

## SMA Directors' Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2024

Via Zoom

7:00 pm

In attendance: Directors Bob Dodge, Al DiSabatino, Carson Hanrahan, Russ Pinizzotto, Ara Jerahian, Howie Marshall and Rob Burgess and club members David Gay, George Bokinsky, Paul Howell, Mike Simmons and Anne Dobriko. A quorum was present.

The minutes of the February 21, 2024 meeting were approved.

### Follow-Up on Action Items and Committee Reports:

#### Program Committee: Russ and Maame

- Discussion ensued on dedicating two club meetings per year to new members, offering telescope and observing help. It was agreed that May and November would be those months. Carson had previously circulated a list of possible topics to cover. Directors were asked to submit what they considered essential topics (see at end of minutes). Five topics would be covered at each meeting. The program committee would attempt to find knowledgeable club members to present on each of these topics. It was further agreed that notices of these meetings should be posted on social media such as FB and Instagram. Anne Dobriko offered to help with such promotion.
- The April meeting will feature Dr. Philippe Reekie of the Harvard College Observatory. 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 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We also hope to commit part of the May meeting to seeking members' eclipse images, including a short talk from Greg Shanos.
- **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

- Carson offered suggestions for upcoming events; each would have a rain date:
  - Club Open House Saturday, April 27
  - May star party – EAA and visual – Galaxies – Cumberland Fairgrounds?
  - June – Lunar Observing and Telescope Help – location TBD – Brunswick?
  - July – Globular Cluster Observing – Kettle Cove
  - August – Nebula observing, EAA and smart scopes – location TBD; coordinate around Maine State Star Party in Cobscook Bay
  - September – Clusters and planets – Bug Light park, So Portland
  - October – TBD – Brunswick
  - November – planets – Greater Portland location

- It was again suggested that expanding our social media exposure was needed to reach a younger audience: FB, Instagram, Reddit, Cloudy Nights, NSN, TikTok. Anne again offered to try to be of help in getting us onto these platforms.
- Paul suggested meeting up with Bowdoin students and the new astronomy professor on campus for some stargazing.
- 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**.
- Other outreach events, sought by third parties or scheduled by or through the club:
  - Patagonia Womens+ Outdoor Activities Mixer – March 15 – in Freeport, supported by Lisa Wilson, Joanne Sharpe and Rob – with about 40 people who visited our table.
  - Adaptive Outdoor Education Center – light pollution talk – TBD – Rob
  - Clare Harrington – MSAD 51 (Cumberland/No. Yarmouth) – fall 2024 for 180 students
  - Harrison, ME public library – talk in March, TBD, on stars, planets and eclipse – for children and families – Chris Parent
  - Falmouth and Cumberland Libraries – eclipse talks, dates TBD – Ron Thompson
  - USM Garden Club, Sabattus – TBD – June – Rob will coordinate
  - Space Day Maine, May 3, 2024 – Greeley Jr High – 840 students – many SMA volunteers as speakers, demonstrators, sought.

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

- Mitchell Field: Howie reported that decision making is progressing on Mitchell Field with the plan being to renovate the building. It might present some opportunity to store equipment there or to use it for indoor talks associated with star parties on site. It's also likely to have bathroom facilities, but any renovations are probably a year or two out.
- **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 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.
- Rob reported that he attended a meeting of a new committee in Brunswick overseeing the plans for use of a new large parcel of 231 acres dedicated to outdoor recreational use in East Brunswick. He reinforced one suggested use presented at a prior town forum designed to elicit ideas from the public – using the site for stargazing – and suggested that the site might qualify for an Urban Night Sky Place designation by DSI. The Committee was very interested in the suggestion and Rob will work with the committee as it moves ahead with its plans. Other members of the Dark Sky Committee, and other club members, are invited to join him in this effort.
- Rob reported that a proposed gubernatorial Proclamation about International Dark Sky Week submitted to the Governor's Office on behalf of SMA and DSM has been issued. Plans are to issue a news release with Dark Sky Maine announcing the week, the Governor's support, and suggesting things people can do at home to achieve better outdoor lighting.
- Rob informed that the Town of Brunswick is finally ready to take up amendments to its zoning ordinance. He has submitted some draft language that will appear before the Planning Board in

a workshop session in April before going to a public hearing and then being submitted to the Town Council for consideration and adoption.

- 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.
- The Land Use Planning Commission has notified SMA and DSM that it is ready to begin the re-write of its lighting standards. Information will be shared as it emerges from the process so that we can collect member input.

### **Membership Committee: Al and Kevin**

- Al reported that the club's year-end peak of 104 has been reduced by 22 due to non-renewal. Eight of the non-renewers were women, reducing our female cohort to 19, but still representing about 20% of the membership. Two of the non-renewers were former directors, and in one case a member died. With the membership at 82, a quorum of 21 is required for the Annual Meeting in April.

### **Equipment Committee: Ara & Kevin**

- The Open House date will be April 27. **ACTION ITEM:** Rob will work with Carson, Ara and Kevin to convene a work party at HQ to organize equipment for sale at the Open House, including the surplus eyepieces, price it/them, install the due rings on the C-8 and C-11, and photograph items available through the club lending program. With a list of items for sale publicity of the Open House can then begin.
- Ara recommended that the EAA scope, acquired through a grant, be offered for sale as a complete AP rig, or in component pieces. In his view the landscape has changed dramatically since that scope was acquired. So many more scopes have come on the market that provide similar technology, in a far easier-to-use format, that it has made the system the club built, essentially obsolete. With COVID no longer an issue, remote distancing through an EAA projection format, is no longer necessary. **ACTION ITEM:** Ara will provide recommendations on how best to convert the EAA scope into cash or, if there is an alternative use for club programs, what that might be.
- The Celestron E-series zoom eyepieces will be sold at the open house if not otherwise purchased by club members.
- The club now owns two tents, 10x10 and 10x20, to be used for club events.

### **Treasurer's Report/Finance Committee: Bob**

- Bob reported that as of 3/20/24 the club had \$10,715 in its operating account, and \$10,000 in a 15-month CD at Bangor Savings with a yield of 3.82%. Recent expenses included quarterly rent at \$486/quarter, two new tents costing \$541 and a \$100 donation to Dark Sky Maine in honor of Earl Raymond.
- Rob (and Bob) reported that for the second straight year the club received a very generous donation of \$1500 from the Edgard and Geraldine Feder Foundation, Inc. of Bath. We are honored by the recognition and grateful for the support this donation represents. The club has formally communicated its thank you to the Feders.

## 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.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Post pictures and bios on webpage. Apologies to Russ for still having him in the delinquent column – he did send in a photo! We now need to get the pictures and bios up.

The meeting ended about 9:00 p.m.

Submitted by  
Rob Burgess

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

- **Club Annual Meeting (April 4)**
- **Apr 17**
- **May 15**
- **Jun 19**
- **Jul 17**
- **Aug 21**
- **Sep 18**
- **Oct 16**
- **Nov 20**
- **Dec 18**

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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)