

Rappahannock Astronomy Club

Minutes, October 25, 2010, Meeting

In attendance:

- Ann Aleo
- Jim Baker
- Barton Billard
- Don Clark
- George Clarke
- Brenda Conway
- Glenn Faini
- Joe & Sherry Francis
- Rob Friedel
- Leigh Gettier
- Sarah Holloway
- Bruce Johnson
- Dan Lien
- Mike Masters
- Tim Plunkett

President Mike Masters began the meeting with introductions at 6:45 p.m. Thirteen members and 1 guest were present. Brenda and Ann came briefly at the beginning to transfer the Club Personal Solar Telescope (PST) and get the new tripod for it from Don.

Program

Joe Francis presented the program on black holes. Topics included history, escape velocity and gravity dependence on mass and size, black hole formation, black hole properties and evolution, gravitational lensing, observational evidence, and alternatives. Among the interesting tidbits Joe reported were findings indicating that black holes may have been able to form in the early universe from large collapsing gas clouds without going through the stage of star formation. Merging Quantum Mechanics and General Relativity may lead to new ideas on whether black holes exist. String theories seem to eliminate the singularities implied by General Relativity and possibly black holes. Joe found recent news that early this year, the supermassive black hole in the center of the Andromeda galaxy grew 100 times brighter and then dimmed somewhat, settling down to 10 times as bright. He also said evidence is beginning to suggest that massive black holes are found in very early galaxies, and perhaps they figure in galaxy formation.

Old Business

- Tim presented the Treasurer's report for September 30, 2010. For the month, he collected dues from new member William Dillon and paid Astronomical League dues. The Club has 27 members as of the end of September. At this point, Tim is crediting dues paid toward 2011 membership because there is such a short time left in the current year. Some current members have already paid dues in advance for the next year or more. Mike paid Tim the \$15 dues he collected from new member George Clarke at the September meeting. Tim confirmed that he received Don's email about the purchase of the tripod voted on in September and said he would send Don a check for reimbursement.
- Nominations for 2011 Club officers—Mike reported that all of this year's officers agreed to run again. He requested nominations from the members present. He also noted that additional nominations could be made at the November meeting before the voting takes place. Joe Francis nominated Bart Billard for Secretary, and Dan Lien seconded. Joe nominated Tim Plunkett for Treasurer, seconded by Dan. Glenn Faini nominated Joe Francis for Vice President, and Bart seconded. Joe nominated Mike Masters for President, and Dan seconded. Noting the Pizza Hut meeting room is no longer available for our November meeting, Mike discussed the plan to hold the meeting in the same room in the Library and canvassed the members present about pizza. Based on the response he estimated 15 members planned to attend and eat pizza. Mike asked for volunteers and appointed Joe to bring pizza, Don to bring drinks, Leigh to bring ice and a cooler, and Rob to bring cookies. Mike has leftover supplies (cups and plastic utensils) that he will bring.

- Club loaner equipment status—Don has custody of the Comet Catcher: the new mount he purchased is with the PST on loan to Ann. Ranny has the 8-inch Dob. Joe has the Orion Dob and has replacement Teflon pads, but has not installed the missing pad. Brenda has the German equatorial Orion reflector and the CCD camera. Bart has custody of the NexStar. Tim is looking for the missing slow-motion control for the equatorial reflector. Mike reported trying the mount Don purchased to see whether it would be suitable for the Comet Catcher as well as the PST. Dew interfered with the trial at the star party, but Mike took it home and found it acceptable, if not ideal. Pointing toward the zenith is awkward. A better tripod would probably run more than \$200—250 and might not be as necessary for the short focal length of the Comet Catcher. Mike recommended buying another like Don had purchased instead of a more expensive mount. Tim made the motion, with Joe seconding to purchase the \$90 tripod, and the motion carried.
- Events—The September 11 Skyline event was cancelled. The Curtis Park outreach was held as planned, with support from David Abbou, along with Myron Wasiuta and Mark DeVito. The October 2 star party was successful. We were unable to support the Shenandoah River Park request for an outreach event for October 9. Our next star party date is Friday, November 5. The unusual day is a result of conflicting Caledon events on the Saturday. The backup date is November 13. Mike brought up a request for an outreach at North Stafford High School on the same date as the backup. Leigh volunteered to help support the outreach, and Mike said that he would reply in the affirmative, because David Abbou also was willing to support the outreach. He noted it would not preclude use of the backup date at Caledon if the primary date were a no-go. Sarah described the use at star parties she attended in California of red lights to mark the locations of telescopes. Mike thought it was a good suggestion and asked her to find a couple of links to forward him illustrating models of lights like the ones she has seen.
- Star party calendar for 2011—Mike showed the proposed calendar discussed at the last meeting. Rob moved to adapt the draft schedule subject to Caledon agreement. Don seconded the motion and the vote was in favor.
- JPL Night Sky Network—Mike reported a Club email address is needed for the Night Sky Network participation. He said the issue was too complicated to be addressed at this time during the meeting. The Club officers will take up the issue by email.
- Club mailing lists—Currently the Club has two mailing lists, and Mike suggested at the last meeting that we consider dropping the raclub@m31.us list. He asked whether anyone had thought of drawbacks of dropping this list. No downsides were raised other than reluctance of some to sign up for a Yahoo account. He told us members could ask Scott to add them to the Yahoo list to receive the emails without joining Yahoo. A grace period for phasing out raclub@m31.us could allow time for members to get word of the phase-out and arrange to receive mail from the Yahoo list. Don moved that the Club withdraw from raclub@m31.us. Joe seconded the motion and the motion passed on a show of hands. Mike suggested 3 months, ending January 31, 2011, for phasing out the list.
- *Sky & Telescope* subscription discount status—Tim has not submitted to the magazine yet. He has the list of those interested in participating. Current subscribers can participate by providing their subscription number. They do not have to renew to qualify the Club for the discount rate.
- Club POC for Astronomical League—Tim reports that Astronomical League has updated its information to show him as POC instead of Mark Slade, so no action is necessary.

New Business

- Scott Busby's new house—Mike said that Scott has moved and named his new house "Belmont Observatory." He has offered to host next year's Club picnic there.
- New Club website items—Don Clark has identified telescope help videos: see the [Links](#) page on the Club website. "Fun Sun Facts!," a handout for daytime outreach events, is now available on the [Documents](#) page.
- Meeting programs for 2011—Mike presented the preliminary program schedule for next year. He said that Myron has indicated that he might have more time next year as his new practice becomes established, and he might be able to offer one or two programs.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is November 10, 2010, 7:00 p.m., at the Central Rappahannock Regional Library Headquarters, 1201 Caroline St., in Fredericksburg. Introductions will begin at 6:45 p.m.

Submitted by Bart Billard, Secretary