

Saw Mill River Audubon
October 02, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by William Kellner)
The meeting held on Zoom

Present (in **bold type**): **Erik Andersen, Cary Andrews**, Ginger Bernardin, **Louisa Gagliardi**, Mitchell Goldfarb, **Phil Heidelbergger, Rik Kaufman, Suzanne Kavic, William Kellner, Valerie Lyle, Tom McEnerney, Michael Madias, Jr., Mark Magel, Kara Mason, Kenneth Novenstern, Steve Rappaport, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Richard Saravay**, Jean Sparacin, **Jennifer Stern, Larry Trachtenberg**, Kathleen Williamson. Executive Director **Anne Swaim** was also present.

Absent: Ginger, Mitchell, Jean, Kathleen

The meeting started at 7:05 PM.

President's Report—Erik Andersen

Anne noted that a quorum was present, and Erik began the meeting.

Motion: To approve the minutes of the board of directors meeting held on September 11, 2023 as circulated.
Motion by: Phil Heidelbergger. Seconded by: Tom Ruth. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Erik reminded board members to review the upcoming meeting dates shown on tonight's meeting agenda, calling attention to March 24 for the rescheduled annual dinner and the newly scheduled April 15 board meeting. There is no board meeting scheduled for November; rather all committees will meet during that month to plan future activities and propose budgets for the upcoming year. Committees should submit budget requests prior to Thanksgiving.

Development Committee Report—Erik Andersen

[Reference Membership and Donation Report as of September 29, 2023.]

With the current 686 SMRA chapter member households and 476 joint NAS/SMRA member households, total membership stands at 1,162.

Year-to-date dues payments received for chapter memberships are at \$3,961. The budgeted goal for 2023 is \$8,400 for dues payments.

Finance Committee—Phil Heidelbergger

As of October 1, 2023, the endowment portfolio balance was \$1,308,456, a 4.7% (\$58,531) increase above the January 1, 2023 balance of \$1,249,925, but a 3.2% (\$42,683) decrease for the month of September. There have been \$17,035 in withdrawals from the portfolio so far during 2023. As of October 1, 2023, we are \$124,092 (78.0%) 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: 01/01/23–09/30/2023] Lynn reported that overall revenues are in line with budgeted amounts. Annual Fund donations are higher than they were at this time in 2022. Seed sale revenues are close to budget and school program revenues are ahead of last year's numbers and 2023 budgeted amounts.

Expenses are also in line with budgeted amounts and overall cash flow has been positive. Revenues exceeded expenses for the spring 2023 trip to Ohio and the upcoming Trinidad trip.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

Anne discussed the NYSOA New York Birders Conference, which SMRA hosted Sept. 22–24. The conference was a great success with record attendance. Our costs for the conference were fully covered as expenses closely matched revenues received. In response to Phil's query, Anne reported that we did not have to pick up the costs of any unfilled hotel rooms.

Anne thanked Debbie for her incredible work as conference coordinator. Thirty-six volunteers assisted Debbie. Conference attendees gave the gathering rave reviews. Anne called on Debbie, who thanked our volunteers for their efforts. She said SMRA Office Manager Barbara and John Cavallero deserve a special mention. Key-note speaker David Sibley helped make the conference the success that it was. His talk was very well received and he went out of his way to meet with young birders. Sibley was one of the attendees who expressed appreciation for how well the meeting was run and how enjoyable the experience was.

Erik spoke, agreeing that David Sibley was very impressed with the conference. Erik noted that Debbie and the conference volunteers did a marvelous job. He thanked Debbie for persevering over months of planning and pulling everything together at the conference. Debbie replied that detailed planning well in advance allowed us to efficiently execute our plan and achieve our goal of hosting a high-quality meeting. She noted that the many young birders in attendance clearly enjoyed themselves and helped make the conference such a success.

Larry asked if vendors were pleased with the conference. Erik replied that the commercial vendors he spoke to were very happy with the meeting. Zeiss reported that they were pleased with the event. They sold several high-end binoculars at their table. Erik also noted that non-profit exhibitors were very positive about their experience. Kara spoke, agreeing that vendors were very pleased. She reported that one of the vendors, Wild Birds Unlimited, sent her an email saying that they were impressed with the high level of sales at their exhibit.

Anne noted that the scientific presentations were an important part of the conference and that there were several interesting talks. She concluded the discussion of the NYSOA Conference by thanking the field trip leaders; the field trips were well attended and enjoyed by the participants.

Our newly hired educator, Cathy Hildenbrand, will be observing Pete Salmansohn teaching students from the Ossining school district on a Connect Kids to Parks outing at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Cathy will prepare a written lesson plan based on her observations. We plan to have Cathy teach younger elementary school students. For Spring 2023, we are exploring the possibility of booking programs with Yonkers and New Rochelle schools as we have done in past years.

Our relationship with Zeiss resulting from the NYSOA Conference is continuing. Zeiss generously sponsored a birding walk led by Anne at the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. The Sleepy Hollow Cemetery Historic Fund provided a guide who spoke about the many famous Americans whose gravesites we passed on the walk. Additional programs sponsored by Zeiss are being considered. Another new partnership for SMRA are monthly bird walks being offered for residents of Kendal-on-Hudson.

Anne updated the board on the issue of the Pruyn Sanctuary neighbor who is being prosecuted by the Town of New Castle for various environmental law violations. As discussed in the minutes of our previous (Sept. 11) board meeting, there have been serious impacts on sanctuary property. The trial in town court has been re-scheduled for November 20. Ken and Larry are looking into the possibility of SMRA retaining legal counsel. The board will be kept informed about future developments in this matter.

