

SMA Directors' Meeting Minutes
January 15, 2025
Via Zoom
7:00 pm

In attendance: Directors Russ Pinizzotto, Mike Simmons, David Gay, Bob Dodge, Paul Howell, Anne Dobriko, Carson Hanrahan, Jeremy Wright (from Hawaii) and Rob Burgess. A quorum was present.

The minutes of the December 18, 2024 meeting were approved.

Follow-Up on Action Items and Committee Reports:

Program Committee: Russ & Anne

Russ reviewed scheduled speakers:

- The Board reviewed the January 2 meeting format and content favorably and agreed we should try to replicate it at future meetings. The meeting benefited by having a timekeeper.
- 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 – Webb and Hubble images compared to the sublime celestial paintings of the late 1800's.

Another special interest subgroup, in the citizen science category, was suggested by Paul doing photometry and measuring light curves from Polaris or Delta Scuti stars. Rob said he would put the idea in his newsletter to see if it generated a critical mass of interest.

Outreach Committee: Carson, Mike and Anne

- Carson introduced the schedule and noted that it had been built around several principles: lunar cycle (generally, shortly after a new moon), on Saturday nights (easier for working members to mobilize for), and partnered with one or more other organizations (to help with location access and size of audience).
- March – 3/1 @ 6pm (rain date 3/29 @ 7pm) with Scarborough Land Trust, at Fuller Farm
 - 3/1 sunset @ 1730, moonset @ 1949; 3/29 sunset 1904, moonset @ 1941
- April – 4/2 @ 7pm (rain date 4/4 @ 7pm) with MSAD51, Cumberland, N Yarmouth Schools, location TBD
 - Sunset @ 1900, moonset N/A
- May – 5/17 @ 8pm with Brunswick/Topsham Land Trust, location TBD
 - Sunset @ 2001, moonset N/A
 - Need to confirm with land trust folks
 - Rain date suggestion?
- June/July – TBD

- August – 8/16 @ 7:30pm with Cumberland’s Prince Memorial Library & Ice Cream Social, at Twin Brook Recreation Fields in Cumberland
 - Sunset @ 1942, moonset N/A
 - Need to confirm with library
 - Rain date suggestion?
- September – 9/20 @ 6:30pm, with South Portland Land Trust, at Bug Light Park
 - Sunset @ 1841, moonset @ 1814
 - Rain date suggestion?
- October – 10/18 @ 5:30pm with Harpswell Heritage Land Trust, at Mitchell Field
 - Sunset @ 1752, moonset @ 1648
 - Need to confirm with Howie and land trust folks
 - Rain date suggestion?
- November – 11/15 @ 5pm, no sponsor, at Kettle Cove State Park
 - Sunset @ 1615, moonset @ 1401
 - Rain date suggestion?

Carson also noted a desire expressed by several members for one or more club-only events, where members could assist one another and help newer members along the learning curve. Rob suggested June and July events might be centered “north” and “south” – one in the Brunswick area and another in the greater Portland area. He offered his home for the Brunswick event and suggested making it social with a cookout or similar. Due to later sunsets members could stay later and we did not have to worry about a public audience drifting away as the evening got late.

The schedule did not yet include other events, particularly solar, that could occur in the greater Portland area (Family Fun Day in Cape Elizabeth in June) and in Brunswick (Community BBQ on the Mall in early September). They would be plugged in as placeholders once dates were known and provided we could roust sufficient volunteers.

Carson will check with MSAD 51 on the April star party and whether we wanted it published to the wider world in light of the fact that as many as 200 students and parents might already attending.

Rob will follow up with both the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust about an event at Crystal Spring Farm in May and also with Kelly Greenlee at the Cumberland Library about an August 16th event date. Rob will also check in with Maine’s First Ship in Bath to see if partnering with them again made sense in light of developments with their replica ship *Virginia*.

Rob raised the possibility of another Eastern Prom observing session for the partial solar eclipse at sunrise on 3/29/25. It would be publicized within the club and that those who could attend might show. Doing an observing session of the total lunar eclipse on 3/13/25 was ruled out since totality was not to be reached until about 2 a.m.

Dark Sky Committee: Rob, Howie, Jeremy

- Rob reported that Dark Sky Maine was now an official chapter of Dark Sky International. He also noted that outgoing President of DSI had many Maine connections and has participated in several DSM events. He urged Maine to be a leader in the next frontier of light pollution abatement involving marine life impacts.
- Rob noted that the Brunswick Planning Department was finally fully staffed and that the long-awaited consideration of amendments to the lighting ordinance would be taken up soon.

Internet/Webpage: Paul

- Paul reported that woolen caps with SMA embossed logos were in and purchases could be made through the website for \$25. So far, three had been sold.
- Fixes relating to notice of new members or renewals were discussed and appeared to be working well. Paul was thanked for his efforts in building work-arounds.

Membership Committee: David

- David reported that total membership is now 122, again, a new record. Three memberships (Joan Chamberlin, Ed Gleason and George Whitney) were non-paying/honorary. David sent out 43 emails to non-renewers (4 have since renewed), leaving 39 possible lost members. Efforts will be made from now through the end of February to get those members to renew.
- Rob has separately asked David to identify those who gave more than the minimum when they renewed so they could have their donation be acknowledged and be thanked.

Equipment Committee: Jeremy and Dean

- Jeremy reported that he and Dean have a few scopes ready for publicizing for sale. Jeremy will work with Paul to get them up on our website. If we are forced to go to national marketplaces like Cloudy Nights and Astromart it will be an easy transition. The goal is to sell these locally to avoid the headaches of shipping.
- There was additional discussion on buying some items to fill in gaps in club equipment, the most notable of which is a tripod and mount for the Lunt solar scope. Rob asked board members to send their wish list ideas to Jeremy and Dean who can then report to the board with recommendations.

Treasurer's Report/Finance Committee: Bob

- Bob reported that with new and renewing memberships our checking account balance was \$14,340.63, up from \$12,745 last month. Our endowment fund balance was \$10,316.36, up from \$10,284.70 last month.
- The Board again took up the redlined Investment Policy but this time with Mike Simmons present to answer questions. Mike's suggestions:

- Retain an outside advisor. (Mike could not do it due to an inherent conflict of interest as a board member. However, he said his partner could do it for us at no charge. He and his partner advise several small non-profits.)
- Investment Committee meet with the advisor four times per year and report to the Board annually.
- Expand our donations language on our webpage, advising of the endowment and including information about bequests.
- Establish some policies regarding certain unexpected revenues (e.g., lifetime memberships, equipment sales proceeds) where a percentage of such funds automatically goes into the endowment.
- Determine, through the Investment Committee, as policy how much of the returns on the Endowment can be spent on club operations or acquisitions.

There was considerable discussion on whether the \$10,000 corpus of the fund should be indexed with inflation, or growth in fund balances. Mike recommended that that number remain fixed at \$10,000, leaving it up to SMA to exercise the fiscal judgment to avoid tapping into the endowment below that level, especially where the goal of the fund is to grow to generate a steady stream of investment returns that can help cover some of the club's operating expenses.

- Since the Club's CD matures in May 2025 we have another month or two to adopt a policy and retain an advisor. Members were asked to carefully review the policy and submit any modifications to Rob for consideration at the next meeting.

Executive Committee: Rob, Bob, Russ

The Committee is still endeavoring to meet with Mike Green, candidate for the vacant director's position.

The meeting ended about 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by
Rob Burgess

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

- **Feb 19**
- **Mar 19**
- **Apr 16**