

# Rappahannock Astronomy Club

## Minutes, March 17, 2021, Online Meeting

In attendance:

Jim Browder  
Scott Busby  
Bart & Linda Billard  
Don Clark  
Glenn Faini  
Claire Gardiner  
Glenn Holliday

Mark McDonagh  
Troy Major  
John Maynard  
Rolando Pancotti  
Matt Scott  
Nancy Stalik

The business meeting began at about 7:05 p.m. Twelve members and 2 guests were present.

## Old Business

- Treasurer's Report—Matt Scott reported several dues payments in February. He said there were no expenditures in February.
- Vice President's Event Report—Glenn Faini was not at the star party in March and asked John Maynard how it went. John said it was glorious, although he discovered he needed a screwdriver to adjust his finder and didn't have one. He said he set up next to a street light that was off and enjoyed the darkest skies he has had. Glenn asked who else was there, and John said Sabrina (Maxwell) was the only other participant. He saw a lot of naked eye objects, but not many Messier objects because of the finder alignment problem.
- Secretary's Report—Bart Billard just reported posting the minutes recently and having trouble with the page format creating a lot of blank space between the title and the table for the minutes links. He said he could not find a blank line to delete like Don Clark reported doing when he fixed the problem last month.
- *StarGazer* Report—Linda Billard said she had nothing specific yet but was always soliciting contributions for the next issue. She mentioned Glenn F. was going to do an article, or maybe two. He recalled agreeing to elaborate on the recommendations for astronomy apps, but could not think of a second topic. Linda could not remember anything specific either but said she would scrounge her email to see if it reminds her what the idea might have been.
- MSRO Status—Jerry Hubbell was not present, so Glenn skipped this topic after offering to describe what MSRO is.
- Communications Report—Don Clark was also not yet present for this topic. Glenn F. skipped to the Facebook page report, saying Myron Wasiuta was now in charge of maintaining it. Because Myron was not at the meeting, Glenn F. just explained it was only maintained to help Facebook users find us. It only directs interested people to go to our website and does not provide any separate content. He said our Groups.io account was working well, with only a couple of club members not yet signed up.
- Equipment Inventory—Scott Busby said lending was still limited because of Covid but mentioned it was about 18 days until "herd immunity" when he would have had his second vaccine shot and be able to have members visit to borrow equipment again. He mentioned sending copies of the equipment inventory to a couple of people, including Glenn F, but did not recall who the second person was. He said he had not yet identified any equipment he thought the club should sell off. Glenn F. said he had read through the Bylaws, and all he found about disposition of equipment was the passage about what to do with assets should the club dissolve. He concluded we would be allowed to sell off equipment that we did not need. If the proceeds went to the club treasury, he did not even see the need for a vote. Scott said once we could meet in person again, he would bring things like extra eyepieces and accessories to meetings to see whether any members wanted to purchase them first. He said he thought all the more valuable equipment was appropriate to be retained for loaning out to members. Scott ended with an offer to lend out equipment to members who needed something, inviting them to contact him and talk about what they needed. He said he would try to match their requirements and mentioned he could work around the coronavirus limitations if need be.

## New Business

- Membership Renewals—Glenn F. mentioned 12 of last year's members had still not renewed, although 1 indicated planning to do so. He noted we were up to 39 paid memberships compared with the total of 43 reached in 2020.
- Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) Inquiry—Glenn said he would let Nancy Stalik talk about the FOR request. He said she could talk about her email to him, which was not forwarded to the club as a whole. Glenn Holliday confirmed he had seen it and had sent her something in response. Glenn F. was not sure whether the third person was David Abbou or someone else. Nancy gave a little overview of FOR and its mission to preserve the health and scenic beauty of the river. She said she manages educational programs. Normally, FOR sees 7,000 field-trip kids each school year and then another 5,000 to 7,000 kids in grant programs where FOR members go into their schools. With Covid, FOR has had to adapt, which Nancy felt has had some positive effects. She mentioned branching out from a focus on habitats and watershed science to try what they call OLLs: outdoor learning labs with a wider range of topics to reach kids who might not be part of field trip or grant program groups. She said she and another colleague involved in creating these OLLs were both enthusiastic about astronomy, although not very knowledgeable yet, and had gone ahead and scheduled an astronomy OLL. They already had the 20-person capacity signed up. She indicated it was not an optimum time for one and hoped for a better opportunity in the fall as conditions (like “herd immunity”) improved, but asked for someone to give her a list of “four things you always tell kids when you do a program.” Glenn asked about where they planned to hold the event and what date it was scheduled for. Nancy mentioned the three likely possibilities they had were the canal trail (with not much view of the sky), the FOR beach (also with a lot of trees), or in the open nearer the Mary Washington Hospital (with more of a light pollution problem). She said April 9 was the date, and the time they could schedule was 6:00 to 8:00 pm. We discussed that date, shortly before the new Moon. It would be okay for deep sky objects unless light pollution was a problem, in which case a date with the Moon in the evening sky would be better. Nancy mentioned they had two table-top telescopes to show the kids. Glenn H. looked up the sky for that date and found Mars would be up and should be interesting if they could have enough magnification to show more than just a bright light. (Later it was noted that Venus would also be visible.) Glenn F. said he would check with David Abbou about his availability. Glenn H. said he would have to check his calendar after the meeting. When the discussion turned to how 8:00 pm would not be dark enough to show much, Nancy asked about topics that could be presented, such as whether we talk about light pollution the way they talk about watershed pollution and its effect on the river. Glenn F. added some other topic examples, including types of telescopes, types of mounts, size of telescope (apertures) for gathering light, and, relative to size, the unimportance of magnification in comparing telescopes. Scott said he could do a presentation on light pollution, and his experience was that children pick up on the topic, not only for effects on seeing celestial objects but also for effects on wildlife.
- Other New Business—In response to a question about the Richmond club, Jim Browder said they had started a few in-person outreach events, so far “bring your own binocular” (BYOB) events with laser tours of the sky. They started with small groups with no contact or telescope sharing and may work up to groups of 25. Nancy asked whether birding binoculars would work for the BYOB events, and the answer was yes. Don Clark had come in late, and told us he had found a formatting problem with the Club Meeting page that he could fix.

## Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday, April 21, 2021. It is planned as an online Zoom meeting.