

Saw Mill River Audubon
May 01, 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, Mitchell Goldfarb, Philip Heidelberger, Michael Madias, Jr., Rik Kaufman, William Kellner, Valerie Lyle, Tom McEnerney, Mark Magel, Steve Rappaport, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Larry Trachtenberg, Kathleen Williamson.**
Present via Zoom: **Cary Andrews, Suzanne Kavic, Kenneth Novenstern, Tom Ruth, Richard Saravay, Jennifer Stern**

ABSENT: Kara Mason, Jean Sparacin

Meeting started at 7:12 PM.

President's Report—Erik Andersen

Erik noted that a quorum was present with board members attending the meeting in the library. Six additional board members joined the meeting remotely (via Zoom).

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

Erik expressed appreciation to all the volunteers who helped make our April Annual Dinner such a successful event. There's been a lot of positive feedback about the program and the venue.

Erik discussed his attendance at the Audubon NY spring council meeting. Of the 27 NAS chapters in New York State, 14 sent representatives to the meeting. Erik noted that there was a lot of interest in the upcoming NYSOA Annual Meeting to be hosted by SMRA in September. It was noted that filling vacancies on the Audubon NY Council has been a problem. Also, the financial health of local chapters varies quite a bit; some chapters are struggling. Having only one statewide council meeting per year was suggested in light of the costs to the chapters associated with sending representatives to the meeting. There will not be a fall NY council meeting this year. The September NYSOA Annual Meeting is expected to draw delegates from many, if not most of the Audubon chapters in New York state in addition to several bird clubs.

Erik noted that Audubon chapters in New York have been asked to approve changes to the Audubon New York bylaws to help deal with the issue of recruiting and retaining members of the Audubon New York Council board of directors and the high level of absentees at board meetings. The bylaws changes are to be approved or rejected as a package. Richard, noting his long connection to the Audubon New York Council and his attendance at many council meetings, spoke in favor of having one annual council meeting instead of two. Richard also expressed support for Anne's work to develop regional meetings around the state where chapters with coinciding interests could exchange ideas.

Erik called on Anne to describe the proposed changes to the bylaws.

Anne listed the proposed changes to the Audubon NY Council bylaws:

ARTICLE III. MEMBERS

Current language:

Section 1. All certified Chapters of the National Audubon Society located wholly or partly in New York State are eligible to be members of the Council.

Proposed amendment

Section 1. All certified Chapters of the National Audubon Society located within or near New York State are eligible to be members of the Council.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE IV — BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 4

Current language:

Section 4. Vacancies occurring on the Board of Directors during the year may be filled by appointment of the Chair with the approval of a majority of the Board.

Proposed amendment:

Section 4. Vacancies occurring on the Board for any reason shall be filled by appointment of the chair with the approval of a majority of the board. Each director so appointed shall be added to the next slate put forward by the Nominating Committee to all member chapters in good standing, and, if elected, their term will begin.

Current language:

Section 5. Regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held twice per year in conjunction with the Council meetings. Telephone conference call Board meetings will take place as needed during the year. A quorum consisting of more than 50 percent of the Board members attending in person or via telephone conference call is required to conduct an official Board meeting. At any regular Board meetings or Board conference call, Board members may attend and vote by telephone communication, and Board members so attending shall be counted in the quorum. Proposed language (changes are underlined)

Proposed amendment:

Section 5. Regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held twice per year in conjunction with the Council meetings. Telephone conference call or Virtual/Zoom Board meetings will take place in winter and summer, and additionally as needed during the year. A quorum consisting of more than 50 percent of the Board members attending in person or via telephone conference call or Virtual/Zoom meeting is required to conduct an official Board meeting. At any regular Board meetings or Board conference call, Board members may attend and vote by telephone communication, and Board members so attending shall be counted in the quorum.

Proposed additions to Section 5:

5.1 Resignation. Any director may resign at any time by delivering notice to the Chair or the Secretary in writing or by email or facsimile. The resignation shall take effect when such notice is so delivered, unless the notice specifies a later effective date, and the acceptance of such resignation shall not be necessary to make it effective.

