

Southern Maine Astronomers
Club Meeting Minutes and Minutes of
Annual Meeting of Members and Annual Meeting of Directors
April 3, 2025 7:00 p.m.

Attending were members Michael Green, Dave Crocker, Russell Pinizzotto, Craig Snapp, Bob Dodge, Dwight Burkard, Kevin Berry, David Gay, John Saucier, Greg Thorup, Marc Stowbridge, Anne Dobriko, Greg Shanos, Brad Irish, Carson Hanrahan, Gil Fraser, Art Salve, Dean Ostergaard, Kat Taylor, Steve Tondreau, Bill Denig, Joe Long, John Stetson, Mike Simmons, Howie Marshall, David Manchester, Paul Schumann, Brett Joslin, Rich Kahn, Russell Clark, Steve Turner Rob Burgess and guests Ravi Kumra, and Wendy___.

With 32 members in attendance a quorum was present (29 Members were needed) for the Annual Meeting of Members. With 8 directors present, a quorum (6 directors were required) was present for the Annual Meeting of Directors.

Rob Burgess opened the formal portion of the meeting and welcomed five new members: Fred Nehring of Boothbay, Stephanie Boekhorst of Cape Elizabeth (student member), John Stetson of Raymond, Benjamin Steinhart of Portland, and George Griggs of Kennebunk. Two lapsed members were welcomed back: Lisa Wilson of Yarmouth and Russell Clark of Scotia, NY.

Recent activities by members:

- Russ Pinizzotto noted that he was at 206 of the Second Herschel 400 challenge through the AL Observing Program. He reported that the AL Observing Program members continued to work on the NASA Observing Challenge program.
- David Crocker stated that the new physics/astronomy professor at USM (filling in for Prof. Julie Ziffer) was interested in SMA and would be willing to speak at a future meeting on his research.

Announcements:

- Rob reported that there was a new graphic calendar on the webpage to provide a month-at-a-glance overview of club events, added at the suggestion of Director Anne Dobriko. Thanks to Director Paul Howell for getting the idea so quickly turned into a tangible update on our webpage.
- The partial solar eclipse on Saturday, Mar 29 at dawn was clouded out. However, the club got some worldwide exposure when Rob was interviewed by BBC America about the eclipse. Club member Kerry Kertes, traveling in Chile, saw the broadcast from there!
- The major dark sky bill in the Legislature, sponsored by Rep. Laurie Osher still awaits printing and an LD number. SMA plans to participate in support of the bill when it goes to hearing. Members wanting to know more, or to join in the process, please contact Rob.

- Knit caps with the SMA logo embossed into a leather tag were now available for \$25 from Paul Howell (howellrcp@gmail.com)
- Maine Space Day will be held this year at Bath Middle School on Friday, May 2. If you'd like to participate contact Rob.

Guest Speaker:

Rob introduced the monthly speaker, Bill Denig, a recent new member to the club. Bill Denig's career started as a young PhD from Utah State University in 1984. He spent the next 20 years between the Air Force Research Lab in Boston and the Air Force Space Command in Colorado Springs. In the early years he served as principal investigator on several research projects on the space shuttle and even oversaw his own console at Mission Control in Houston. In 2005 Bill transitioned to the Director's position of the World Data Center for Solar-Terrestrial Physics as well as head of NOAA's Solar and Terrestrial Physics Division monitoring space weather. In 2017 Bill left government service and became associated with St. Joseph's College in Standish, Maine, restoring their observatory. And in 2024 we were lucky to have Bill join SMA!

Bill spoke about how our knowledge has grown regarding the near-Earth space environment including the Sun, interplanetary space, and our own magnetosphere-ionosphere-thermosphere system and how human life can be affected. He started with one of the first recognitions of how events in our atmosphere can affect life on Earth. Interestingly, the "Year Without Summer" in 1816, was documented by Rev. Jonathan Fisher of Blue Hill, ME, who noted changes in the weather and the effect on crops. The real cause was volcanic debris in the atmosphere, dimming sunlight. However, it was evidence how life could be affected by forces not well understood. In 1858, the Carrington Event, emerged from a huge solar storm that generated auroras in lower latitudes and caused telegraph failure as the wires representing the new technology became antennas, capturing the flood of electrons and overloading their capacity. In 1961, Jim Dungey, proposed "magnetic reconnection" – how ionized gases follow magnetic field lines, in his Open Magnetosphere model, which still guides our understanding of space weather today. The great Northeast Blackout of 1989 plunged parts of New England and the Province of Quebec into darkness for nine hours. The effects of space weather were also seen by NORAD when it lost more than 1000 satellites through atmospheric drag triggered by geomagnetic storms. In short, with our increased reliance on satellites, myriad electronic devices, and human exploration of space, the impacts of eruptions of the Sun are increasingly important to the maintenance of modern life on Earth.

Bill's full talk is available by a recording and access will be posted on the club's website.

Night Sky Tour - Russ Pinizzotto

Russ highlighted items from the NASA Observing Challenge for April: Caldwell 59 – Ghost of Jupiter (Planetary nebula); Caldwell 53 – Spindle Galaxy; M65 and 66 in Leo; NGC 3628 – Hamburger Galaxy; M81 (Bode's Nebula) and 82 (Cigar Galaxy) in Ursa Major; M95, M96 and M105 – galaxies in Leo and Caldwell 40, resembling the Black Eye galaxy.

Annual Meeting of Members

The meeting was called to order, with a quorum having previously been verified. Rob Burgess, serving as Secretary Pro Tem, indicated that all five directors (Bob Dodge, Russ Pinizzotto, Carson

Hanrahan, Jeremy Wright and Rob Burgess) whose terms were expiring had agreed to seek reelection, and represented a slate. Rob asked for nominations from the floor; there were none. The slate of directors was unanimously reelected. With no further business to conduct, the Annual meeting of Members was adjourned.

Annual Meeting of Directors

Rob called the meeting to order, having previously noted a quorum of 8 was present to conduct business. Incumbent directors indicated a desire to continue in their roles as Directors, although Rob Burgess was stepping down as President due to having served six consecutive years in that position. Russ Pinizzotto, as VP agreed to step up as President; Carson Hanrahan agreed to serve as VP; Bob Dodge agreed to continue to serve as Treasurer; and Rob Burgess agreed to fill the vacant Secretary position. There being no other nominees for the officer positions the Directors elected the slate by unanimous vote. With no other business to be conducted the Annual Meeting of Directors was adjourned.

Rob Burgess
Secretary, SMA