These two factors resulted in the checking account balance increasing by about \$11,000 from the beginning of the year.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

Anne and Debbie discussed planning for the New York Birders Conference to be held Sept. 22–24. We are expecting a good turnout—it is likely there will be over 200 and possibly as many as 300+ people registering for the meeting. We can now confirm that David Sibley will be the keynote speaker, which is sure to increase attendance. Another big draw will be Tom Stephenson, coauthor of *The Warbler Guide*. Tom will be our workshop keynote, leading a workshop on learning bird sounds. Conference registration will start April 1.

The conference website is available for preview at www.nybirders.org. Views of the site were shared on Zoom and projected at the library. Anne also showed the preliminary conference schedule from the website. Field trips will take place in the mornings on Saturday and Sunday. The vendor area in the hotel will be open Saturday afternoon. Ornithology research paper/poster sessions will also be offered on Saturday afternoon. Consult the conference website for more scheduling details, including workshops and evening events.

There are several questions to be resolved regarding the conference, including setting a price for meeting registration, determining whether to offer an early bird registration discount and how many comps should be offered. A Zoom meeting will be scheduled shortly for conference subcommittee leaders to address these and other issues.

Anne noted that there are financial risks to the organization as contracts have to be signed and deposits put down in advance. She called on Tom McE. to continue this discussion. Tom described to the board the proposed contract with the Sleepy Hollow Hotel, the main conference venue. SMRA will guarantee 100 of the 125 rooms blocked out for the conference. We are guaranteeing that 100 rooms will be booked for Friday and Saturday night. We could cancel until August 10. Tom also noted that the contract guarantees that the hotel will net at least \$4,000 on food and \$4,500 for the ballroom on Saturday. We will be paying the hotel a \$10,000 nonrefundable deposit which will be applied to food/hotel costs.

Tom then described the proposed contract with David Sibley. His speaker's fee is \$7,500 plus \$100 per diem and mileage. The latest cancellation date is July 22. So, if SMRA had to cancel after July 22 but no later than August 10, we would lose our \$10,000 deposit with the Sleepy Hollow Hotel and the \$7,500 David Sibley speaker's fee. Tom noted that the David Sibley contract is with his publisher, Penguin Random House. Both contracts protect SMRA against a force majeure event that would cancel the conference, such as a declared health emergency. The Penguin Random House contract requires a good-faith attempt to reschedule in the event of cancellation. There was discussion and review of the worst-case scenario costs if the event were cancelled after August 10 and not by a covered force majeure event. There was consensus to proceed.

Motion: With the understanding that some details are pending, the board of directors authorizes approval of contracts for the 2023 New York Birders Conference with the Sleepy Hollow Hotel and Penguin Random House and that Anne Swaim is authorized to sign these contracts on behalf of Saw Mill River Audubon. Motion by: Tom McEnerney. Seconded by: Steve Rappaport. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Anne and Debbie said the conference should be a successful event and that it will be a real feather in SMRA's cap. Other local Audubon chapters will be involved with the conference and stand to benefit as well.

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim

Anne passed around the flyer for the upcoming trip to Ohio's Magee Marsh (May 21–25), a renowned stopping point for Canada-bound spring migrants as they prepare to cross Lake Erie. Co-leaders are Anne and Charlie Roberto. This will be a driving trip in two vans. As space is limited, the trip should sell out quickly. Board members who would like to come need to sign up soon.

The Annual Meeting pot luck is coming up on April 2. We'll need a centerpiece for each of the 10 tables. Ideas and help are welcome. Mark said instead of flowers we might consider plant-based arrangements featuring seeds. A sign-up sheet for volunteers needed for various aspects of the April 2 event was passed around.

Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth

We had a very successful webinar "Does Your House Kill Birds" on February 16. NYC Audubon's Justin Partridge and SMRA member Patrick Harty provided a fascinating history of efforts to study and mitigate the problem of bird mortality due to window strikes. Peter McCartt, Director of Energy and Sustainability for Westchester County, also participated. He said he will convey some of the strategies learned in the webinar for assessing and mitigating the problem to County building management. Justin pointed webinar viewers to several sources where various films and stickers can be purchased for reducing window collisions. Other ideas include not washing windows, especially during migration, and using insect screens on window exteriors. Bill reminded board members that the webinar was recorded and is available on the SMRA YouTube channel.

Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth (continued)

Another Advocacy Committee webinar will deal with the problem of artificial outdoor lighting and its impacts on birds, other wildlife, human health, and neighborhood aesthetics. There is a direct tie-in with the webinar on mitigating window collisions. This next webinar is scheduled for May 10. Anne has recruited Dr. Lawrence Faltz for our program. Dr. Faltz is an expert on light pollution; he has previously done a presentation for Bedford Audubon.

Kara has written a detailed article for our spring newsletter on the problem of neonicotinoid pesticides and the harm they cause to birds and other wildlife. There is a bill pending in the NYS legislature to impose a partial ban on these dangerous chemicals. Kara asked board members to contact her if they knew of any local groups, such as garden clubs or environmental organizations, who would be willing to sign the coalition letter urging passage of this important legislation.

Tom said there are no updates beyond what was reported in the minutes of the Feb. 6 board meeting regarding the pending sale of the Buttonhook parcel by the Chappaqua school district in the Town of New Castle.

Ken noted that he has been in touch with Deborah Cramer, author of the *Narrow Edge: a Tiny Bird, an Ancient Crab & an Epic Journey*. This book is about the Red Knot and its dependence on the horseshoe crab to sustain its long migration. The author has agreed to do a Zoom program with SMRA. The Advocacy Committee will investigate scheduling this and consult with Kathleen who leads the SMRA Nature Book Club.

Tom noted that the Spring Audubon NY/CT Council meeting is scheduled for April 14-17 in Glens Falls, NY. No one from SMRA is currently planning to attend this meeting. Tom noted that it's a great opportunity to meet people from other chapters around the state and in CT, and that we have money in the budget to cover the expenses of two people to attend. Tom said he would forward event information to those interested.

Bird Seed Sale—Ken Novenster

We still have bird seed in the shed. Board members are urged to contact the office to order and pick up seed. While there will be no third Saturday seed sales in March or April, purchase and pickup are always available by calling the office. Tom McE. noted that revenue for seed sold in January and February was approximately \$5,000.

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.

Michael has applied for and received grants for two NYS-funded programs for trees and shrubs—Buffer-in-a-Bag and Trees for Tribs. The plants, which are free of charge to SMRA, will be available in April. We have designated our Choate, Graff, and Brinton Brook Sanctuaries for these new plantings.

Newsletter—Jenni Stern

The summer issue deadline is May 1. Anne noted and Jean concurred that we are expecting to drop the completed spring issue in the mail on March 8.

Nominating Committee—William Kellner

Board member candidates Kara Mason and Mark Magel left the meeting room prior to the vote for directors.

Nominating Committee—William Kellner (continued)

- William Kellner, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, submitted the following slate of candidates for the

board of directors with a three-year term to begin on March 7, 2023, and end at the conclusion of the March 2026 meeting of the board of directors: Cary Andrews, Ginger Bernardin, Suzanne Kavic, Mark Magel, Kenneth Novenster, Thomas Ruth, Richard Saravay, Kathleen Williamson. Valerie Lyle asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this slate of candidates for the board of directors. Motion by: Louisa Gagliardi. Seconded by Rik Kaufman. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

- William Kellner, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, submitted the following candidate for the board of directors with a one-year term to begin on March 7, 2023, and end at the conclusion of the March 2024 meeting of the board of directors: Kara Mason. Valerie Lyle asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this candidate for the board of directors. Motion by: Suzanne Kavic. Seconded by Jennifer Stern. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Tom McE. raised a question about the two resolutions electing directors to the board. By having the new terms start on March 7, there would be a period of several hours when the number of board members would be reduced by nine. He suggested that the board revise the resolutions so that the newly elected board members would begin their terms immediately.

