

Saw Mill River Audubon

**March 4, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes (taken by William Kellner, attendance compiled by Rik Kaufman)
Meeting held on Zoom**

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

Absent: Mitch, Steve, Jean, Jenni

Meeting started at 7:01 PM.

President's Report—Erik Andersen

Erik, noting that a quorum was present, began the meeting.

Motion: To approve the minutes of the board of directors meeting held on February 5, 2024 and as circulated.
Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Lynn Salmon. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Nominating Committee—William Kellner

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 immediately and end when their successors are elected and qualified: Erik Andersen, Philip Heidelberg, William Kellner, Michael Madias, Jr., Kara Mason, Steve Rappaport, Larry Trachtenberg. Erik Andersen asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this slate of candidates for the board of directors. Motion by: Valerie Lyle. Seconded by Suzanne Kavic. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

William Kellner, on behalf of the Nominating Committee, submitted the following candidates for officers of the board of directors with a one-year term to begin immediately and end when their successors are elected and qualified: President—Erik Andersen; Vice President—Suzanne Kavic; Treasurer—Lynn Salmon; Secretary—William Kellner; Board Chair—Valerie Lyle. Erik Andersen asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve these candidates for officers of the board of directors. Motion by: Philip Heidelberg. Seconded by: Cary Andrews. 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 when their successors are elected and qualified: Erik Andersen (Chair), Suzanne Kavic, Valerie Lyle, Lynn Salmon, Philip Heidelberg, William Kellner. Erik Andersen asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this slate of candidates for the Executive Committee. Motion by: Kenneth Novenster. Seconded by: Tom Ruth. 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 when their successors are elected and

qualified: Mitchell Goldfarb (Chair), Judith Lavenberg, Henry Seduski. Erik Andersen asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this slate of candidates for the Audit Committee. Motion by: Valerie Lyle. Seconded by: Suzanne Kavic. 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 when their successors are elected and qualified: Philip Heidelberger (Chair), Erik Andersen, Rik Kaufman, Suzanne Kavic, Valerie Lyle, Tom Ruth, Lynn Salmon, Patricia Watson. Erik Andersen asked for a motion that the board of directors vote to approve this slate of candidates for the Finance Committee. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Kenneth Novenster. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Bill expressed his thanks to Steve Rappaport and John Cavallero for serving again this year on the Nominating Committee.

Executive Director's Report—Anne Swaim

Anne and Larry 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. SMRA's attorney Perry Freedman has filed a civil complaint against the neighbor for damage to SMRA's property. The neighbor has filed a motion to dismiss SMRA's complaint. Anne displayed a copy of the motion to dismiss using Zoom's screen share feature. A copy of the motion to dismiss will be sent to board members upon request. Perry Freedman will submit to the court a response to the motion to dismiss, stating reasons why SMRA's complaint should not be dismissed.

Perry Freedman is requesting an additional \$5,000 retainer. Motion: to authorize paying Perry Freedman an additional \$5,000. Motion by: Rik Kaufman. Seconded by Suzanne Kavic. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Finance Committee—Philip Heidelberger

As of March 1, 2024, the endowment portfolio balance was \$1,408,168, a 3.5% (\$47,008) increase for the month of February and a 3.7% (\$50,114) increase above the January 1, 2024 balance of \$1,358,054. There have been no additions to or withdrawals from the endowment so far during 2024. As of March 1, 2024, we are 59.9% (\$99,594) above our guideline to maintain two years of budgeted withdrawals in highly liquid assets such as checking, short-term CDs and money market funds.

President's Report—Erik Andersen

Erik reminded board members of the beautiful quilt "Forest Friends" designed and produced by Patricia Loquet for our 2024 bird quilt raffle. Noting that sales to date have been limited and that the raffle will take place at the Annual Dinner on March 24, Erik asked board members to actively sell tickets. Also, board members who have not yet done so need to register for the dinner on the SMRA website.

SMRA has received a request from the Village of Irvington to issue a statement in support of Irvington's proposed deer management program on Village-owned woodlands. The Executive Committee discussed the pros and cons of the issue, noting that issuing a statement of support would fall within our mission despite the potentially controversial nature of expressing support for lethal control of the deer population. Erik and Anne pointed out that numerous scientific studies have demonstrated that the excess deer population in our region has severely degraded woodland habitats. Wildlife has been negatively impacted. This is especially true for several species of ground-nesting birds (e.g., Ovenbird).