5.2 Removal. Any one or more of the directors may be removed for cause at any time by the affirmative vote of a majority of the directors present at a regular meeting or call or special meeting or call of the Board called for that purpose, provided that there is a quorum of not less than a majority of the entire Board present at such meeting and that notice of the proposed action shall have been transmitted to all directors at least two weeks before the meeting. Missing more than 2 of the meetings or calls of the full Board in a 12 month period may constitute cause for removal.

Current language:

ARTICLE IV. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. The Board of Directors, comprised of the Officers and Directors at Large, shall be the governing body for the purpose of managing the affairs of the Council. The Board of Directors shall perform the duties prescribed by these By-laws and by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Council, and other such duties as must be undertaken to fulfill the purpose of this Council. The Board shall have no less than eight (8) or more than twelve (12) members.

Proposed amendment:

ARTICLE IV. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. The Board of Directors, comprised of the Officers and Directors at Large, shall be the governing body for the purpose of managing the affairs of the Council. The Board of Directors shall perform the duties prescribed by these By-laws and by the parliamentary authority adopted by the Council, and other such duties as must be undertaken to fulfill the purpose of this Council.

The Board shall have no less than eight (8) or more than twelve (12) members. A minimum of seven (7) board members must be from chapter boards located wholly within the state of New York.

Motion: To accept the proposed changes to the Audubon New York bylaws as read by Anne. Motion by: Valerie Lyle. Seconded by: Steve Rappaport. Motion carried (20 in favor, 1 board member abstained).

Erik noting that Lynn, our new Treasurer, needs to be put on the Finance Committee, called on Bill as chair of the Nominating Committee, to ask for a vote by the board of directors. Bill, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, requested a motion to elect Lynn to the Finance Committee.

Motion: To approve Lynn Salmon as a member of the Finance Committee. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Ginger Bernardin. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Development Committee Report—Erik Andersen

[Reference Membership and Donation Report as of April 28, 2023.]

With the current 667 SMRA chapter member households and 520 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,187.

Donations year-to-date in 2023 stand at \$19,104

Erik noted that our Annual Fund Drive is ongoing. He thanked board members who have already submitted their contributions.

Anne noted that a virtual training session with fundraising consultant Sharon Danosky was held for board members on April 18. The session was recorded, so board members who were not able to attend will have the opportunity of watching this valuable program. Sharon asked attendees to list reasons that they donate to SMRA. Anne is compiling these; please submit by email if you haven't done so. Anne noted that the issue of legacy gifts and bequests was discussed at the training session following a suggestion from Valerie. We are working on language for the website and possibly newsletter to solicit these types of donations.

Bird Seed Sale—Ken Novenster

There's not much seed left in the shed; some varieties are completely sold out. The current inventory is always shown on our website: <https://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed-order>. Ken asked whether we should discount the remaining seed. Anne suggested holding off until at least June. Tom McE. agreed and said we should consider not offering a discount as we had reduced our profit margins this year due to the higher purchase prices for seed—we wanted to minimize price increased to our customers as much as possible.

Finance Committee—Phil Heidelberger

For our official quarterly report, as of April 1, 2023, the endowment portfolio balance was \$1,296,814, a \$46,889 (3.8%) increase above the January 1, 2023 balance of \$1,249,925. As of April 1, the year-to-date, one-year, three-year and five-year investment rates of return were 4.5%, -5.4%, 10.4% and 6.1% respectively, compared to our Morningstar Allocation Fund Index benchmark returns of 3.4%, -4.8%, 8.1% and 4.1% for the same periods. The balance as of May 1, 2023 was \$1,302,285 which is a \$5,471 (0.4%) increase for the month of April. As of May 1, 2023, there were \$15,000 in withdrawals from and \$0 in additions to the portfolio. As of May 1, 2023, we are \$124,438 (78.3%) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted withdrawals in highly liquid assets such as checking and money market funds.

