

SMA Directors' Meeting Minutes

April 24, 2024

Via Zoom

7:00 pm

In attendance: Directors Bob Dodge, Al DiSabatino, Carson Hanrahan, Russ Pinizzotto, Ara Jerahian, Howie Marshall, Kevin Kane, Jeremy Wright and Rob Burgess and club members George Bokinsky, Paul Howell, Ron Thompson, Dwight Lanpher, Bill Rixon and Anne Dobriko. A quorum was present.

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

Follow-Up on Action Items and Committee Reports:

Program Committee: Russ and Maame

- Discussion ensued on having two meetings per year dedicated to new members, covering topics germane to folks new to astronomy. The meetings were to be in May and November, but the April club meeting was cancelled due to weather and power outages, pushing everything back by one month. Therefore, the June meeting will be the first aimed at members new to astronomy.
The Board reviewed suggested topics to be covered. **ACTION ITEM:** Carson and Russ will choose the four or five topics for the June meeting and then work with the Board to find presenters for each.
- The May meeting will feature Dr. Philippe Reekie of the Harvard College Observatory. Fortunately, he remained available after our April cancellation. Speakers for other meetings were actively being solicited by the Program Committee. Many prospective speakers were looking for dates in the fall, given academic commitments. We are still seeking a NASA speaker on the Deep Space Network, on its 60th anniversary. We also hope to commit part of the May meeting to seeking members' eclipse images.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Rob will reach out to Spirit Aero Systems in Biddeford to discuss their role in supplying heat resistant materials for planetary missions.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Decide if July meeting is moved to new date or is cancelled. Club meeting date falls on Thursday, July 4.

Outreach Committee: Carson, Anne Dobriko (member)

- Carson offered suggestions for upcoming events. Bolded items were added by Rob as possible placeholders or for other specific events:
- Star parties: Saturday with Sunday alternate
- **Maine Space Day – Friday, May 3 – Greeley Middle School (Cumberland)**
- May star party – EAA and visual – Galaxies – Cumberland Fairgrounds? **May 11/12**
- June – Lunar Observing and Telescope Help – location TBD – Brunswick? **June 15/16** (Open House??)
- July – Globular Cluster Observing – Kettle Cove **July 6/7** (July 4th weekend)
- **Brunswick Rotary – Monday, August 5 (Rob)**

- August – Nebula observing, EAA and smart scopes – location TBD; coordinate around Maine State Star Party in Cobscook Bay **August 9-11**
 - **Perseid Meteor Shower Star Party with BTLT – August 10/11 ?**
 - **Cumberland Library Star Party -Twin Brooks – TBD ?**
 - September – Clusters and planets – Bug Light park, So Portland **Sept 6/7** (Labor Day weekend)
 - **Maine’s First Ship – Bath – Sept?**
 - **Brunswick Non-Profit Community BBQ – early September – solar viewing**
 - **Bowdoin Students – Sept? Oct?**
 - **ASNNE StarFest - September**
 - **Stars Over Katahdin – Sept 28**
 - October – TBD – Brunswick **Oct 5/6** (Neptune Dr or MCHT (Woodward Point) or Mitchell Field?)
 - November – planets – Greater Portland location **Nov 2/3**
 - Adaptive Outdoor Education Center – light pollution talk – TBD – Rob
 - USM Garden Club – Sabattus – June TBD – Rob, others
 - Clare Harrington – MSAD 51 (Cumb./No Yar) – fall 2024 (180 students)
- Rob reported that the Open House initially proposed for late April or early May needed to be postponed until later in the season, possibly in mid-June. Eclipse organizing/communicating and a cancelled club meeting due to weather have thrown off planning for the Open House.

Rob stated that after discussion with Carson he would prepare a monthly report on upcoming events to alert members and to seek volunteers. Currently, we announce and seek volunteers within a week or two of scheduled events. An email from the Club President well before these events might better enable club members to schedule attendance at events and volunteer. We will also add any other astronomical events in our area from other clubs or groups to our website so as to provide a type of clearinghouse of such information.

Dwight inquired about solar viewing in summer months as was attempted last year in lieu of star parties. Rob stated the club would pursue those opportunities, including again participating in the Brunswick Community Organization BBQ, which we have done successfully for the last two years. **Not mentioned, but shared from Kerry Kertes, is an invitation to again participate in the Cape Elizabeth Family Fun Day in June, for solar viewing.** The club will also use the opportunity of late sunsets to hold a star party or two focusing on the moon that can be observed in twilight.

- work on our publicity efforts for these events including with various social media platforms. Rob will forward to her our media contacts list.
- Rob said he would reach out to the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust, the Maine Coast Heritage Trust and Maine’s First Ship, to invite joint events in 2024. These organizations all requested star parties in 2023 we couldn’t accommodate. This was an **ACTION ITEM.**