- Motion: to amend the two previous motions to have terms of the newly elected members of the board of directors begin immediately. Motion by Suzanne Kavic. Seconded by: Erik Andersen. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).
- William Kellner, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, submitted the following candidate for officers of the board of directors with a one-year term to begin immediately and end at the conclusion of the March 2024 meeting of the board of directors: President—Erik Andersen; Vice President—Suzanne Kavic; Treasurer—Lynn Salmon; Secretary—William Kellner; Board Chair—Valerie Lyle. Valerie Lyle asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this slate of candidates for officers of the board of directors. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by Michael Madias, Jr. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).
- William Kellner, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, submitted the following slate of candidates for the Executive Committee with a one-year term to begin immediately and end at the conclusion of the March 2024 meeting of the board of directors: Erik Andersen (Chair), Suzanne Kavic, Valerie Lyle, Lynn Salmon, Philip Heidelberg, William Kellner. Valerie Lyle asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this slate of candidates for the Executive Committee. Motion by: Rik Kaufman. Seconded by Tom McEnerney. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).
- William Kellner, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, submitted the following slate of candidates for the Audit Committee with a one-year term to begin immediately and end at the conclusion of the March 2024 meeting of the board of directors: Richard Saravay (Chair), Judith Lavenberg, Henry Seduski. Valerie Lyle asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this slate of candidates for the Audit Committee. Motion by: Suzanne Kavic. Seconded by Louisa Gagliardi. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).
- William Kellner, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, submitted the following slate of candidates for the Finance Committee with a one-year term to begin immediately and end at the conclusion of the March 2024 meeting of the board of directors: Philip Heidelberg (Chair), Erik Andersen, Suzanne Kavic, Valerie Lyle, Tom Ruth, Rik Kaufman, Patricia Watson. Valerie Lyle asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this slate of candidates for the Finance Committee. Motion by: Ginger Bernardin. Seconded by Jean Sparacin. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Nominating Committee—William Kellner (continued)

Bill expressed his thanks to Steve Rappaport and John Cavallero for serving again this year on the Nominating Committee. Mark and Kara rejoined the meeting following the voting.

Erik welcomed new board members Kara and Mark. He thanked the board for electing him president, Suzanne as vice president and Lynn as treasurer, noting that it's an honor to serve on such a dedicated board of directors. He also thanked Val, Tom R. and Tom McE. for their service as president, vice president and treasurer. Everyone gave a warm round of applause to the new and returning board members and new officers.

Val said it was a great pleasure to serve as president, a job she will miss, noting that she looks forward to continuing to serve on the board of directors. Val thanked Erik for stepping up to become president. Tom R. thanked Val for her work as president, saying that her efforts smoothed the way for him as vice president.

Anne recognized Tom McE. for his 20 years of service as treasurer and thanked him for the invaluable work he has done for SMRA. Tom McE. said he was honored to be part of a such a vibrant, participatory board of directors who have grown and advanced SMRA over the years and serving as treasurer has been a great pleasure.

New Business— Resolutions Relating to the Chase Checking Account

As outgoing Treasurer, Tom McEnerney stated that the Board needed to approve certain matters relating to SMRA's checking account (Account) at JP Morgan Chase Bank. In particular, the Board should update the persons authorized to sign checks and should designate the new Treasurer, Lynn Salmon, to replace Tom McEnerney as the person authorized to act on behalf of SMRA with respect to all matters relating to the Account.

Upon motion by Tom McEnerney and seconded by Steve Rappaport, the Board unanimously approved:

- (i) the removal of Robert McCrillis, Judith Epstein and Stan Wecker as persons authorized to sign checks on the Account;
- (ii) the addition of Lynn Salmon as a person authorized to sign checks on the Account;
- (iii) the continuation of Thomas McEnerney and William Kellner as persons authorized to sign checks on the Account; and
- (iv) the designation of Lynn Salmon to replace Thomas McEnerney as the person authorized to act on behalf of SMRA in all matters relating to the Account.

New Business Cary reminded the board that SMRA will have a table at the Croton Earth Day event on Saturday, April 29 and that volunteers are needed to help. Val noted upcoming board events: Sunday, April 2 (Annual Dinner at the Center at Mariandale); Monday, May 1 (at Croton Free Library); and Monday, June 5 (picnic for board members and volunteers at Senasqua Park, Croton-on-Hudson.)

Adjournment—Valerie Lyle

Motion: Valerie shall adjourn the meeting. Motion by: Cary. Seconded by: Suzanne. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively). Val adjourned the meeting at 8:34 PM.