Prior to tonight's meeting, Anne distributed to the board a draft statement for potential submission to Irvington in support of the Village's proposal. This statement outlines how the excessive population of deer has impacted local habitats and wildlife and how SMRA's ongoing deer management program in its sanctuaries has had some positive effects in terms of regeneration of over-browsed fauna; there have been no concerns with safety. Also distributed was the statement issued in 2010 by SMRA in support of the proposed deer management program in the Village of Croton-on-Hudson. The Croton program was not implemented due to local opposition.

Several board members spoke in favor of issuing a statement in support of the Irvington plan, including Bill, Val, Tom R. and Mark. Val noted that the public is probably better educated now about the need for deer management than when the controversial plan by the Village of Croton was proposed in 2010 and that successful deer management programs at Teatown, the SMRA sanctuaries and Westchester County Parks could help allay concerns. Mark said one problem with the failed Croton program was that a strong case for the environmental benefits of deer management was not emphasized early enough in the process.

Erik said going forward with crafting a statement of support makes sense considering the board's support.

Motion: To submit a statement to the Village of Irvington in support of implementing a deer management program. The statement will enumerate scientific findings on the benefits of deer management and relate SMRA's experience in terms of the safety and efficacy of the SMRA deer management program. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Valerie Lyle. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Erik gave the floor to Anne who noted that we have received a second application for a Larry Light Youth Scholarship. The applicant is Arabella Pajoohi, a young birder who is well known in the SMRA community. Arabella is applying to a summer program for 7th and 8th grade girls at the Penikese Island School in Massachusetts. Students in the program will work with women scientists from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Two strong letters of reference were included with Arabella's scholarship application, including one from Charlie Roberto. Arabella is requesting a \$1,800 scholarship to cover program tuition and travel costs. Anne noted that the amount requested by our two scholarship applicants exceeds the annual Larry Light Scholarship distribution guideline but that a generous donor has agreed to make up the difference.

Motion: To approve a Larry Light Scholarship for \$1,800 for Arabella Pajoohi to attend the Science + Nature Camp at the Penikese Island School. The board's approval of the scholarship is contingent upon Arabella's acceptance by the program. Motion by: Kenneth Novenster. Seconded by: Ginger Bernardin. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Anne will host a bird walk at Rockefeller State Park Preserve on Earth Day. Following a SMRA bird walk that morning, she will staff SMRA's exhibit table at the Earth Day event held in front of the preserve's visitor center near the main entrance. Board members are encouraged to join Anne at the table. Volunteers are also needed to staff SMRA's exhibit at the Croton Earth Day event at Senasqua Park. Earth Day is April 27.

Anne displayed the Annual Dinner volunteer signup sheet using Zoom screen share, calling attention to items where we still need volunteers. She thanked the board members who have already signed up and reminded volunteers to make sure to arrive early. Kathleen will again supply silverware that can be washed. Anne said this year's presentation by our Larry Light Scholarship winner about her program last summer at the Audubon Hog Island Camp in Maine looks excellent.

Bird Seed Sale—Ken Novenster

We need two volunteers for our March 16 seed sale. Michael and Kathleen agreed to volunteer.

Newsletter—Anne Swaim for Jenni Stern

The deadline for the summer issue is May 1. The spring issue was our first issue to be distributed, for the most part, digitally. We mailed 270 printed copies to members for whom we don't have an email address. These members were informed this would be their last printed issue unless they formally request to continue getting a printed copy. They may also choose, instead of getting a printed copy, to receive notification that the digital issue is available by submitting an email address. So far, about 50 of these 270 members have requested that print copies continue to be mailed to them. Printing will be done in the SMRA office as needed.

New Business—Erik Andersen

Anne thanked Erik and Ginger for prepping painting the second upstairs bedroom at the Pruyn House. They did a great job. They also assisted Anne in reinstalling the kiosk display at Pruyn with new back boards.

Tom R. thanked Anne and Ken for hosting the recent well-attended webinar with author Deborah Cramer on the plight of the Red Knot and the decline of the horseshoe crab. It was a very informative hour. Ken noted that SMRA plans to partner with Deborah to advocate for reduction or elimination of the harvesting of horseshoe crabs in New York State. Anne reminded the board of our June 21 field trip to the Jamaica Bay NWR to participate in the horseshoe crab census held on the night of the full moon.

Adjournment—Erik Andersen

Motion: Erik shall adjourn the meeting. Motion by: Cary Andrews. Seconded by: Mark Magel. Motion carried (all present voted affirmatively).

Erik adjourned the meeting at 7:56 PM.