Treasurer's Report—Lynn Salmon

[Reference report: Operating Revenues & Expenses Year-to-Date: 1/1/2023–4/30/2023]

Lynn went over the details of the report, discussing revenues and expenses, using the marker of one-third of the annual budget to compare actual revenues and expenses with budgeted amounts. Highlights include: Annual Fund Donations at \$23,633 this year compared to \$9,118 last year, due to sending out the AF letters earlier this year. Membership donations at \$1,960 this year, compared to \$3,690 last year, probably due to earlier AF and people donating to that instead of renewing membership. Other revenues and expenses are tracking as expected with the budget. NY State Birders conference early bird registrations at \$9,213 so far, plus \$13,327 in donations currently giving the conference positive cash flow with expenses of \$13,851 to date. SMRA is also now accepting Zelle payments in addition to credit card and paypal. Zelle deposits have no transaction fees.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

Anne discussed ongoing planning for the upcoming NYSOA New York Birders Conference, which SMRA is hosting Sept. 22–24. Field trip and workshop planning is finalized and now various subcommittees are working on conference logistics such as registration packets and a silent auction/raffled and recruiting and coordinating volunteers. The conference website has a downloadable flyer which can be used by Audubon chapters across the state to encourage members to attend the conference. The optical company Zeiss will participate in the conference and has committed support of at least

\$3,000. Cary mentioned she is continuing to actively solicit vendors for the conference exhibit hall.

Phil asked how many hotel rooms have been reserved for the NYSOA conference. Anne replied that so far we have commitments for 25 rooms and noted that over 70 people have registered for the meeting, which is an excellent number for this early in the process.

SMRA educator Pete Salmansohn will be doing 14 in-classroom programs for fourth and fifth graders in the Yorktown schools. SMRA educator Pat Mutolo will be resigning after her spring programs as she plans to move out of the area. We will begin an active search in June to find a replacement.

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim

Anne discussed her joint presentation with Kathleen held at the Chappaqua Library on April 23. Kathleen read her poems about bird life and Anne followed with information and illustrations about the specific birds. The program was well-attended with almost 90+ in attendance; there has been a lot of positive feedback. The program audience included those interested in birds and nature as well as those interested in poetry and literature. This was a great opportunity to expand our outreach and impart important information about our conservation work. We are planning to replicate the joint presentation in other venues; Lynn will replace Anne for these sessions.

The upcoming trip to Ohio's Magee Marsh will take place May 21–25. Co-leaders are Anne and Charlie Roberto with 10 participants.

Our popular annual visit to the Doodletown IBA in Bear Mountain State Park to see spring migrants is scheduled for May 20. Another great opportunity to see spring migrants is our walk at Sterling Forest State Park on June 18. Please see the Google Calendar on the SMRA website for details.

Anne called on Kathleen to update the board on the SMRA Nature Book Club. The next meeting of the club will be June 13. This may be an in-person meeting. The book to be discussed will be announced shortly.

Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth

The Advocacy Committee will meet on May 8. Among other things, we'll discuss the presentation by ClearPath New York on their plans to upgrade the state's electric transmission infrastructure with the goal of bringing renewable power from its upstate or Canadian sources to downstate population centers. Erik, Val and Jenni attended the session with ClearPath and will brief the committee. Erik has approached Audubon NY's Erin McGrath to determine Audubon NY's position on this project.

Our next public program will be the May 10 webinar on the problem of artificial outdoor lighting and its impacts on birds, other wildlife, human health and neighborhood aesthetics. Dr. Lawrence Faltz, an expert on light pollution, is the presenter.

We are continuing our efforts to call attention to the problem of neonicotinoid pesticides and their impacts on birds and pollinator insects. Kara is coordinating this work. She is currently in Albany, lobbying in support of the Birds and Bees Protection Act currently before the state legislature.