Dark Sky Committee: Rob, Howie, Jeremy and Paul Howell

- Mitchell Field: Howie reported no new developments. However, he did note that the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust asked us to present another star party at Mitchell Field, probably in October. Carson noted this dovetailed with our tentative schedule and that a star party tentatively set for Brunswick might be held at Mitchell Field.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Howie will work with Jeremy, Kevin and Ara to get the Google Map of our recommended star gazing sites up on our webpage.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Rob will put together some dark sky advice for our webpage from the DSI website that can guide people on their choices for outdoor lighting needs. We will also provide links to DSI, Dark Sky Maine and other resources.
- Capt Fitzgerald/Maine Gravel - Rob continues to follow developments and will report back with any meaningful updates.
- Rob reported that the gubernatorial Proclamation about International Dark Sky Week did not get any press coverage despite a news release that was issued by SMA and DSM. Rob was philosophical in that the proclamation at least raised the issue in the Governor's office.
- Rob informed that the Town of Brunswick is finally ready to take up lighting amendments to its zoning ordinance. He has submitted some draft language that will appear before the Planning Board in a workshop session in mid-May.
- Efforts to modernize DSM's organizational structure, including to eventually seek chapter status by Dark Sky International, continue. Rob is representing SMA in those efforts but he welcomes others' participation.
- SMA and DSM submitted a letter to the Land Use Planning Commission regarding their proposed topics for consideration for updating their zoning requirements on outdoor lighting. Our letter supported the scope of their proposed rules and suggested a few other topics for their consideration.
- Rob informed the board of a Freeport ordinance he found that bore on light trespass. The ordinance was adopted in May 2023. The ordinance specified that light above 0.1 footcandles at the property line straying onto a neighboring property would be considered a nuisance entitling the injured property owner to seek police enforcement. The ordinance has an escalating schedule of fines if trespass is determined and not abated. Jeremy cautioned that promoting these kinds of solutions in residential settings could backfire on us and lead to the same kind of polarization that currently divides the body politic. He recommended public education and encouragement to follow good dark sky lighting practices rather than police-type enforcement. Dwight seconded that recommendation. Rob agreed but wanted the board to understand this development in lighting issues, and enforcement, that are now part of the regulatory landscape.
- **[Amendment to Minutes due to omission]** Jeremy said he would undertake an informal survey of several retailers looking for low CCT bulbs and dark sky-friendly light fixtures to better understand what's in the marketplace locally. This will better enable us to advise people seeking to do the right thing and perhaps push those retailers on the type of inventory they carry, if necessary.

Membership Committee: Al and Kevin

- Al reported that the club's current membership was 84 after we lost about 23 members to attrition after year-end. This loss of membership was somewhat less than what we lost going from 2022 into 2023. Seventeen of our members are woman, maintaining the approximate level of 25% female membership. The quorum for the annual meeting will therefore be 22 members. Al noted the status of several of our special, honorary or other membership and recommended a decision be made with regard to maintaining these or not. Al noted Ed Gleason's impending departure to Newfoundland and whether he wanted to remain an honorary member.

- Al raised a question, with Edward's departure, of whether we could continue to promote as a benefit of membership free admission to the Southworth Planetarium. **ACTION ITEM:** We need to talk to Edward, hopefully be introduced to his successor, and determine if that privilege will continue to be available to SMA. Previously, there was discussion about a departing gift for Edward from the club. This also needs to be resolved.

Equipment Committee: Ara & Kevin

- A predicate to the Open House will be identifying, assembling, verifying functionality, and pricing all items we would like to sell. It was also recommended that all items be photographed and then posted to our website as being for sale to members only for 30 days. Thereafter, unsold items would be offered at the Open House to the general public. **ACTION ITEM:** Gather a work party to meet on a Saturday to address the above equipment issues. Carson, Jeremy, Ara and Rob will get this process under way. It will be promoted in the club so others have a chance to participate.
- Al stressed the value of the equipment lending program. His personal experience was very favorable when given the chance to try out the club's C-9.25. He felt we should do more to promote that benefit of club membership, and encouraged that we not sell off all the equipment. Dwight stated that the NH club has a list of lending equipment, with pictures, on its website. It has long been discussed to beef up our webpage on the equipment lending program with pictures, descriptions and procedures. **ACTION ITEM:** Rob will circulate the latest equipment list to the Board as we undertake this important project.
- The Celestron E-series zoom eyepieces will be sold at the open house if not otherwise purchased by club members.

Treasurer's Report/Finance Committee: Bob

- Bob reported that as of 4/24/24 the club had \$10,275.16 in its operating account, after reimbursing Jeremy for the cost of two tents. The club also has a \$10,000 in a 15-month CD at Bangor Savings with a yield of 3.82%.

Executive Committee: Rob, Ara, Bob, Russ

- Bob and Howie, serving as a Nominating Committee, have found three members willing to serve as directors for the coming year: Dave Gay, Mike Simmons, and Paul Howell. The Annual Meeting was noticed on 3/8/24, more than 14 days in advance of 4/4/24, continued to 5/2/24.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Post pictures and bios on webpage after getting pictures and bios from our slate of new directors.

The meeting ended about 8:40 p.m.

Submitted by
Rob Burgess

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

- **May 15**

- Jun 19
- Jul 17
- Aug 21
- Sep 18
- Oct 16
- Nov 20
- Dec 18

Caron's suggested topics for beginner astronomy topics. He has shown them as topics that might be covered monthly, but they also could be combined into focused meetings in May and November, choosing five topics for each of those meetings. **Other ideas are encouraged.**

- Starting in EAA - overview & equipment
- Smart telescopes - overview & equip (Oct/Nov)
- How to align & collimate your scope and mount (June?)
- Star hopping (Aug/Sept)
- Go-to telescopes intro (May)
- All about eyepieces (June?)
- Filters for visual? (Sept)
- Where to find observing targets/ideas (May)
- Astro software - scope control, planetarium, weather, etc.
- AP beginner's guide (done, courtesy Ara)