SMRA has signed a letter, following Executive Committee approval, opposing the EATS (Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression) Act. This proposed federal law would prevent states from regulating farming and ranching practices. If enacted, there would be serious environmental impacts, especially in states like New York. SMRA has also signed a letter in support of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. This action has been recommended by the American Bird Conservancy. The National Audubon Society is a member of the coalition.

An article, published in *The Examiner News*, about grassland maintenance lapses at Croton Point Park, resulted from the efforts of SMRA member Joe Wallace to call attention to this issue. Westchester County has taken notice of this negative publicity and scheduled a stakeholder meeting for Oct. 13. SMRA will participate in that meeting. A Zoom session with Charlie Roberto, Karalyn Lamb, and Anne will take place on Oct. 10 to go over discussion topics for the Oct. 13 meeting with SMRA board members invited to this pre-meeting Zoom.

Programs and Field Trips—Anne Swaim

Upcoming trips may include Cape May. The Trinidad trip has 19 participants and two SMRA leaders and we will be staying at the newly refurbished and re-opened Asa Wright Nature Centre.

SMRA Nature Book Club—Bill Kellner for Kathleen Williamson

On October 17 the club will meet via Zoom to discuss *The Sea Trilogy* by Rachel Carson. Participants may choose to read one or more of the works in the trilogy: *Under the Sea-Wind*, *The Sea Around Us* and *The Edge of the Sea*.

Advocacy Committee Report—Tom Ruth

The Advocacy Committee will meet on October 12 to discuss and plan appropriate actions on environmental issues, including challenges facing Red Knots and the horseshoe crabs they depend on during their long-distance migration, the Clean Path NY Project, to build infrastructure that will support moving clean electricity from where it's generated upstate to where it's needed in the New York City metropolitan area and others. Kara reminded the board about our upcoming webinar scheduled for Nov. 9 in which the Natural Resource Defense Council's Dan Raichel will provide a detailed presentation (via Zoom) on the serious environmental impacts of neonicotinoid pesticides.

Bird Seed Sale—Anne Swaim for Ken Novenstern

We have one unfilled volunteer slot for our upcoming seed sale day, which is Oct. 7 (9:30 AM–12:30 PM) Tom McE. said he'd cover that shift. Ken noted that board members are our best seed sale customers.

Pruyn Garden Update—Mark Magel

The gardens are in the stage of shutting down for the winter, which for the purpose of providing food and habitat for birds and insects means "do nothing," leaving the seed heads in place and the foliage to eventually die back. In the last two weeks, we've remapped both the Meadow Garden and Hummingbird & Butterfly Garden, noting what exists neatly, what has spread or jumped around, and what has not survived. This activity was very popular with the volunteers. Over the summer we had about 10 volunteers and about 60 visitors. Mark will take our notes and over the winter redraw the maps of both gardens and suggest new plantings.

In the Meadow Garden, many plants did exceedingly well at the expense of crowding out/overshadowing others—mainly various flowering perennials like Echinacea, Rudbeckia, asters, and butterfly Aesclepias. Deer damage was also a major factor. Similarly, the H&B garden had winners and losers, but no deer, so it was mainly an issue of plants either staying neat or growing to out-compete others. The Pentas did not do well this year, although other annuals did very well. The decision was made to divide some of the Joe Pye weed, blue mist, flax, and others and transplant them into the larger meadow. Many plants (mainly grasses) have 6' or deeper root systems so lifting and replanting those would be tricky. The missing plants in the Meadow Garden will probably not be directly replaced but instead, new vigorous flowering natives such as New York ironweed and helenium will be introduced. We plan to cut back the flax and try again with more butterfly Aesclepias in the Meadow Garden. An early start on weeding and the decision to not do supplemental watering was successful for both natives and suppressing weed growth.

We observed an abundance of pollinators and hummingbirds. Mountain mint was the most popular with the pollinators. We allowed some jewelweed to not be weeded out, which turned out to be extremely popular with hummingbirds as were the newly introduced *Salvia gigantium* (instead of *S. farinacea*).

Lastly, Old Farm Lake Condominiums in Chappaqua contacted us to advise on native pollinator plantings for their landscape. Mark will make a site visit and discuss his findings on Oct. 9.

Mark concluded by thanking the garden volunteers. These volunteers had fun while learning a lot. Their hard work and dedication is much appreciated. The birds and insects also expressed appreciation in their own way. We're planning to schedule one more volunteer session to collect seeds for winter sowing.

Sanctuaries Committee Report—Michael Madias, Jr.

Michael reported that, despite the very heavy rains this past summer, our trails are in good shape. Recent improvements, like the installation of new water bars, have helped. Former board member Donna Lassiter has donated native grasses for planting in our Brinton Brook Sanctuary and Pruyn Meadow Garden. Our yearly deer management program is proposed to take place using vetted bowhunters in Brinton Brook, Choate, and Pruyn Sanctuaries from Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, 2023, under the same guidelines as in past years. Michael and Anne will place appropriate signage in these sanctuaries.

Motion: To approve the deer management program to take place in Brinton Brook, Pruyn, and Choate Sanctuaries from Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, 2023. Motion by: Michael Madias, Jr. Seconded by: Suzanne Kavic. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Newsletter—Jenni Stern

The deadline for the winter issue is Nov. 1. Look for good coverage of the NYSOA conference in the issue. Please get any material to Jenni by the deadline.

New Business—Erik Andersen

Anne called attention to the Zeiss coupon included in SMRA's recent upcoming event email blast. The coupon offers a discount on Zeiss binoculars purchased at Feed the Birds in Croton.

Adjournment—Erik Andersen

Motion: Erik shall adjourn the meeting. Motion by: Larry Trachtenberg. Seconded by: Louisa Gagliardi. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively). Erik adjourned the meeting at 8:05 PM.