Tom called on Ken to discuss the issue of the decline in the population of the horseshoe crab and impacts on bird species like the Red Knott that depend on this resource. Ken discussed the possibility of having SMRA join the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition. The Advocacy Committee is looking at having a future Zoom program with Deborah Cramer, author of the book *The Narrow Edge: A Tiny Bird, an Ancient Crab, and an Epic Journey*. The New York City Audubon chapter has an active program to monitor horseshoe crab populations on beaches in Jamaica Bay. Contact Ken if you are interested in participating.

Tom will represent SMRA at the upcoming H2H All Partner Meeting to be held at Greenwich Audubon on May 9. Let him know if you would like to join him.

It was noted that Kara Mason is not at the board meeting because she was attending a lobby day in Albany about the neonicotinoid issue.

Pruyn Garden Update—Mark Magel

Gardening season is off to a good start. The mild winter has helped but lack of rain in April may cause some impacts. Recent rains may help. Tom McE. and grandson Henry performed yeoman's service by doing a major spring cleanup in the garden. On April 26 six volunteers continued getting the garden ready for spring. Another volunteer workday is scheduled for May 10. Thereafter, we'll hold a volunteer workday every other Wednesday at Pruyn. We'll also be scheduling additional volunteer workdays for special projects in the garden. We're looking for a volunteer with woodworking skills to fix the garden fence and gate.

We have a new gardening volunteering web page which lists all work dates and other details and offers a form to RSVP for gardening work days: <https://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/gardening>

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.

A property owner with a parcel adjacent to our Choate Sanctuary has expressed concerns about dead ash trees on the SMRA side of the border. She has agreed to remove these trees at her expense.

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 on May 8. We have designated our Choate, Graff and Brinton Brook Sanctuaries for these new plantings and will shortly be posting dates for volunteer workdays to get the plants in the ground.

Michael was informed by the Croton Trails Group of the completion of the project that required the white trail on the Hudson National Golf Course property to be co-located with Brinton Brook's red trail on the Brinton side of the property line. The combined trail was marked with both red and white blazes; the white blazes have been removed.

Michael called on Phil to discuss the \$4,000 NAS grant to be used to on the sanctuary trail network to mitigate effects of severe weather events related to climate change. Last fall, volunteers walked the trails and identified places where improvements (e.g., installation of water bars and trail reroutes) should be made. The following volunteer workdays for this trail work have been scheduled: May 16 at Pruyn; May 28 at Brinton Brook; June 13 at Graff; June 28 at Graff and/or Brinton Brook.

We have a new sanctuary projects web page listing these dates and work details and offering a form to RSVP for the sanctuary work dates: <https://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/projects>

Newsletter—Jenni Stern

The summer issue deadline is today. Expect the issue in the mail in early June.

New Business—Erik Andersen

Erik called for board approval of upcoming board of directors meeting dates as listed on the agenda for today's meeting. Motion: To approve the dates for meetings of the board of directors during the remainder of 2023 and first half of 2024 as listed in the agenda for today's meeting. Motion by: Mitchell Goldfarb. Seconded by: Valerie Lyle. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Ginger took the floor and expressed her opinion that having a hybrid board meeting is problematic as the technology is inadequate for properly conducting business. She pointed out that it can be hard to hear those who are attending virtually and that there are constant interruptions to properly establish the remote connection. Several board members agreed with this assessment. Bill suggested that the hybrid option be dropped for future meetings scheduled at the Croton Free Library. These board meetings would be entirely in-person with no option to attend remotely. This would not affect the meetings which are scheduled to be held entirely on Zoom.

Erik, noting that no members of the board of directors spoke in favor of continuing hybrid meetings, announced that in-person meetings of the board scheduled for the Croton Free Library will be entirely in-person and will not have a hybrid option.

Cary noted the new Purple Martin house that has been installed by the Village of Croton-on-Hudson at Croton Landing Park. Anne, Lynn and Charlie Roberto provided guidance to the Village on siting.

Adjournment—Erik Andersen

Motion: Erik shall adjourn the meeting. Motion by: Phil Heidelberger. Seconded by: Steve Rappaport. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively). Erik adjourned the meeting at 8:25 PM.