

SMA Directors' Meeting Minutes

December 18, 2024

Via Zoom

7:00 pm

In attendance: Directors Russ Pinizzotto, Mike Simmons, David Gay, Bob Dodge, Howie Marshall, Paul Howell, Carson Hanrahan and Rob Burgess. Also in attendance were members Anne Dobriko, Mike Green, Marc Stowbridge, David Crocker, Al DiSabatino, Ron Thompson, Dean Ostergaard, and new member Bill Denig. A quorum was present.

The minutes of the November 20, 2024 meeting were approved.

Follow-Up on Action Items and Committee Reports:

Program Committee: Russ

Russ reviewed scheduled speakers:

- January 2 – member short talks on observing tips for those new to astronomy. Russ had not received any suggestions after an email request to the membership as to topics or offers to present. He will continue to seek input. At the meeting the following suggestions were made: spotter scope alignment, averted vision, purpose and use of setting circles, aligning in daylight, what not to do, cleaning optics.
- February 6 – Greg Shanos will provide a talk on a comparison of various e-scopes.
- March & April – TBD (Russ is hoping to get a speaker about the Parker Solar Probe for one of these months)
- May: Elizabeth Kessler, Stanford University – Hubble images compared to the sublime celestial paintings of the late 1800's.

Special Interest sub-Groups: David Crocker & Russ

David reported that there are currently four club members that have connected regarding solar observing and that they are staying in touch via email several times per week. Russ reported that the AL Observing Program group has four to five members that are meeting every two weeks on Tuesday evenings at 7 via zoom. Other interest areas of astrophotography and citizen science opportunities have not coalesced but remain open if a leader comes forward.

Rob thanked David and Russ for taking leadership of these groups which are responsive to member interests as expressed in our last survey of the membership. He also stated he would make regular mention of these groups in his monthly President's blog on the website.

Outreach Committee: Carson, Mike and Anne Dobriko

- November 16 and rain date Nov 23 star party at Bug Light cancelled due to weather.

- Rob reported representing SMA at a fundraiser for Teens to Trails at Flight Deck Brewing, bringing a telescope, etc. Weather was cloudy, so only a handful of attendees stopped by. Nevertheless, it was good to support our co-tenant.
- Rob spoke via Zoom to the Night Owl Club, part of the Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium in St. Johnsbury, VT on 11/21/24. A FaceBook Live recording is available at <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/Zz2Nc3naaJccR5y1/>. It is also available on their community access TV channel at <https://www.katv.org/vod/lectures/2024/fmp20241213>. While attendance was light, the wisdom imparted will now live on in perpetuity!
- Rob will present a brief overview of Astrotourism at Dark Sky Maine's Winter Solstice Virtual Star Party on 12/19/24.
- David Crocker represented SMA at the annual tree lighting ceremony in South Portland on 12/5/24, in concert with John Haley of the Southworth Planetarium.
- Carson reported that a possible star party with about 80 Seventh graders at Falmouth Middle School remains a possibility early in 2025.
- Clare Harrington – MSAD 51 (Cumb./No Yar) – April 2025 based on discussion with Carson.
- **Corporate Star Party requests:** at the November meeting the following corporate star party standards were adopted:
 1. \$1,000 providing three astronomers with scopes and laser tour
 2. \$200 for each additional scope
 3. \$500 if the event is cancelled by requester
 4. \$250 minimum if event is cancelled due to weather
 5. \$750 for indoor Stellarium-type presentation
 6. Mileage and other out-of-pocket expenses of volunteers to be reimbursed out of fee paid to club; remainder of funds to club

ACTION ITEMS:

- Roster of volunteers willing to participate will need to be developed, as well as a coordinated program for volunteers to present
- Tab will be added to website to solicit interest
- Rob will reconnect with Navitour regarding this new club offering

Resumption of star parties with lecture components

- Rob reported that Jon Wallace contacted him to express his willingness to resume some level of regular star parties, rain or shine, at Neptune Drive that would also include some form of indoor talk/lecture. Jon offered to lead several of these if they were to resume. Rob expressed some concern that the balance of star party activities has shifted to the greater Portland area foregoing use of our facilities in Brunswick and that he was grateful for Jon's offer. Reaction from the Board was cool, recognizing that our membership survey indicated that travelling to Brunswick by the bulk of the membership was a deterrent to attendance. Several board members indicated that those coming to star parties were most interested in hands-on experiences of looking through and using telescopes rather than sitting in a classroom, and that our experience with the classroom was that lectures overran their time limits leaving attendees feeling captured. They were also skeptical of attendance under "rain or shine" promotion. They noted that our monthly meetings provide a regular

opportunity to learn about astronomy topics and were also wary of volunteer burnout if the club committed to too many events. Nevertheless, there was great appreciation for Jon's offer and encouraged further discussion to see how it might be melded with a club star party schedule for 2025.

Dark Sky Committee: Rob, Howie, Jeremy

Rob reported on the Goodwin Chevrolet remodeling in Brunswick that raised the question, under an ordinance, of when compliance with new standards would apply to a grandfathered property. Rob solicited feedback on whether an ordinance should compel compliance if the renovations exceeded a certain dollar threshold of expenditure or percentage of square footage of the original property, or whether compliance should be required by all within so many years of enactment of new lighting standards. Responses were mixed, citing negative reactions to mandates, as well as potentially large financial consequences if an ADA model of triggering compliance based on level of expenditure or percentage of change. It remained an issue with no easy answer but one that will have to be expertly negotiated in any new ordinance or redraft.

Internet/Webpage: Paul

- Paul reported that woolen caps with SMA embossed logos were in and purchases could be made through the website for \$25. This led to other discussions about the variety of products available through the NHAS website, and several other sites cited by those in attendance. Paul will check them out.
- Paul posted an essay on light pollution by Makayla MacGregor and encouraged members to read it.
- There was extensive discussion, pre-meeting and during the meeting, on issues surrounding joining the club that may be associated with Wix architecture. A number of automated messages have been generated about "new member" joining the club that have not included paying the membership fee. Further investigation is warranted to determine if people are being confused by the process or are rather attempting to join Google Groups. David, Bob and Paul will be looking into this situation.

Membership Committee: David

- David reported that total membership is now 118, again, a new record. Renewals are continuing apace. Bob has offered to assist David in addressing some of false membership issues reported above as they have an impact on club finances.
- Google Groups participation has not changed for more than a month, despite desires of some to join or be added to the mailing list. The problem appears to be that Kevin Kane, former board member, is "owner" of the GG page for the club and changes require his input. Rob will work with GG to change the ownership of the page to make sure it is properly functioning.

Equipment Committee: Jeremy and Dean

- Dean reported that he and Jeremy have four scopes under review and testing and that descriptions of each have been completed. Once finally field tested and photographed they

will be listed for sale on the club website. Paul will work with Jeremy and Dean by providing a template that will fit on our webpage. The Board thanked Jeremy and Dean for all their work thus far in organizing this equipment, which will also have benefits for the club telescope loan program.

- David Crocker suggested the club buy a mount to support the Lunt solar scope. It was agreed to add it to our wish list of items as Jeremy and Dean complete their work on club equipment.

Treasurer's Report/Finance Committee: Bob

- Bob reported that with new and renewing memberships our checking account balance was \$12,745, up from 10,724.26 last month. Our endowment fund balance was \$10,284.70.
- The Board reviewed the redlined Investment Policy and raised a number of points that will need to be addressed before any policy is adopted. Unfortunately, Mike Simmons, who provided the draft policy, had to leave the meeting at 8:30 and was not available to discuss issues raised by the board. Among the specifics were:
 1. The need for more flexibility in investment options;
 2. Eliminating the restriction on spending the corpus of the fund. It should indicate that the corpus cannot be spent on routine operating expenses of the club, not an outright prohibition. It might also read the corpus of the funds could be spent upon board approval.
 3. There was confusion over the percentages shown in the Asset Allocation Guidelines and how they would be applied in a real world setting. There may have been a misunderstanding of the purpose of the "maximum allocation" column.
- This matter will be placed on the agenda for the January meeting.

Executive Committee: Rob, Bob, Russ

- Rob reported that he and Bob met via Zoom with Anne Dobriko about her interest in serving on the board. Anne has been a regular attendee of board meetings, club meetings and star parties and has posted SMA activities out on various social media platforms. Through her energy, ideas and participation Anne has shown the requisite commitment to serve on the board and her selection is recommended by Bob and Rob.
- In accordance with the bylaws the Directors voted unanimously to make Anne Dobriko a member of the board with a term expiring in April 2026.
- Anne will join Russ on the Program Committee while continuing the other services she provides to the club. Welcome, Anne!

The meeting ended about 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by
Rob Burgess

Next Directors' Meetings (all on Wednesdays at 7p.m. via Zoom):